

# 4. *The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820–1977*<sup>1</sup>

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In 1820, *The Black Book*, a radical critique of the corruption and power of the English Establishment, made this comment on royal ritual:

Pageantry and show, the parade of crowns and coronets, of gold keys, sticks, white wands and black rods; of ermine and lawn, maces and wigs, are ridiculous when men become enlightened, when they have learned that the real object of government is to confer the greatest happiness on the people at the least expense.<sup>2</sup>

Forty years later, Lord Robert Cecil, the future third marquis of Salisbury, having watched Queen Victoria open parliament, wrote with scarcely more approval:

Some nations have a gift for ceremonial. No poverty of means or absence of splendour inhibits them from making any pageant in which they take part both real and impressive. Everybody falls naturally into his proper place, throws himself without effort into the spirit of the little drama he is enacting, and instinctively represses all appearance of constraint or distracted attention.

But, he went on to explain:

This aptitude is generally confined to the people of a southern climate and of non-Teutonic parentage. In England the case is exactly the reverse. We can afford to be more splendid than most nations; but some malignant spell broods over all our most solemn

<sup>1</sup> An earlier draft of this paper was presented to the Social History Seminar at Cambridge University and to a joint/student-faculty seminar at Princeton University. I am most grateful to the participants for their comments and criticisms, to Dr S. D. Banfield and Mr C. J. Babbs for help with two particular problems, and to Mr J. Whaley for sharing with me his incomparable knowledge of ritual and ceremony in early modern Europe. Some preliminary thoughts on this subject were outlined in my article, 'The Not-So-Ancient Traditions of Monarchy', *New Society* (2 June 1977), pp. 438–40. This final version was completed in 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in D. Sutherland, *The Landowners* (London, 1968), p. 158.

ceremonials, and inserts into them some feature which makes them all ridiculous...Something always breaks down, somebody contrives to escape doing his part, or some bye-motive is suffered to interfere and ruin it all.<sup>3</sup>

Taken together, these quotations exemplify contemporary attitudes towards the ceremonial of the British monarchy during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century. The first argued that as the population was becoming better educated, royal ritual would soon be exposed as nothing more than primitive magic, a hollow sham. And the second suggested, on the basis of impeccable inside knowledge, that in any case the pageantry centred on the monarchy was conspicuous for its ineptitude rather than for its grandeur.

Today in England the situation is the exact reverse. With the possible exception of the papacy, no head of state is surrounded by more popular ritual than Queen Elizabeth II. The mass of the population may indeed have become better educated, as the authors of *The Black Book* had hoped; but they have not, as a result, lost their liking for the secular magic of monarchy. On the contrary, as Ian Gilmour has noted, 'Modern societies still need myth and ritual. A monarch and his family supply it.'<sup>4</sup> And, in additional contrast to this earlier period, the ceremonial is now splendidly performed, so much so that observers have assumed that this has always been the case. 'All the pageantry and grandeur of a thousand-year-old tradition'; 'a pageantry that has gone on for hundreds of years'; 'all the precision that comes from centuries of precedent'; 'the English are particularly good at ceremonial': these are the phrases of contemporary commentators and journalists as they describe the great royal ceremonials.<sup>5</sup> However accurate may have been the accounts of *The Black Book* and of Cecil in their time, they have ceased to be valid today. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and explain the subsequent changes in the context and nature of English royal ceremonial which have rendered their comments irrelevant and confounded their predictions.

<sup>3</sup> *The Saturday Review*, 9 Feb. 1861, pp. 140-1. The article was published anonymously.

<sup>4</sup> I. Gilmour, *The Body Politic* (London, 1969), p. 313.

<sup>5</sup> J. Dimpleby, *Richard Dimpleby* (London, 1977), p. 329; Sir J. Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI: His Life and Reign* (London, 1965), p. 310; H. Vickers, 'Twenty Five Years a Queen', in H. Montgomery-Massingberd (ed.), *Burke's Guide to the British Monarchy* (London, 1977), p. 42; *Illustrated London News*, 6 Feb. 1965.

I

Despite the continued centrality of the monarchy in British political, social and cultural life, the changing nature of its public image during the last two hundred years has received remarkably little attention from historians. The 'theatre of power' of Tudor and Stuart courts – the manner by which royal and republican prestige was enhanced by elaborate ceremonial – has been extensively investigated, not only for Britain but for Europe as a whole.<sup>6</sup> For the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a second efflorescence of 'invented' ritual and tradition in Wilhelmine Germany and the French Third Republic has been the subject of a number of studies, which throw out suggestive hints as far as contemporary British ceremonial is concerned.<sup>7</sup> And, in inter-war Europe, the elaborate rituals of the new Fascist and Communist régimes have recently begun to attract extensive scholarly attention.<sup>8</sup> By comparison, English royal ritual has been almost entirely ignored for the period since the late seventeenth century. Although biographies of kings and

<sup>6</sup> R. E. Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva, 1960); R. Strong, *Splendour at Court: Renaissance Spectacle and Illusion* (London, 1973); S. Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969); D. M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry, 1558–1642* (London, 1971); F. A. Yates, *The Valois Tapestries* (London, 1959); E. Muir, 'Images of Power: Art and Pageantry in Renaissance Venice', *Am. Hist. Rev.*, lxxxix (1979), pp. 16–52; G. Reedy, 'Mystical Politics: The Imagery of Charles II's Coronation', in P. J. Korshin (ed.), *Studies in Culture and Revolution: Aspects of English Intellectual History, 1640–1800* (London, 1972), pp. 21–42; C. Geertz, 'Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power', in J. Ben-David and T. N. Clark (eds.), *Culture and its Creators: Essays in Honor of E. Shils* (Chicago and London, 1977), esp. pp. 153–7.

<sup>7</sup> G. L. Mosse, 'Caesarism, Circuses and Monuments', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vi (1971), pp. 167–82; C. Rearick, 'Festivals and Politics: the Michelet Centennial of 1898', in W. Laqueur and G. L. Mosse (eds.), *Historians in Politics* (London, 1974), pp. 59–78; C. Rearick, 'Festivals in Modern France: The Experience of the Third Republic', *Journal of Contemporary History*, xii (1977), pp. 435–60; R. Samson, 'La Fête de Jeanne d'Arc en 1894: Controverse et Célébration', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, xx (1973), pp. 444–63; M. Agulhon, 'Esquisse pour une Archéologie de la République: l'Allegorie Civique Féminine', *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, xxviii (1973), pp. 5–34; E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions in Nineteenth-Century Europe' (Past and Present Conference Paper, 1977), pp. 1–25. My debt to Prof. Hobsbawm's work will be apparent throughout this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> G. L. Mosse, 'Mass Politics and the Political Liturgy of Nationalism', in E. Kamenka (ed.), *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Ideal* (London, 1976), pp. 39–54; H. T. Barden, *The Nuremberg Party Rallies, 1929–39* (London, 1967).

queens contain appropriate accounts of weddings, coronations and funerals, there has been no systematic attempt to analyse such ceremonial in a long-term, comparative, contextual perspective.

Accordingly, the pioneer work on the ceremonial aspect of the British monarchy has been almost entirely undertaken by sociologists, with regard to both the provision and the interpretation of the evidence. Since the establishment of Mass Observation in 1937, there has been a continuous stream of surveys assessing popular responses to successive royal ceremonial occasions, from the coronation of George VI to the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth.<sup>9</sup> Some sociologists have attempted to analyse their 'meaning' within a Durkheimian, functionalist framework, stressing the integrative force of such ceremonial, and the way in which it embodies and reflects, upholds and reinforces, deeply rooted, widely held popular values.<sup>10</sup> In another tradition, the same ritual has been seen, not as expressing a publicly articulated expression of consensus, but as embodying the 'mobilization of bias' – an example of the ruling élite consolidating its ideological dominance by exploiting pageantry as propaganda.<sup>11</sup> Either way, for the sociologist, the 'meaning' of ceremonial in industrial society is inferred from an essentially decontextualized analysis of the ritual itself, evaluated within the relatively historical framework of Marxist or functionalist theory.

This chapter seeks to rediscover the 'meaning' of such royal ceremonial by employing a rather different methodology, namely that of setting it more comprehensively within its historical context. The central idea underlying this approach is that ceremonial occasions, like works of art or of political theory, cannot be interpreted merely 'in terms of their internal structure, *indépendant de tout sujet, de tout*

<sup>9</sup> H. Jennings and C. Madge, *May the Twelfth* (London, 1937); L. Harris, *Long to Reign Over Us?* (London, 1966); J. G. Blumler, J. R. Brown, A. J. Ewbank and T. J. Nossiter, 'Attitudes to the Monarchy: Their Structure and Development during a Ceremonial Occasion', *Political Studies*, xix (1971), pp. 149–71; R. Rose and D. Kavanagh, 'The Monarchy in Contemporary British Culture', *Comparative Politics*, viii (1976), pp. 548–76. For the most recent analysis, using such material, see P. Ziegler, *Crown and People* (London, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (trans. J. W. Swain, London, 1915), pp. 220, 225, 358, 375, 379; E. Shils and M. Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation', *Sociological Review*, new ser., i (1953), pp. 63–81; Blumler *et al.*, 'Attitudes to the Monarchy', pp. 170–1.

<sup>11</sup> S. Lukes, 'Political Ritual and Social Integration', in S. Lukes, *Essays in Social Theory* (London, 1977), pp. 62–73; N. Birnbaum, 'Monarchies and Sociologists: A Reply to Professor Shils and Mr Young', *Sociological Review*, new ser., iii (1955), pp. 5–23; R. Bocock, *Ritual in Industrial Society* (London, 1974), pp. 102–4.

'objet, et de toute contexte'. Like all cultural forms which may be treated as texts, or all texts which may be treated as cultural forms, 'thick' rather than 'thin' description is required.<sup>12</sup> For ceremonial occasions as much as for great works of political theory, 'to study the context... is not merely to gain additional information...; it is also to equip ourselves... with a way of gaining a greater insight into... its meaning than we can ever hope to achieve simply from reading the text itself'.<sup>13</sup> So, in order to rediscover the 'meaning' of royal ritual during the modern period, it is necessary to relate it to the specific social, political, economic and cultural milieu within which it was actually performed. With ceremonial, as with political theory, the very act of locating the occasion or the text in its appropriate context is not merely to provide the historical background, but actually to begin the process of interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

For clearly, even if the text of a repeated ritual like a coronation remains unaltered over time, its 'meaning' may change profoundly depending on the nature of the context. In an essentially static age, unchanging ritual might be a genuine reflection of, and reinforcement to, stability and consensus. But in a period of change, conflict or crisis, it might be deliberately unaltered so as to give an impression of continuity, community and comfort, despite overwhelming contextual evidence to the contrary. Under certain circumstances, a coronation might be seen by participants and contemporaries as a symbolic reaffirmation of national greatness. But in a different context, the same ceremony might assume the characteristics of collective longing for past glories. In the same way, a royal funeral might be a service of thanksgiving and celebration for a monarch who had made his nation great. Or, with the same format and text, it could be interpreted as a requiem, not only for the monarch himself, but for the country as a great power. Just as the 'meaning' of the Statue of Liberty has altered profoundly during the last century as a result of changes in 'the historical tissue of circumstance', so the same argument may be made with regard to the texts of ritual events.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London, 1975), pp. 7, 14, 449.

<sup>13</sup> Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978), i, pp. xii–xiv.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. D. M. Schneider, 'Notes Towards a Theory of Culture', in K. H. Basso and H. A. Selby (eds.), *Meaning in Anthropology*, (Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1976), pp. 214–15: 'all meaning is to some degree context-defined or context-determined'.

<sup>15</sup> M. Trachtenberg, *The Statue of Liberty* (Harmondsworth, 1977), pp. 15–19, 186–96. For a similar analysis of the changed 'meaning' of the famous railway bridge over the Zambezi at Victoria Falls, see: J. Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat* (London, 1978), pp. 347–8.

However, a work of art such as a statue is, by definition, static insofar as its 'meaning' alters over time, that can only be as a result of changes in the context. But in the case of ritual and ceremonial the performance itself is also elastic and dynamic. While the basic text of a repeated ritual may remain essentially unaltered – such as the crowning, anointing and recognition of an English coronation – the precise manner in which the ceremonial is produced may differ, which in itself only serves to give a further dimension to changes in 'meaning'. The ceremonial might be performed well or badly. It might be carefully rehearsed or blundered through with little prior preparation. The participants might be bored, indifferent, interested, or even passionately assured of the historical importance of the pageant in which they were participating. And so, depending both on the nature of the performance and the context within which it is set, the 'meaning' of what is ostensibly the same ceremony might fundamentally alter. No analysis restricted to the text, which ignores both the nature of the performance and the 'thick' description of context, can hope to offer a historically convincing explanation of the 'meaning' of royal ritual and ceremonial in modern Britain.<sup>16</sup>

Viewed in this light, there are at least ten aspects of ritual, performance and context which need to be investigated. The first is the political power of the monarch: was it great or small, growing or declining? The second is the personal character and standing of the monarch: was he loved or loathed, respected or reviled? The third is the nature of the economic and social structure of the country over which he ruled: was it localized, provincial and pre-industrial, or urban, industrial and class-dominated? The fourth is the type, extent and attitude of the media: how vividly did it describe royal events, and what picture of the monarchy did it convey? The fifth is the prevailing state of technology and fashion: was it possible for the monarchy to benefit from using anachronistic modes of transport or dress to enhance its mystery and magic? The sixth is the self-image

<sup>16</sup> This seems to me, as a historian, to be the chief problem in the textualist approach in anthropology, exemplified in E. Leach, *Culture and Communication: The Logic by which Symbols are Connected: an Introduction to the Use of Structuralist Analysis in Social Anthropology* (London, 1976), pp. 84–93, where he analyses the biblical story of the consecration of Aaron as High Priest. For an even better example of this genre, see the same author's unpublished lecture, 'Once a Knight is Quite Enough', where he compares the investiture of knighthood with pig sacrifice in Borneo in the 1940s, a comparison which, from a historian's standpoint, says almost nothing of interest about the 'meaning' of the ceremony of investiture in the context of the present.

of the nation over which the monarch ruled: was it confident of its position in the international hierarchy, or worried and threatened by foreign challengers? Was it opposed to formal empire, or self-consciously imperialist? The seventh is the condition of the capital city in which most royal ceremonials took place: was it squalid and unimpressive, or endowed with splendid buildings and triumphal thoroughfares as a fitting backdrop for ritual and pageantry? The eighth is the attitude of those responsible for liturgy, music and organization: were they indifferent to the ceremonial and inept in organization, or eager and able to make the display a success? The ninth is the nature of the ceremonial as actually performed: was it shabby and slovenly, or splendid and spectacular? Finally, there is the question of commercial exploitation: how far did manufacturers of pottery, medals and other artefacts feel that there was money to be made from the sale of commemorative pieces?

If the ritual and ceremonial of the British monarchy is contextualized and evaluated in this way, it becomes possible to rediscover its 'meaning' in a more historically convincing manner than sociologists have so far been able to do. For them, England from the 1800s is assumed to be a 'modern', 'industrial', 'contemporary' society, the structure of which is taken as given.<sup>17</sup> But, as is so often the case, for the historian it is the *changes* and discontinuities which are of major interest rather than the unifying aspects. To suppose, for instance, as many sociologists do, that Walter Bagehot's description of the mid-Victorian monarchy was valid for its time in the same way that it is assumed to have been valid since, is to show a profound ignorance, not only of the very peculiar context within which he wrote *The English Constitution* and his articles in *The Economist*, but also of the exact way in which both the context and performance of royal ritual have changed and developed since that time.<sup>18</sup>

Set in this 'thick' descriptive context, four distinct phases in the development of the ceremonial image of the British monarchy

<sup>17</sup> E. g. Lukes, 'Political Ritual and Social Integration', pp. 62, 64.

<sup>18</sup> Shils and Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation', p. 64; Boccock, *Ritual in Industrial Society*, p. 103; Rose and Kavanagh, 'The Monarchy in Contemporary British Culture', pp. 553, 557. In fact, the most important point about Bagehot's complex and occasionally contradictory picture of the power and pomp of the monarchy was that it was not so much description as prescriptive. For the fullest analysis along these lines, see: N. St John-Stevás (ed.), *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, 12 vols. so far (London, 1965–78), v, pp. 81–3. But see also: R. H. S. Crossman, introduction to W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (London, 1963), p. 36.

emerge. The first period, extending from the 1820s, and before, to the 1870s, is a period of ineptly managed ritual, performed in what was still preponderantly a localized, provincial, pre-industrial society. The second, beginning in 1877, when Victoria was made empress of India, and extending until the outbreak of the First World War was, in Britain as in much of Europe, the heyday of 'invented tradition', a time when old ceremonials were staged with an expertise and appeal which had been lacking before, and when new rituals were self-consciously invented to accentuate this development. Then, from 1918 until Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 came the period in which the British persuaded themselves that they were good at ceremonial because they always had been – a belief in large part made possible because Britain's former rivals in royal ritual – Germany, Austria and Russia – had dispensed with their monarchies, leaving Britain alone in the field. Finally, since 1953, the decline of Britain as a great power, combined with the massive impact of television, suggests that the 'meaning' of royal ceremonial has once again changed profoundly, although as yet the outlines of this new period of change can only be dimly discerned. Each of these successive phases will now be examined in turn.

## II

The period lasting to the 1870s saw the British monarchy at its most significant in terms of the real, effective political power which it wielded. And, with the experience of the seventeenth century still strong in the English corporate memory, it followed that there remained hostility to the further aggrandizement of royal influence by re-opening of the theatre of power which had been happily closed down by the end of the seventeenth century. In 1807, for example, George III dissolved a parliament less than one year old so as to increase the strength of a ministry hostile to Catholic Emancipation. Four years later, when the Prince of Wales assumed the regency, it was generally supposed that, if he had so wished, he could have removed the Tory administration and put in the Whigs in their place.<sup>19</sup> Thereafter, he remained an exasperating and important figure in the political firmament, a constant irritant to Canning, Liverpool and Wellington alike. And his successor, William IV, was even more energetic, as Professor Gash explains:

<sup>19</sup> C. Hibbert, *George IV* (Harmondsworth, 1976), pp. 379–83, 675–86, 694.



In his short reign of seven years, he thrice dismissed a ministry; twice dissolved Parliament for political purposes before its time; three times made formal proposals to his ministers for a coalition with their political opponents; and on one celebrated occasion allowed his name to be used, independently of his political advisers, to influence a crucial vote in the House of Lords.<sup>20</sup>

Nor was Victoria, in her early years as queen, exactly quiescent. In 1839, by refusing to accept Ladies of the Bedchamber who were agreeable to Peel, she succeeded in artificially prolonging the life of Melbourne's government. In 1851, she all but sacked Palmerston from the Foreign Office and, after Albert's death, remained 'a shrewd, persistent and opinionated adviser and critic of her governments'. Even as late as 1879 the Commons once more debated Dunning's famous motion 'that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished'.<sup>21</sup>

If continuing royal power made grand royal ceremonial unacceptable, then renewed royal unpopularity made it impossible. For the public character and reputation of successive generations of the royal family during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century meant that they were almost without exception viewed with indifference or hostility. The lives, loves and morals of George III's children were such as to make them arguably the most unloved royal generation in English history. In particular, George IV's extravagance and womanizing brought the monarchy to a low ebb, the nadir of which was reached in 1821 when his marriage to Queen Caroline became both public politics and public scandal. 'There never was an individual less regretted by his fellow creatures than this deceased king', noted *The Times* in its damning editorial on his death. 'What eye has wept for him? What heart has heaved one throb of unmercenary sorrow?'<sup>22</sup> In the same way, William IV's short honeymoon of popularity vanished as a result of his hostility to the Whig reforming government, so that *The Spectator* could castigate him for his 'feebleness of purpose and littleness of mind, his ignorance and his prejudices'.<sup>23</sup> Nor, initially, did Victoria fare any

<sup>20</sup> N. Gash, *Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832–1852* (Oxford, 1965), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> D. Beales, *From Castlereagh to Gladstone, 1815–1885* (London, 1971), pp. iii, 163, 166; J. Ridley, *Palmerston* (London, 1972), pp. 529–40; K. Martin, *The Crown and the Establishment* (London, 1962), p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> Hibbert, *George IV*, pp. 782–3.

<sup>23</sup> Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

better. Her partiality for her first prime minister earned her the sobriquets 'Mrs Melbourne' and 'Queen of the Whigs', and Albert's Germanic intensity was generally frowned upon – 'a Prince who has breathed from childhood the air of courts tainted by the imaginative servility of Goethe'.<sup>24</sup> And the new Prince of Wales, ensnared successively in the Mordaunt Scandal and the Aylesford Case, damningly described by Bagehot as an 'unemployed youth', was hardly able to add any lustre to this dowdy and unpopular crown.

In short, the monarchy was neither impartial and above politics nor Olympian and above society, as it was later to become, but was actively part of both. And, because both politics and society were quintessentially London-based, metropolitan activities, the ceremonial appeal of the monarchy was only further circumscribed. For between the age of Wilkes and the age of Chamberlain, the national influence of London was relatively restricted as provincial England reasserted itself. Local loyalties and rivalries remained strong; the county community was still a cohesive and realistic unit.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the uneven development of the economy and slow adoption of steam power meant that while Britain may have been the 'workshop of the world', the workshops were both small in size and relatively few in number. Engels's Manchester, with its massive mills and segregated suburbs, was the exception rather than the rule. In 1851, agriculture remained the largest employer of labour. 'The England of the rectory and the modest mansion house and the farm house' was preponderant. 'Country towns, both large and small... were the norm, so far as urbanization in the mid nineteenth century was concerned.'<sup>26</sup> In such a localized, provincial, face-to-face world, the scope for presenting a ceremoniously enhanced monarch, Olympian, aloof and detached, as the father figure of the nation and focus of all loyalties, was distinctly limited.

<sup>24</sup> R. Fulford, *The Prince Consort* (London, 1966), pp. 156–9.

<sup>25</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 312, 357–9; H. Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 14–15.

<sup>26</sup> W. L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victoria Generation* (London, 1968), p. 7; Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 32; W. A. Armstrong, *Stability and Change in an English County Town: A Social Study of York, 1801–1851* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 10–11; P. Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain, 1700–1914* (London, 1969), pp. 259–73; C. Chamberlain, 'The Growth of Support for the Labour Party in Britain', *British Journal of Sociology*, xxiv (1973), pp. 482–4; A. E. Musson, *British Trade Unions, 1800–1875* (London, 1972), pp. 16–21; A. Reid, 'Politics and Economics in the Formation of the British Working Class: A Response to H. F. Moorhouse', *Social History*, iii (1978), p. 359.

The condition and attitude of the press was a further barrier to such a development. For while the great royal ceremonies were fully reported in provincial as well as metropolitan newspapers, the press as a whole remained hostile to the monarchy. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the attacks in the London press of Gillray, Rowlandson and the Cruickshanks made the monarchy 'without doubt the most regular topic and target for the cartoonists'.<sup>27</sup> From the 1850s to the 1870s, Victoria was constantly the object of criticism in newspaper editorials. Sensational scandals and murders had a more significant effect in boosting circulation than did the lavishly reproduced commemorative editions of *The Times* and *The Observer* on the occasions of William IV's and Victoria's coronations.<sup>28</sup> And the provincial press, Liberal, intellectual, rational, middle-class, opposed to display as much as to emotion, was in general no more favourable to the monarchy than its metropolitan counterparts.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the lack of pictures made even the greatest of royal ceremonial something of a mystery to all except the most literate and wealthy. For there was no cheap, pictorial press, and the *Illustrated London News*, begun in 1842, sold at a shilling a copy, and was restricted to the 'rectory' public.<sup>30</sup> Under these circumstances, great royal ceremonies were not so much shared, corporate events as remote, inaccessible group rites, performed for the benefit of the few rather than the edification of the many.<sup>31</sup>

The prevailing state of transport technology served further to contain the monarchy within society rather than elevate it above. For there was nothing particularly anachronistic, romantic or splendid about the way in which English royalty travelled. Victorian England was, as Professor Thompson reminds us, a horse-drawn society, in which there were 120,000 privately owned large carriages and 250,000

<sup>27</sup> M. Wynn Jones, *A Cartoon History of the Monarchy* (London, 1978), pp. 40–5, 68–77; M. Walker, *Daily Sketches: A Cartoon History of British Twentieth-Century Politics* (London, 1978), p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> R. D. Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 343–4.

<sup>29</sup> A. J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855–1914* (London, 1976), pp. 38, 45, 74, 120–1.

<sup>30</sup> C. Fox, 'The Development of Social Reportage in English Periodical Illustration during the 1840s and Early 1850s', *Past and Present*, no. 74 (1977), pp. 92–3, 100–2, 111; J. D. Symon, *The Press and its Story* (London, 1914), p. 213.

<sup>31</sup> It is also noteworthy that few volumes were produced commemorating great royal occasions during this period, and those which were, such as Sir George Naylor, *The Coronation of His Most Sacred Majesty King George IV*, 2 vols. (London, 1839), were so lavish that their sale was restricted to a very small audience.

light two wheelers by 1870.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the carriages which members of the royal family drove today were in widespread use tomorrow. The Phaeton, for example, was introduced by George IV, the Wagonette by the Prince Consort, and the Victoria by the Prince of Wales.<sup>33</sup> Stimulated by such royal patronage, there was a massive proliferation in the range of carriages available by the mid-Victorian period. As W. B. Adams noted as early as 1837, 'the varieties of shape and make have become so numerous that it is difficult even for the practised observer to be familiar with them all'.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the monarchy's carriages were no more grand than those of lesser mortals. At William IV's coronation, for instance, the most outstanding coach was that of Prince Esterhazy. And at Victoria's coronation seven years later, the carriage of Marshal Soult, the French ambassador, rather than that of the queen herself, was regarded as the most splendid.<sup>35</sup>

This lack of concern about successful foreign rivalry in trivial matters was the obverse side of supreme confidence in international competition in important affairs. The defeat of Napoleon left Britain without a rival in continental Europe, and in North America the United States, racked by civil war, seemed determined to pass from infancy to disintegration without going through great-power status on the way. Palmerston's 'Don Pacifico' speech embodied this self-confidence perfectly, combining as it did a panegyric on Britain's unique social and constitutional stability with a strident and popular assertion of her unchallenged role as policeman of the world.<sup>36</sup> The early and mid-Victorians saw themselves as the leaders of progress and pioneers of civilization, and prided themselves on the limited nature of their government, their lack of interest in formal empire, their hatred of show, extravagance, ceremonial and ostentation.<sup>37</sup> The certainty of power and the assured confidence of success meant that there was no need to show off. Little Belgium might spend more

<sup>32</sup> F. M. L. Thompson, *Victorian England: The Horse-Drawn Society* (London, 1970), p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Sir W. Gilbey, *Modern Carriages* (London, 1905), pp. 46–53, 63–4; G. A. Thrupp, *The History of Coaches* (London, 1877), pp. 87–90.

<sup>34</sup> W. B. Adams, *English Pleasure Carriages* (London, 1837), p. 220.

<sup>35</sup> Thrupp, *op. cit.*, pp. 89–90; P. Ziegler, *King William IV* (London, 1971), p. 193.

<sup>36</sup> Burn, *Age of Equipoise*, p. 103; Ridley, *Palmerston*, pp. 523–4; A. Briggs, *Victorian People* (Harmondsworth, 1965), pp. 10–11, 24, 51.

<sup>37</sup> R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London, 1961), pp. 1–4.

than Great Britain on its metropolitan law courts, but the reality of power and religion of parsimony meant that the English regarded such petty one-upmanship with disdain or indifference.<sup>38</sup>

This attitude goes far in explaining why London was ill-suited to be the setting for grand royal ceremonial, and why the English positively made a virtue of it. Even the most ardent champion of the 'infernal wen' conceded that it could not rival the careful planning of L'Enfant's Washington, the venerable ruins of Rome, the magnificence of Haussmann's Paris, the grand schemes for the reconstruction of Vienna instituted by Francis Joseph in 1854, or the splendid constellation of five squares constructed in St Petersburg during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> In these great capitals, the grand buildings and splendid thoroughfares were monuments to the power of the state or the influence of the monarch. In London, by contrast, the squares and suburbs, railway stations and hotels, were monuments to the power and wealth of the *private* individual. Mid-Victorian London, as Donald Olsen has argued, was a statement against absolutism, a proud expression of the energies and values of a free people.<sup>40</sup> Grandeur in the style of Paris or St Petersburg spelt despotism: for how else could enough power be wielded or funds mobilized to make it possible to complete such mammoth schemes? London, by contrast, might be slovenly, but at least its people were not enslaved. As one contemporary explained: 'The public buildings are few, and for the most part mean... But what of all this? How

<sup>38</sup> Sir J. Summerson, *Victorian Architecture in England: Four Studies in Evaluation* (New York, 1971), p. 115: 'English governments in the mid-nineteenth century were parsimonious to an almost unbelievable degree; their parsimony being part of a national philosophy which expressed itself from time to time in a horrified contempt for architects and for architecture.' Poelaert's Brussels Law Courts cost £1,760,000; Street's first design for those in London was only £1,500,000.

<sup>39</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848–1875* (1977), pp. 326, 328, 329, 334, 337; E. N. Bacon, *Design of Cities*, rev. edn (London, 1978), pp. 196–9, 220–3; J. W. Reys, *Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capital Center* (Princeton, N.J., 1967), pp. 5, 20, 21; A. Sutcliffe, *The Autumn of Central Paris: The Defeat of Town Planning, 1850–1970* (London, 1970), ch. 2; D. H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton, 1958), *passim*; P. Abercrombie, 'Vienna', *Town Planning Review*, i (1910–11), pp. 221, 226–7; G. R. Marek, *The Eagles Die* (London, 1975), pp. 171–2; I. A. Egorov, *The Architectural Planning of St Petersburg* (Athens, Ohio, 1969), pp. 104–5, 182, 192; J. H. Bater, *St Petersburg: Industrialisation and Change* (London, 1976), pp. 17–40.

<sup>40</sup> D. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (London, 1976), pp. 51–3, 61, 329. For some general comments on the value-structures of spatial systems, see: D. Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (London, 1973), pp. 31–2.

impressively do you feel that you are in the metropolis of a free people?<sup>41</sup>

Such love of freedom and economy and hatred of ostentation was the kiss of death for grand royal ceremonial, and the ineptitude with which the musical arrangements were made only further darkened the picture. The first seventy years of the nineteenth century were among the bleakest in England's musical history: no major work by any English composer has survived; still less the relatively trivial ephemera of ceremonial music.<sup>42</sup> The national anthem was far from being the venerated patriotic hymn it was later to become: it was not even sung at Victoria's coronation; new choral arrangements were relatively infrequent; and during the reign of George IV,<sup>43</sup> alternative versions criticizing the king and praising his queen proliferated. Successive Masters of the King's Musick were men of no distinction, whose duties were limited to conducting the royal orchestra.<sup>44</sup> And Sir George Smart, organist of the Chapel Royal, to whom the musical arrangements for all great royal ceremonies from the funeral of George IV to the coronation of Victoria were entrusted, was singularly inept. At Victoria's coronation, for instance, it was claimed that he would play the organ and give the beat to the orchestra simultaneously, a prediction which *The Musical World* regarded with scorn on the grounds that he was unable to do either singly.<sup>45</sup> And this lack of inspiration and leadership at the top was reflected in the sad state of English cathedral choirs, especially those of the Abbey and St Paul's. Rehearsals were unknown; surplices were not worn; choirs did not process; absenteeism, indiscipline and irreverent behaviour were endemic; services were long and badly planned. At Westminster Abbey, most of the minor canons and lay clerks were old and incompetent, and those few of real ability were usually members of other London church choirs, so that their attendance could not be relied upon.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Olsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–6.

<sup>42</sup> M. Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London, 1964), p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> P. A. Scholes, 'God Save the Queen': *The History and Romance of the World's First National Anthem* (London, 1954), pp. 147–8, 165, 203–4, 209. See also app., table 3.

<sup>44</sup> They were: Sir William Parsons (1786–1817), William Shield (1817–29), Christian Kramer (1829–34), François Cramer (1834–8), George Anderson (1848–70), Sir William Cusins (1870–93). See: E. Blom (ed.), *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th edn, 10 vols. (London 1954), v, p. 627.

<sup>45</sup> Anon., 'Music at the Last Coronation', *Musical Times*, xliii (1902), pp. 18–20.

<sup>46</sup> B. Rainbow, *The Choral Revival in the Anglican Church (1839–1872)* (London,

Part of the problem derived from a lack of interest in ritual on the part of the clergy, who were either indifferent or hostile. As one authority noted as early as 1763, 'the higher ranks of the church do not think themselves concerned' in the performance of services.<sup>47</sup> The combination of poverty of means and absence of taste made the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century a low point in ecclesiastical ritual and ecclesiological concern.<sup>48</sup> At Westminster Abbey, Wren's incomparable Altar Piece was removed at the time of George IV's coronation, and was replaced by an undignified, mock-Gothic structure. Thereafter, the choir was remodelled, and the stalls were placed so close together, with accommodation for some of the congregation between, that choral singing of any merit was impossible – even if the choir had been competent. James Turle, organist from 1831 to 1882, was unable to bring any discipline to the choir, and the organ he played was old and inaudible. In 1847–8, Dean Buckland again reorganized the choir, and placed most of the congregation in the transepts where they could neither hear nor see the clergy. And when, finally, the congregation was restored to the nave, they were obliged to sing the hymns 'from large posters placed on the columns'. With good cause, Jebb castigated the 'coldness, meagreness and irreverence in the performance of the divine offices'. Even as late as the time of Dean Stanley (1870–91), the administration of the Abbey was marked by 'ignorance of finance and incapacity for business'.<sup>49</sup> If the efficient stage managing of routine services was more than the clergy could cope with, then effective planning and execution of the great royal ceremonial which took place in the Abbey was quite beyond them.

### III

It is in this context that the actual performance and popularity of royal ritual and ceremonial during the first three-quarters of the

1970), ch. 13; Sir F. Bridge, *A Westminster Pilgrim* (London, 1919), pp. 72–5, 196–201. For contemporary comment, see: J. Pearce, *Apology for Cathedral Service* (London, 1839); J. Jebb, *The Choral Service of the Church* (London, 1843); S. S. Wesley, *A Few Words on Cathedral Music* (London, 1849).

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Pearce, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>48</sup> W. O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2nd edn (London, 1972), pt 2, pp. 366–74.

<sup>49</sup> J. Perkins, *Westminster Abbey: Its Worship and Ornaments*, 3 vols. (London, 1938–52), i, pp. 89–94, 106–9, 144, 153–63; ii, p. 16; iii, pp. 141, 149, 152, 155, 160, 163–4; R. E. Prothero, *The Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D., late Dean of Westminster*, 2 vols. (London, 1893), ii, pp. 282–3.

nineteenth century needs to be understood. Clearly, in this first period, ceremonial did not exist to exalt the crown above the political battle, to that Olympus of decorative, integrative impotence which it was later to occupy, or to that earlier peak of picturesque power which it had once scaled. The abiding political influence which the monarch wielded made it dangerous; the real power of the nation made it unnecessary; and the localized nature of society, reinforced by the provincial press, combined with the lack of a sufficiently splendid metropolitan setting, made it impossible. For the majority of inhabitants, local loyalties still took precedence over national allegiance. And, at rare moments when ceremonial did rivet national attention, it was not connected with the monarchy, but with heroes like Nelson or Wellington, whose funerals, significantly, far surpassed those of George III, George IV, William IV and Albert in splendour and popularity.<sup>50</sup>

Monarchs who were politically energetic but personally unpopular, trundling through the miserable streets of London by the conventional mode of transport, were more the head of society than the head of the nation. So, the royal ritual which accompanied them was not so much a jamboree to delight the masses, but a group rite in which the aristocracy, the church and royal family corporately re-affirmed their solidarity (or animosity) behind closed doors. To put it in the language of the anthropologist, these London-based displays in this early period did not articulate a coherent ceremonial language, as had been the case in Tudor and Stuart times, and as was to happen again towards the end of the nineteenth century. There was little self-conscious attempt by the promoters, participants or spectators to see them as parts of a cumulative, inter-related ceremonial series. There was, as it were, no vocabulary of pageantry, no syntax of spectacle, no ritualistic idiom. The whole was not greater than the sum of its parts.

Under these circumstances, the ineptitude of British ritual during this first period becomes more readily explicable. Indeed, the future third marquess of Salisbury was not alone in finding British ceremonial unimpressive. 'The English', noted the *Illustrated London News* in 1852 on the occasion of Wellington's state funeral,

<sup>50</sup> R. Davey, *A History of Mourning* (London, n.d.), pp. 75-7, 81-3; J. S. Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 4-5; C. Oman, *Nelson* (London, 1947), pp. 563-6; E. Longford, *Wellington*, 2 vols. (St Albans, 1971-5), ii, pp. 489-95.



are said to be a people who do not understand shows and celebrations, or the proper mode of conducting them. It is alleged that they flock to and applaud the rudest attempts of the kind; and that, unlike the French, and other nations of the continent, they have no real taste for ceremonial. There is, doubtless, something in the charge.<sup>51</sup>

Six years later, on the occasion of a royal wedding, the same journal added that 'in this country we have few if any public pageants; and the materials of their composition are as invariably the same as they are sparse and ineffective'.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, even as late as 1883, William Jones could still observe that 'it must be admitted that the present age is not favourable to the perpetuation of elaborate ceremonies'.<sup>53</sup>

And he was quite correct. For the majority of the great royal pageants staged during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century oscillated between farce and fiasco. In 1817, at the funeral of Princess Charlotte, the daughter of the Prince Regent, the undertakers were drunk. When the duke of York died, ten years later, the chapel at Windsor was so damp that most of the mourners caught cold, Canning contracted rheumatic fever and the bishop of London died.<sup>54</sup> George IV's coronation, although conceived in the grandest manner possible, in a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to win some popularity, was so overblown that grandeur merged into farce. It was necessary to employ prize-fighters in Westminster Hall to keep the peace between the distinguished but belligerent guests. George himself, although sumptuously clad, 'looked too large for effect, indeed he was more like an elephant than a man'. And the pathetic, unsuccessful attempt made by Queen Caroline to gain access to the Abbey marred the whole proceedings. At George III's coronation, the deputy earl marshal, in reply to the monarch's well-merited criticisms of the arrangements, had observed: 'it is true, sir, that there has been some neglect, but I have taken care that the next coronation shall be regulated in the exactest manner possible'. But circumstances had confounded his prediction.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 25 Sept. 1852.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 Jan. 1858.

<sup>53</sup> W. Jones, *Crowns and Coronation* (London, 1883), p. viii.

<sup>54</sup> C. Hibbert, *The Court at Windsor: A Domestic History* (London, 1964), pp. 171–2.

<sup>55</sup> J. Perkins, *The Coronation Book* (London, 1902), pp. 97, 115, 175, 258; Hibbert, *George IV*, pp. 597–604. It is important to stress that there is much about George IV's public style that anticipates subsequent developments: grandeur in London (Regent Street), royal visits (to Scotland and Ireland), and an expensive

George IV's flirtation with grandeur was so unsuccessful that it was not repeated for the next half century. At George's own funeral at Windsor, William IV talked constantly and walked out early. 'We never saw so motley, so rude, so ill-managed a body of persons', noted *The Times* in its description of the mourners.<sup>56</sup> William, for his part, loathed ceremonial and ostentation, and tried to dispense with his coronation altogether. Eventually, he allowed it to proceed, but it was so truncated that it became mockingly known as the 'Half-Coronation'. His funeral was equally squalid – 'a wretched mockery', Greville described it. The ceremony was long and tedious, and mourners loitered, laughed, gossiped and sniggered within sight of the coffin.<sup>57</sup> Nor was Victoria's coronation any more impressive. It was completely unrehearsed; the clergy lost their place in the order of service; the choir was pitifully inadequate; the archbishop of Canterbury put the ring on a finger that was too big for it; and two of the trainbearers talked throughout the entire ceremony.<sup>58</sup> Albert's funeral was almost a private affair at Windsor, as was the wedding of the Prince of Wales. In London, where Alexandra was greeted, commentators noted 'the poor taste of the decorations, the absence of outriders, and the extraordinary shabbiness of the royal equipages'. *Punch*, in turn, protested that the wedding should take place at Windsor – 'an obscure Berkshire village, noted only for an old castle with no sanitary arrangements'. And, once again, the planning and organization were woefully inadequate. Palmerston had to travel back from Windsor third class on the special train, and Disraeli was obliged to sit on his wife's lap.<sup>59</sup>

But the nadir of royal grandeur and ceremonial presence was reached in those two decades following Albert's death, when the queen's reclusive widowhood and the public scandals involving the Prince of Wales 'provided the matter for innumerable denunciations'.<sup>60</sup> Between 1861 and 1886, the queen, now known in the popular press as 'Mrs Brown', only opened parliament six times. Even *The Times* felt 'regret' at her continued absence at Windsor,

coronation (see app., table 1). My point is that, despite all this, without the appropriate concatenation of contextual circumstance (as was to occur later), it simply did not work.

<sup>56</sup> Hibbert, *George IV*, pp. 777–9.

<sup>57</sup> Ziegler, *William IV*, 152–3, 291.

<sup>58</sup> E. Longford, *Victoria, R.I.* (London, 1966), pp. 99–104.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 395; G. Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra* (London, 1972), pp. 45–6.

<sup>60</sup> Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 21.

Balmoral and Osborne.<sup>61</sup> In 1864 a notice was pinned to the rails of Buckingham Palace in the manner of an advertisement: 'These commanding premises to be let or sold, in consequence of the late occupant's declining business.'<sup>62</sup> Between 1871 and 1874, eighty-four republican clubs were founded, and radicals such as Dilke and Chamberlain were loud in their demands for investigations into the Civil List. Walter Bagehot, although in favour of a grand and splendid monarchy, constantly stressed that such was not, in fact, the case. 'To be invisible', he noted, 'is to be forgotten... To be a symbol, and an effective symbol, you must be vividly and often seen.' Or, as he put it even more stridently, 'From causes which it is not difficult to define, the Queen has done almost as much to injure the popularity of the monarchy by her long retirement from public life as the most unworthy of her predecessors did by his profligacy and frivolity.'<sup>63</sup>

But Victoria was adamant. In 1863, for example, she refused to open parliament, stressing her 'total inability, without serious injury to her health, to perform these functions of her high position which are accompanied by state ceremonials, and which necessitate the appearance in full dress in public'.<sup>64</sup> For, as she later explained, even in her husband's presence, she 'was always terribly nervous on all public occasions', and the absence of Albert's support now made such appearances unbearable.<sup>65</sup> But for Gladstone, during his first prime ministership, such a state of affairs could not be allowed to continue. 'To speak in rude and general terms', he noted, 'the Queen is invisible and the Prince of Wales is not respected.' Time and again, between 1870 and 1872, with all the energy but tactlessness at his command, Gladstone reminded the queen of the 'vast importance' of the 'social and visible functions of the monarchy', for both 'the social well-being of the country' and the 'stability of the throne'.<sup>66</sup> But, however energetically he sought solutions to this 'great crisis of Royalty', either

<sup>61</sup> *The Times*, 9 Nov. 1871.

<sup>62</sup> Longford, *Victoria, R.I.*, p. 401.

<sup>63</sup> W. Bagehot, 'The Monarchy and the People', *The Economist*, 22 July 1871; *idem*, 'The Income of the Prince of Wales', *The Economist*, 10 October 1874. Both articles are reprinted in St John-Stewas, *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, v, pp. 419, 431.

<sup>64</sup> G. E. Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd ser., 1862–1885, 3 vols. (London, 1926–8), i, p. 133.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 244.

<sup>66</sup> P. Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr Gladstone, 1845–1879*, 2 vols. (London, 1933–4), ii, p. 357.

by urging the queen to appear more frequently in public or by establishing the Prince of Wales as viceroy of Ireland, Victoria would not be moved. As Disraeli explained in the Commons, she was 'physically and morally incapacitated' from performing her duties.<sup>67</sup>

This picture of ineptly managed ritual, with only limited appeal, is corroborated by the restricted scale of commercial exploitation which these ceremonials stimulated during this first period. Commemorative pottery, for example, had been a recognized genre since the 1780s. But the monarchy was much less often depicted than other contemporary figures. Frederick the Great was far more popular than George II, and Nelson and Wellington were more frequently commemorated than George III. And, during the reign of George IV, more pottery was produced in support of Queen Caroline than in favour of the king himself. The coronations of William IV and Victoria received little attention, and between 1861 and 1886, despite numerous royal marriages, there was virtually no royal commemorative pottery produced at all. The private production of medals for sale tells a similar story. Once again, more medals were issued in support of Queen Caroline than in commemoration of the coronation of her husband, and the coronations of William and Victoria were scarcely noticed.<sup>68</sup> During this early period, the royal family was so unpopular, and the appeal of its ceremonial was so limited, that it was not deemed worthy of large-scale commercial exploitation.

#### IV

Between the late 1870s and 1914, however, there was a fundamental change in the public image of the British monarchy, as its ritual, hitherto inept, private and of limited appeal, became splendid, public and popular. To some extent, this was facilitated by the gradual retirement of the monarchs from active politics. Victoria, however obstinate and obstructive she had been at the beginning of her reign, wielded much less effective power by the end. The growing size and importance of the electorate, combined with increased party consciousness, meant that assertions of the royal prerogative of the

<sup>67</sup> P. Magnus, *Gladstone: A Biography* (London, 1963), pp. 207–17.

<sup>68</sup> J. and J. May, *Commemorative Pottery, 1780–1900* (London, 1972), pp. 22, 40–5, 51, 58–9, 73; D. Rogers, *Coronation Souvenirs and Commemoratives* (London, 1975), pp. 25–30, 31–3, 36; J. Edmundson, *Collecting Modern Commemorative Medals* (London, 1972), pp. 39–42. See also app., table 2.

kind which had precipitated the Bedchamber crisis were much less in evidence. Once the electorate had spoken in 1880, for example, the Queen Empress could no more keep Disraeli in than Gladstone out.<sup>69</sup> And Edward VII came to the throne old and inexperienced, had little taste for desk work, spent three months of the year abroad and, apart from occasional interference in matters of foreign policy and the award of honours and decorations, played only a minimal role in political life.<sup>70</sup> And so, as the real power of the monarchy waned, the way was open for it to become the centre of grand ceremonial once more. In other countries, such as Germany, Austria and Russia, ritualistic aggrandizement was employed, as of old, to exalt royal *influence*. In Britain, by contrast, similar ritual was made possible because of growing royal *weakness*. In England, unlike other countries, it was not so much the re-opening of the theatre of power as the première of the cavalcade of impotence.

At the same time, the growth in popular veneration for the monarchy made such enhanced ceremonial convincing in a manner that had not been possible before, as power was exchanged for popularity. Victoria's longevity, probity, sense of duty and unrivalled position as matriarch of Europe and mother-figure of empire came to outweigh, and then eclipse, the earlier hostile attitude towards her. At her death, she was no longer 'Mrs Guelph', the 'Queen of the Whigs', but the 'most excellent of sovereigns', who 'bequeathed a name eternally to be revered'.<sup>71</sup> Nor was time any less generous to Edward VII. His extravagant life; the zest and style with which he travelled; his notable racing successes; and the incomparable beauty, charm and appeal of his consort: all these advantages were his during the brief years of his reign. Bagehot's 'unemployed youth' had become, in regnal old age, a grand, august, patriarchal figure, father to the empire and uncle of Europe. As one rhymester put it at his death:

Greatest sorrow England ever had  
When death took away our dear old Dad.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Longford, *Victoria, R.I.*, pp. 537–8.

<sup>70</sup> P. Magnus, *King Edward VII* (Harmondsworth, 1967), pp. 342, 348, 373–7.

<sup>71</sup> R. Davey, *The Pageant of London*, 2 vols. (London, 1906), ii, p. 623. Within a month, 3,000 elegies were published in the United Kingdom and colonies, subsequently reprinted in J. A. Hammerton, *The Passing of Victoria* (London, 1902). As Hynes noted, 'The most striking thing about them is the frequency with which they apostrophise the old Queen as Mother.' See: S. Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton, N.J., 1968), p. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Magnus, *Edward VII*, p. 526; Martin, *Crown and the Establishment*, p. 68; Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 28.

This change in the position of the monarch, placing both Victoria and Edward above politics as patriarchal figures for the whole of the nation, was rendered increasingly urgent by economic and social developments during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Once more, London re-asserted its national dominance, as provincial identity and loyalties markedly weakened.<sup>73</sup> It was at the end, rather than the beginning, of the nineteenth century that Britain became a preponderantly urban, industrial, mass society, with class loyalties and class conflicts set in a genuinely national framework for the first time. The New Unionism, the controversies surrounding Taff Vale and the Osborne Judgement, and the growing, unprecedented industrial unrest in the years immediately before the First World War, all betokened a harsher social and economic climate.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, as was stressed at the time of Edward's coronation, the 'antique character of many of the material circumstances of life at the date when Queen Victoria was crowned' contrasted markedly with the dramatic, disorienting developments which had taken place in the subsequent sixty years – a widening franchise, the railway, the steamship, the telegraph, electricity, the tram.<sup>75</sup> In such an age of change, crisis and dislocation, the 'preservation of anachronism', the deliberate, ceremonial presentation of an impotent but venerated monarch as a unifying symbol of permanence and national community became both possible and necessary. In the 1860s, Walter Bagehot had predicted that 'the more democratic we get, the more we shall get to like state and show, which have ever pleased the vulgar'. And he was proved to be correct.<sup>76</sup>

Of particular importance in promoting this new picture of the monarch as head of the nation were developments in the media from the 1880s. For with the advent of the yellow press, news became increasingly nationalized and sensationalized as the old, rational, intellectual, middle-class, provincial Liberal press was gradually superseded by the great national dailies: London-based, increasingly

<sup>73</sup> Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, pp. 312–13, 327, 330, 356–9.

<sup>74</sup> Chamberlain, 'The Growth of Support for the Labour Party', pp. 481, 485; Pelling, *History of British Trade Unions*, p. 89; Musson, *British Trade Unionism*, p. 65; J. Lovell, *British Trade Unions, 1875–1933* (London, 1977), pp. 9, 21–3, 30–3, 41–6.

<sup>75</sup> J. E. C. Bodley, *The Coronation of King Edward the Seventh: A Chapter in European and Imperial History* (London, 1903), pp. 203–6.

<sup>76</sup> W. Bagehot, 'The Cost of Public Dignity', *The Economist*, 20 July 1867; reprinted in St John-Stevas, *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, v, p. 413.

Conservative, strident, vulgar and working-class in their appeal.<sup>77</sup> In 1896, Harmsworth launched the *Daily Mail*, which sold for one half-penny, and achieved a daily circulation of 700,000 within four years. The *Mirror*, the *Sketch* and the *Daily Express* soon followed. At the same time, the savage cartoons and editorials of the earlier period disappeared almost entirely. Edward VII's liaisons were discreetly ignored, and cartoonists such as Partridge and Carruthers Gould depicted great occasions in the lives and deaths of monarchs in a restrained and respectful way. Only in the foreign press was criticism of the British monarchy still to be found. But in English papers it had already become virtually sacrosanct.<sup>78</sup> A third major change concerned the development of new techniques in photography and printing, which meant that illustrations were no longer confined to expensive, middle-class weeklies. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century the great royal ceremonies were described with unprecedented immediacy and vividness in a sentimental, emotional, admiring way, which appealed to a broader cross section of the public than ever before.<sup>79</sup>

If the press was one major agent in exalting the monarchy to venerated Olympus, then changes in transport technology produced a similar effect, as developments served to render the monarchs' coaches increasingly anachronistic and splendid. From the 1870s, the carriage trade received a severe check in its hitherto spectacular growth rate.<sup>80</sup> The invention of the pneumatic tyre by Dunlop in 1888 led to the cycling boom of the next decade. By 1898 there were more

<sup>77</sup> Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, pp. 356–8.

<sup>78</sup> Walker, *Daily Sketches*, pp. 7–8, 13; Wynn Jones, *Cartoon History of the Monarchy*, pp. 130, 138–9; Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press*, pp. 120–30, 190–6; Symon, *The Press and its Story*, pp. 229–32; H. Herd, *The March of Journalism* (London, 1952), pp. 233–40.

<sup>79</sup> Symon, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–9. It is noteworthy that this is also the period which sees a massive proliferation in popular works explaining, describing and commemorating great royal occasions. For the coronations of Edward VII and George V, see, for example: J. H. Pemberton, *The Coronation Service according to the Use of the Church of England* (London, 1902, 1911); D. Maclean, *The Great Solemnity of the Coronation of the King and Queen of England* (London, 1902, 1911); W. H. Stackpole, *The Coronation Regalia* (London, 1911); E. Metallinos, *Imperial and Royal Coronations* (London, 1902); L. G. Wickham Legg, *English Coronation Records* (London, 1901); H. F. Burke, *The Historical Records of the Coronation* (London, 1904); Bodley, *Coronation of Edward the Seventh*; Perkins, *The Coronation Book*. The upsurge in popular, laudatory royal biographies also dates from this time.

<sup>80</sup> Thompson, *Victorian England*, pp. 16–18.

than one thousand miles of tramways in English cities, and by 1914 that figure had trebled.<sup>81</sup> For town dwellers in particular (who were by now the majority of the population), the horse ceased to be part of their way of life as it had previously been. In London, for example, in 1903, there were 3,623 horse buses and only thirteen motor buses. By 1913 there were only 142 horse buses left, compared with 3,522 motor buses. And the shift from hansom cabs to taxis was equally pronounced. In 1908, 10,500 cars and commercial vehicles were produced; in 1913 the figure was 34,000.<sup>82</sup> Under these circumstances, the royal carriages, previously commonplace, became endowed with a romantic splendour which had never been attainable before. So, while coachmakers like Mulliner were obliged to turn to motor cars because of the decline in demand for their more traditional products, Edward VII actually commissioned a new state landau in which he drove back from the Abbey after his coronation. Described as being 'in its build, proportions and adornment probably the most graceful and regal vehicle ever built', it was emphatic proof of the monarchy's new and unique capacity to call in the old world to redress the balance of the new.<sup>83</sup>

Internationally, the same trends were in evidence. For the novelty of a mass society at home was reflected in the newness of formal empire abroad. And, once more, the originality of the development was concealed and rendered acceptable by associating it with the oldest national institution, the monarchy. During the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, no royal ceremonial occasion could plausibly have been called an imperial event. But, from 1877, when Disraeli made Victoria empress of India, and 1897, when Joseph Chamberlain brought the colonial premiers and troops to parade in the Diamond Jubilee procession, every great royal occasion was also an *imperial* occasion.<sup>84</sup> As Bodley noted, during the final decades of Victoria's reign, her crown became 'the emblem of the British race, to encourage its expansion over the face of the globe'.<sup>85</sup> Edward, while Prince of Wales, visited Canada and India, and in the 1900s the

<sup>81</sup> P. S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770* (London, 1974), pp. 150, 155.

<sup>82</sup> F. M. L. Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xxix (1976), p. 61; S. B. Saul, 'The Motor Industry in Britain to 1914', *Business History*, v (1962), pp. 24-5.

<sup>83</sup> Gilbey, *Modern Carriages*, pp. 36-8; M. Watney, *The Elegant Carriage* (London, 1961), p. 81.

<sup>84</sup> J. L. Garvin and Julian Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, 6 vols. (London, 1932-69), iii, pp. 185-95.

<sup>85</sup> Bodley, *Coronation of Edward the Seventh*, p. 19.



duke of York followed in his footsteps with an imperial world tour, and additional visits to Canada and India.<sup>86</sup> Significantly, his father was the first British monarch to be crowned emperor of India and ruler 'of the British Dominions beyond the seas'. Even Edward's illness at the time of his coronation worked to imperial advantage. For while the European delegations departed, those from the empire remained, making the coronation – when it finally happened – 'a family festival for the British Empire'. There were the 'unprecedented circumstances' under which the 'immemorial tradition' was celebrated. Or, as another commentator put it more eloquently:

The great ceremony... possessed a further quality all its own, with which none of its predecessors at Westminster could attempt to compete... For the first time in the history of our land, did the Imperial idea blaze forth into prominence, as the sons and daughters of the Empire gathered together from the ends of the earth to take their part. The archaic traditions of the Middle Ages were enlarged in their scope so as to include the modern splendour of a mighty empire.<sup>87</sup>

'In this regard', as Sir Sidney Lee later noted, 'the precedent of the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 was improved upon.'<sup>88</sup>

Whether these royal ceremonials, in part reflecting a novel consciousness of formal imperial possession, were an expression of national self-confidence or of doubt is not altogether clear. It remains a widely held view that Victoria's jubilees and Edward's coronation mark the high noon of empire, confidence and splendour.<sup>89</sup> But others, following the mood of Kipling's 'Recessional', regard them in a very different light – as an assertion of show and grandeur, bombast and bravado, at a time when real power was already on the

<sup>86</sup> Magnus, *Edward VII*, pp. 52–8, 131–2, 238–41; H. Nicolson, *King George the Fifth: His Life and Reign* (London, 1967), pp. 106–10, 128–33, 228–37.

<sup>87</sup> J. Perkins, *The Coronation Book* (London, 1911), p. 329; Ziegler, *Crown and People*, pp. 56, 66; P. E. Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation* (Oxford, 1937), p. 104.

<sup>88</sup> Sir S. Lee, *King Edward the Seventh: A Biography*, 2 vols. (London, 1925–7), ii, p. 100. It is also noteworthy that the national anthem was increasingly treated as an imperial anthem in these years. In 1892, S. G. R. Coles wrote an imperial verse beginning, 'God Save our Empress Queen', and five years later, H. A. Salmone produced *The Imperial Sun*, 'a translation of the third verse of the National Anthem metrically rendered into fifty of the most important languages spoken in the Queen's Empire'. See Scholes, 'God Save the Queen', p. 141.

<sup>89</sup> For two recent works which take this view, see: J. Morris, *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire* (London, 1968); C. Chapman and P. Raben, *Debrett's Queen Victoria's Jubilees, 1887 and 1897* (London, 1977).

wane.<sup>90</sup> For there can be no doubt that during this period, Britain was increasingly challenged by new, rival world powers, economically, colonially and politically. The unification of Italy and Germany, the recovery of the United States from the traumas of the Civil War, the Scramble for Africa, the tariffs adopted by the continental powers, the decision by Britain to abandon 'Splendid Isolation' and seek alliance and support in Europe, the Boer War, and the crises of Fashoda, Agadir and Morocco, all betokened a world of fear, tension and rivalry which had not existed in the balmy days of Palmerston. The freedom of diplomatic manoeuvre which foreign secretaries had possessed in the past had vanished by the time of Salisbury.

This growing international competitiveness was mirrored in the large-scale rebuilding of capital cities, as the great powers bolstered their self-esteem in the most visible, ostentatious manner. In Rome, the Master Plan of 1883 sought to create a capital city worthy of a new nation, with grand avenues and boulevards on the Parisian model. And the completion of the massive Victor Emmanuel Monument in 1911 was a further emphatic assertion of national grandeur and pride.<sup>91</sup> In Vienna, that clutch of grand buildings facing the Ringstrasse, most of which were constructed in the 1870s and 1880s, was specifically intended to reflect 'the greatness of Empire'.<sup>92</sup> In Berlin, German unification was expressed visually in 'magnificent spacious streets, tree-planted squares, monuments and decorations', including the Column of Victory, the Reichstag, the Siegesalle and the Cathedral, all buildings conceived in a spirit of chauvinistic ostentation, 'the silent sentinels of national glory'.<sup>93</sup> In Paris, the

<sup>90</sup> Hynes, *Edwardian Turn of Mind*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>91</sup> S. Kostof, 'The Drafting of a Master Plan for *Roma Capitale*: An Exordium', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, xxxv (1976), p. 8; A. Robertson, *Victor Emmanuel III: King of Italy* (London, 1925), pp. 104–6; R. C. Fried, *Planning the Eternal City: Roman Politics and Planning Since World War II* (London, 1973), pp. 19–29; C. Meeks, *Italian Architecture, 1750–1914* (New Haven, 1966), pp. 189ff. For one specific episode, see: E. Schroeter, 'Rome's First National State Architecture: *The Palazzo della Finanze*', in H. A. Millon and L. Nochlin (eds.), *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), pp. 128–49.

<sup>92</sup> Marek, *The Eagles Die*, pp. 173–7.

<sup>93</sup> P. Abercrombie, 'Berlin: Its Growth and Present Day Function – II – The Nineteenth Century', *Town Planning Review*, iv (1914), pp. 308, 311; D. J. Hill, *Impressions of the Kaiser* (London, 1919), pp. 59–62; Prince von Bülow, *Memoirs, 1897–1903* (London, 1931), p. 543.

Eiffel Tower, constructed for the Exhibition of 1889, was designed to 'frapper le monde', to stand as 'a triumphal arch as striking as those which earlier generations have raised to honour conquerors'.<sup>94</sup> And in Washington, too, the Park Commission, which recommended the completion and extension of L'Enfant's original grand plan, was in part motivated by similar aims. For, as Olmstead explained, the objective was to enhance 'the effect of grandeur, power and dignified magnificence which should mark the seat of government of a great and intensely active people'. The completion of the Washington Memorial, the White House extension, the Union Station, the Lincoln Monument and the scheme for grand government buildings surrounding the Capitol all date from this period. And, as the commission explained, when these offices were completed, 'the resulting architectural composition will be unparalleled in magnitude and monumental character by any similar group of legislative buildings in the modern world'.<sup>95</sup>

In this environment of extreme international competition, the smugness and pride with which Londoners of a previous generation had venerated their shabby capital city was no longer tenable. Indeed, as early as 1868, *The Builder* had urged that, since 'the stately magnificence of a capital city is one of the elements of national prestige, and therefore of national power and influence', it was imperative that London's architecture should become 'worthy of the capital of the richest nation in the world'.<sup>96</sup> But it was not until the closing decades of the nineteenth century, when national prestige was seen to be threatened, that action was taken, converting the squalid, fog-bound city of Dickens into an imperial capital. The establishment of the L.C.C. in 1888 finally provided London with a single administrative authority, beholden neither to royal despotism nor state power, visibly embodied in the construction of a grand County Hall begun in 1908.<sup>97</sup> The War Office in Whitehall, the Government Buildings at the corner of Parliament Square, the

<sup>94</sup> Trachtenberg, *The Statue of Liberty*, p. 129.

<sup>95</sup> C. M. Green, *Washington*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1962–3), ii, ch. 7; Reys, *Monumental Washington*, pp. 91, 115; L. Craig et al., *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics and Symbols in U.S. Government Building* (Cambridge, Mass., n.d.), esp. pp. 244–65. Cf. the observations of the American architect Cass Gilbert that public building should inspire 'just pride in the state', and be 'a symbol of the civilisation, culture and ideals of our country'.

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in Olsen, *Growth of Victorian London*, p. 53.

<sup>97</sup> Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, pp. 325, 332–3.

Methodist Central Hall and Westminster Cathedral all added to the feeling of grandeur and magnificence.<sup>98</sup> In London, as in other great cities, monumental, commemorative statues proliferated.<sup>99</sup> But the most significant, coherent piece of rebuilding was the widening of the Mall, the building of Admiralty Arch, the re-fronting of Buckingham Palace and the construction of the Victoria Monument in front. This grand, monumental, imperial ensemble, which gave London its only triumphal, ceremonial way, was accomplished between 1906 and 1913 under the auspices of the Queen Victoria Memorial Committee, whose chairman was Lord Esher.<sup>100</sup> And, in London as in Washington or Rome or Paris, the element of international competition was strongly present. For, as Balfour explained when setting up the committee, its aim was to produce a grand, stately, monumental ensemble, 'of the kind which other nations have shown examples, which we may well imitate and can easily surpass'.<sup>101</sup>

Such developments, in London as elsewhere, provided the setting for ceremonial which was itself a further aspect of international rivalry. For the *parvenu* monarchies of Germany and Italy not only sought to rival the more venerable dynasties of Europe in their court ritual, yachts and trains; they also, self-consciously, competed in grand public displays of royal pageantry.<sup>102</sup> Thus in Austria, the six hundredth anniversary of the Habsburg monarchy, the millennium of the kingdom of Hungary, the Golden and Diamond Jubilees of Francis Joseph and the emperor's eightieth birthday were all celebrated with unprecedented pomp and grandeur.<sup>103</sup> Italy retali-

<sup>98</sup> A. Service, *Edwardian Architecture: A Handbook to Building Design in Britain, 1890-1914* (London, 1977), ch. 10; M. H. Port, 'Imperial Victorian', *Geographical Magazine*, xlix (1977), pp. 553-62.

<sup>99</sup> See app., table 4. See also Trachtenberg, *The Statue of Liberty*, p. 100: 'As the mid century became the late century, the momentum of colossus building increased, topping out a thickening forest of monuments of more ordinary scale that almost threatened to choke the city squares and picturesque sites of Europe.'

<sup>100</sup> G. Stamp, *London, 1900* (London, 1978), p. 305.

<sup>101</sup> E. and M. Darby, 'The Nation's Monument to Queen Victoria', *Country Life*, clxiv (1978), p. 1647.

<sup>102</sup> For court ritual in late nineteenth-century Europe, see: Baron von Margutti, *The Emperor Francis Joseph and His Times* (London, 1921), pp. 166-85; Princess Fugger, *The Glory of the Habsburgs* (London, 1932), pp. 100-40; A. Topham, *Memories of the Kaiser's Court* (London, 1914), pp. 85-6, 123, 184-202; Hill, *Impressions of the Kaiser*, ch. 3; Count R. Zedlitz-Trützschler, *Twelve Years at the Imperial German Court* (London, 1924), pp. 46-60, 70-1, 95, 117, 165; M. Buchanan, *Recollections of Imperial Russian Court* (London, 1913), p. 143.

<sup>103</sup> K. Tschuppik, *The Reign of the Emperor Francis Joseph, 1848-1916* (London, 1930), pp. 272, 354, 400.

ated with an extravagant funeral for Victor Emmanuel II in 1878, and the unveiling of his monument in 1911, which was also the jubilee of Italian Unification.<sup>104</sup> In Russia, the funeral accorded to Alexander III in 1894 was without precedent in splendour and magnificence, and the tercentenary celebration of the Romanov dynasty in 1913 was conceived on the grandest possible scale. And in Germany, the funeral of Kaiser Wilhelm I and the Silver Jubilee of his grandson were similarly magnificent.<sup>105</sup> Even republican régimes joined in. In France, Bastille Day was invented in 1880, and was repeated annually thereafter. The funeral of Victor Hugo in 1885 and the centennial of the revolution four years later were further pageants in the grand manner.<sup>106</sup> Likewise, in the United States, the centennial of the revolution and the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America were lavishly commemorated. At the same time, President Chester Arthur began to improve the ritual and ceremonial associated with the White House, and, significantly, Gilbert's plan for Washington in 1900 included provision for 'a great receiving ground for pageants and official ceremonies'.<sup>107</sup>

Once more, the element of competition was noteworthy. An English reporter in Moscow and St Petersburg, covering the funeral of Alexander III for *The Times*, recalled that 'rarely or never, perhaps, in all history, had a more gorgeous open-air pageant been seen. It was only rivalled, though not, perhaps, outshone, by Victoria's jubilee procession to Westminster Abbey'.<sup>108</sup> In the same

<sup>104</sup> G. S. Godkin, *Life of Victor Emmanuel II, First King of Italy*, 2 vols. (London, 1879), ii, pp. 233–44; Robertson, *Victor Emmanuel III*, pp. 103–6.

<sup>105</sup> C. Lowe, *Alexander III of Russia* (London, 1895), pp. 65–76, 289–303; R. K. Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra* (London, 1968), pp. 42–5, 224–7; B. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World before the War, 1890–1914* (New York, 1978), p. 403.

<sup>106</sup> Mosse, 'Caesarism, Circuses and Monuments', p. 172; Rearick, 'Festivals in Modern France', pp. 447–8.

<sup>107</sup> Reys, *Monumental Washington*, pp. 72–3, 85; S. M. Alsop, *Lady Sackville: A Biography* (London, 1978), pp. 27–30. One consequence of making powerful monarchs and presidents more grand (and therefore more public) was an increase in the number of assassinations during this period: President Garfield of the United States, 1881; Alexander II of Russia, 1881; President Carnot of France, 1894; Prime Minister Canovas of Spain, 1897; Empress Elizabeth of Austria, 1898; King Humbert of Italy, 1900; President McKinley of the United States, 1901; Prime Minister Stolypin of Russia, 1911; Prime Minister Canalejas of Spain, 1912; Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria, 1914. In England, by contrast, all the attempts on Victoria's life took place between 1840 and 1882. Pomp without power was far safer than pomp and absolutism. See: Tuchman, *The Proud Tower*, pp. 72, 76; Longford, *Victoria, R.I.*, pp. 188–9, 211–12, 490, 560–1.

<sup>108</sup> Lowe, *Alexander III*, pp. 66–7.

way, when King Edward VII visited Germany in 1909, the Kaiser was determined to dazzle the English king with a display of ceremonial grandeur. And, despite the occasional hitch, he succeeded. 'The Emperor', the Comptroller of the Household later confided to his diary,

was delighted with the visit of King Edward, and said: 'The English cannot come up to us in this sort of thing', meaning the splendour of the procession, the royal apartments in the Castle, the Banquet, the Court Ball and so forth.<sup>109</sup>

Even Americans, however much they prided themselves on the egalitarianism of their society, were not immune to such competition. At the turn of the century, when attempts were made to enlarge the White House, the main concern was that its cramped quarters were inadequate for receptions, which resulted in 'a consequent loss of that order and dignity which should characterise them'.<sup>110</sup>

In such competitive circumstances, it was perhaps fortunate – if largely accidental – that there coincided with this upsurge of interest in ritual and ceremony the English musical renaissance, instigated by Parry, promoted by the entrepreneurial zeal of Stanford and presided over by the genius of Elgar, the first English composer of international renown since Purcell.<sup>111</sup> One aspect of this was a growth of interest in musical history and patriotic hymns, well illustrated by the fact that there were more histories and choral settings of the national anthem in the decades 1890–1910 than in any period before or since.<sup>112</sup> More importantly, such an efflorescence made it possible for the great royal occasions to be presented, not as embarrassing indictments of the dearth of music in England, but as festivals of native talent. Accordingly, the coronations of Edward VII and George V were adorned with specially commissioned works by Stanford, Parry, Elgar, German and Sullivan.<sup>113</sup> At the same time,

<sup>109</sup> Zedlitz-Trützschler, *Twelve Years at the Imperial German Court*, p. 257.

<sup>110</sup> Reys, *Monumental Washington*, p. 131.

<sup>111</sup> F. Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London, 1966), chaps. 7–9; Kennedy, *Ralph Vaughan Williams*, ch. 1.

<sup>112</sup> For historical accounts, see: *Musical Times*, xix (1878), pp. 129–30, 196–7, 260–2, 315–18, 379–81, 438–9; F. K. Harford, *God Save the Queen*, (London, 1882); A. C. Bunten, *'God Save the King': Facsimiles of the Earliest Prints of our National Anthem* (London, 1902); W. H. Cummings, *'God Save the King': The Origins and History of the National Anthem* (London, 1902); S. Bateman, *Our Illiterate National Anthem: A Jacobite Hymn and a Rebel Song* (London, 1911). For choral settings, see app., table 3.

<sup>113</sup> For full accounts of the music at these two coronations, see *Musical Times*, xliii (1902), pp. 387–8, 577–84; lii (1911), pp. 433–7. See also: Sir A. C. Mackenzie,

the improvement in the standards of choirs and orchestras meant that they were also well performed. In this development, the key figures were Sir George Stainer, organist at St Paul's from 1872 to 1888, and Sir Frederick Bridge, his opposite number at Westminster Abbey from 1882 to 1918. Under their firm, efficient guidance, choirs became expertly drilled and trained, processed and behaved in a dignified manner, and were dressed in surplices.<sup>114</sup> As a result, the standard of performance at the early-twentieth-century coronations was incomparably better than at those which had gone before. Finally, the work of Sir Walter Parratt, who was Master of the King's Musick from 1893 to 1924, meant that the overall organization was also improved. For during his tenure of the post, it ceased to be a sinecure, as he became the supreme authority in arranging the music of great royal events.<sup>115</sup> As a result of these developments, it was possible for Bridge and Parratt to collaborate triumphantly in the musical arrangements of the coronations of Edward VII and George V.

During the same period, the attitude of the Established Church towards ritual and ceremony changed markedly. Unconsciously echoing Bagehot, Samuel Wilberforce had noted as early as 1865 that 'there is, I believe, in the English mind a great move towards a higher ritual', and in ensuing decades his prediction was borne out. Bishops began to wear purple cassocks and carry pastoral staffs.<sup>116</sup> Vestments, surplices, incense and altar candles became increasingly common in cathedrals and city churches. In 1887 and again in 1897, the officiating clergy at Victoria's jubilee services dressed in còpes and coloured stoles, a novel and picturesque innovation. And, as with the secular side of royal ritual, the motive was in part a wish to appeal to the working-classes. As E. W. Benson, archbishop of Canterbury, noted after the Golden Jubilee, 'days afterwards, everyone feels that

*A Musician's Narrative* (London, 1927), p. 155; C. L. Graves, *Hubert Parry: His Life and Work*, 2 vols. (London, 1926), ii, pp. 28–31, 56–7; W. H. Scott, *Edward German: An Intimate Biography* (London, 1932), pp. 152–4; P. M. Young, *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (London, 1971), pp. 248, 261; H. P. Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London, 1935), pp. 223–4.

<sup>114</sup> Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, pp. 385–7; Rainbow, *Choral Revival in the Anglican Church*, pp. 286–9; W. Sinclair, *Memorials of St Paul's Cathedral* (London, 1909), pp. 411–12; Bridge, *Westminster Pilgrim*, pp. 65–77, 172–8, 182–6, 222–34.

<sup>115</sup> Sir D. Tovey and G. Parratt, *Walter Parratt: Master of the Music* (London, 1941), pp. 90–1, 96–102, 119. Parratt was also organist at St George's Chapel, Windsor, from 1882 to 1924, and in 1897 had arranged a volume of 'Choral songs in honour of Her Majesty Queen Victoria', which included compositions by Stanford, Bridge, Parry and Elgar.

<sup>116</sup> Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, p. 311.

the socialist movement has had a check'.<sup>117</sup> Significantly, the biographies and reminiscences of late Victorian and Edwardian prelates contain full accounts of elaborate preparations for the great royal ceremonials – something conspicuously lacking in similar books by and about their predecessors. In particular, Randall Davidson became an unrivalled ecclesiastical authority on royal ritual, participating in Victoria's Golden Jubilee as dean of Windsor, her Diamond Jubilee and Edward's coronation as bishop of Winchester, and that of George V as archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>118</sup> At the same time, Westminster Abbey itself was transformed into a more colourful and dignified setting for great ceremonial. The organ was rebuilt in 1884 and 1894; the choir was remodelled and lit with electricity; the choristers were provided with red cassocks in 1897; and Lord Rosebery presented a new cross for the High Altar in 1899.<sup>119</sup> So, by the coronation of Edward VII, the attitude of the church towards ritual had changed markedly since the early days of Victoria. As Jocelyn Perkins the sacrist of the Abbey (and himself responsible for much of the improvement there) explained:

Anything even remotely suggestive of such brilliant muddling was unthinkable... Things accepted without question in 1838 could not fail to meet with stern condemnation in 1902... The attainment of a lofty standard of worship and ceremonial at the solemn sacring of Edward VII was felt on all sides to be imperative.<sup>120</sup>

And, for someone as well-disposed towards ecclesiastical grandeur as Perkins, the result was a complete success:

From end to end did the altar blaze with a display of alms dishes, flagons, chalices... Upon the amateur ritualists of the nineteenth century, with his tailor made vases, his feeble floral decorations, the scene bestowed a sorely needed lesson.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>117</sup> A. C. Benson, *The Life of Edward White Benson, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1899), p. 133.

<sup>118</sup> G. K. A. Bell, *Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury*, 3rd. edn (London, 1952), pp. 118–19, 307–11, 351–7, 367–72, 608–11, 1,300–1.

<sup>119</sup> Perkins, *Westminster Abbey: Its Worship and Ornaments*, i, pp. 112, 187, 189; ii, pp. 16–17, 111; iii, pp. 163, 169, 179.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 111. Perkins was sacrist at Westminster from 1899 to 1958.

<sup>121</sup> Perkins, *Coronation Book*, pp. 336–7.



v

It is in this significantly changed context, both domestic and international, that the more elaborate and more appealing royal ritual of this second phase must be set. From the 1870s onwards, in England as in other western countries, the position of the head of state was ceremonially enhanced. A venerated monarch, conveyed in a splendid state coach along triumphal thoroughfares was no longer, as his predecessors had been, just the head of society, but was now seen to be the head of the nation as well.<sup>122</sup> In England, as elsewhere in Europe, the unprecedented developments in industry and in social relationships, and the massive expansion of the yellow press, made it both necessary and possible to present the monarch, in all the splendour of his ritual, in this essentially new way, as a symbol of consensus and continuity to which all might defer.<sup>123</sup> And, as international relations became increasingly tense, this added a further inducement to the 'invention of tradition', as national rivalry was both expressed and sublimated in ceremonial competition. Only in one major regard did the English experience differ from that of other western nations: in Russia, Germany, Italy, America and Austria, this efflorescence of ceremonial was centred on a head of state who still exercised real power. But in England, while the ceremonial shadow of power was cast over the monarch, the substance increasingly lay elsewhere.

In retrospect, these developments in context and circumstance seem a helpful way of explaining the changes in the performance and 'meaning' of ritual. But at the time, it was not, perhaps, as deliberate as this might imply. For it was only slowly, as one ceremony followed another, that this coherent syntax and language of symbols and meanings emerged. In 1887, after fifty years on the throne, the Widow at Windsor was persuaded – although only with the greatest reluctance – to participate in a grand state pageant in London. It was, indeed, a risk, for her recent unpopularity made it impossible to predict what sort of reception she would receive. And Victoria's emphatic refusal to wear the crown and robes of state only seemed to give substance to such forebodings. Even Princess Alexandra,

<sup>122</sup> See the letter from Professor Norman Cohn to Professor Terence Ranger quoted in T. Ranger, 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa' (Past and Present Conference Paper, 1977), p. 85, n. 31.

<sup>123</sup> Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions', p. 15.

whose powers of persuasion over the queen were unrivalled, failed in her attempts to get Victoria to change her mind.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, the resulting Golden Jubilee, with its procession and service of thanksgiving in the Abbey, was a great success: 'Pageantry such as this generation never saw... The grandest state ceremony of this generation'.<sup>125</sup> The Diamond Jubilee, planned with more confidence and certainty ten years later, was even more splendid. As the queen herself noted, with delighted surprise:

No one, ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me passing through these six miles of streets... The crowds were quite indescribable, and their enthusiasm truly marvellous and deeply touching.<sup>126</sup>

Thereafter came Victoria's funeral, the coronation and funeral of Edward VII, the coronation and durbar of George V, and the investiture of his son as Prince of Wales at Carnarvon Castle. Indeed, by this time, departments of state and of the royal household, which had been woefully ignorant of precedent and ceremonial in 1887, had become expert. Hitches might still occur, as when the horses bolted at Victoria's funeral. But such mishaps were rare and, in this particular instance, were themselves immediately incorporated in 'tradition'.<sup>127</sup> Meticulous planning, popular enthusiasm, widespread reporting and unprecedented splendour were successfully allied. Significantly, while the funerals of Nelson and Wellington were both more grand and more popular than those accorded to the early-nineteenth-century monarchs, the last rites of Victoria and Edward far outshone the state funeral accorded to Gladstone.<sup>128</sup>

Insofar as the success of these pageants depended on improved performance, three people in particular were of major significance. The first was Reginald Brett, Viscount Esher, the *éminence grise* in British governing circles at the turn of the century, friend of Victoria, Edward VII and George V, secretary of the Office of Works from 1895 to 1902, and deputy constable and lieutenant governor of Windsor Castle from 1901–28. He was responsible, not only for the

<sup>124</sup> Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*, p. 174.

<sup>125</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 25 June 1887; Longford, *Victoria, R.I.*, p. 626.

<sup>126</sup> Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 23; Longford, *Victoria, R.I.*, pp. 685–91.

<sup>127</sup> Sir F. Ponsonby, *Recollections of Three Reigns* (London, 1951), pp. 32–3, 83–94, 271–2.

<sup>128</sup> P. Cunnington and S. Lucas, *Costume for Births, Marriages and Deaths* (London, 1971), p. 240.

redcoration of the royal palaces and the sorting of the royal archives after Victoria's death, but also for the overall planning of every great state pageant from the Diamond Jubilee of Victoria to the funeral of Edward VII.<sup>129</sup> In theory, responsibility for such occasions lay with the duke of Norfolk as hereditary earl marshal, the master of the horse, the lord steward and the lord chamberlain. But Esher's charm, tact, historical sense, flair for organization and love of ceremonial ensured that the lion's share of the work was done by him. And there was much to do. For it was so long since there had last been a major royal event that no one could remember what to do. 'The ignorance of historical precedent', Esher once noted in exasperation, 'in men whose business it is to know, is wonderful'. But despite such obstacles, his carefully rehearsed and meticulously researched pageants were triumphantly successful, bringing him 'scores of congratulatory letters' from the royal family and politicians alike. Although Victoria did feel, true to her lifelong antipathy to the Grand Old Man, that Esher's careful and tactful arrangements for Gladstone's state funeral in Westminster Abbey smacked of 'misdirected enthusiasm'.<sup>130</sup>

Esher's interest in royal ritual was matched by that of Edward VII himself. For while his mother had been a reluctant participant in public ceremonial, who loathed splendid costume and public appearances, Edward was eager to 'show himself to his subjects, clothed in his attributes of sovereignty'.<sup>131</sup> He had been a constant critic of his mother's mournful gloom, and had also bitterly resented the way in which his nephew, the Kaiser, had outshone him in splendour. So, as king, there was a double incentive for him to enhance the grandeur of monarchy. And, with the assistance of Esher, he succeeded spectacularly. Indeed, it was Esher himself who paid tribute to his master's 'curious power of visualising a pageant', his 'promptness, imagination and *invention*', which were, he noted, significantly, 'the primary gifts without which *improvisation* is hopeless' (my italics).<sup>132</sup> Sensing more acutely the competitive element in the new ceremonial, another courtier noted, with evident

<sup>129</sup> P. Fraser, *Lord Esher: A Political Biography* (London, 1973), pp. 68–71, 80–3.

<sup>130</sup> M. V. Brett and Oliver, Viscount Esher (eds.), *Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher*, 4 vols (London, 1934–8), i, pp. 204–7, 214–17, 331–2, 274–87, 304, 322, 333, 337; iii, p. 5.

<sup>131</sup> Bodley, *Coronation of King Edward the Seventh*, p. 205.

<sup>132</sup> Lord Esher, *Cloud Capp'd Towers* (London, 1927), pp. 182–3.

approval: 'Our King makes a better show than William. He has more graciousness and dignity. William is ungracious, nervous and plain'.<sup>133</sup>

So it was entirely characteristic that one of Edward's earliest acts as king was to revive the state opening of parliament as a full-dress ceremonial occasion, with a procession in the state coach through the streets of London, and with the king, clad in his full regalia, personally reading the speech from the throne – something which Victoria had not done in forty years.<sup>134</sup> And, ironically, it was Edward's funeral, in which the ubiquitous Esher once more had a hand, which was 'the grandest state pageant in which he was to take part'. Of especial significance was the lying-in-state at Westminster Hall – 'an innovation which proved extremely popular'. One quarter of a million people filed past the coffin: never before had so many ordinary people, personally, individually, paid their last respects to a British monarch. And it was this novel precedent, combined with the long procession through the streets of London, with the coffin placed on a gun carriage pulled by naval ratings, followed by the more private interment at Windsor, which was emulated at the funerals of both George V and VI.<sup>135</sup>

If Esher provided the expertise and organizing flair, and Edward himself supplied the enthusiasm and support, it was Elgar whose compositions raised ceremonial music from mere trivial ephemera to works of art in their own right. His 'Imperial March' of 1897 was the smash hit of the Diamond Jubilee, and successfully established him as the nation's unofficial musical laureate. Five years later, he composed the 'Coronation Ode' to commemorate the accession of Edward VII, which included, at the king's request, the choral setting of the broad and soaring melody of 'Pomp and Circumstance Number One' which has since gone round the world as 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Then, for the accession of George V, came the 'Coronation March', and the masque, 'The Crown of India' for the Delhi durbar. Such works, which reflected Elgar's genuine love of colour, pageantry, precision and splendour, provided the ideal martial, musical background to the great royal ceremonies.<sup>136</sup> At the same time, they should not be seen as the embodiment of Edwardian

<sup>133</sup> Quoted in J. Elliott, *Fall of Eagles* (London, 1974), p. 137.

<sup>134</sup> Lee, *King Edward the Seventh*, ii, pp. 21–3.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 720.

<sup>136</sup> I. Parrott, *Elgar* (London, 1971), pp. 7, 18, 65; P. M. Young, *Elgar, O. M.: A Study of a Musician* (London, 1955), pp. 79, 97, 222, 288.

bombast, pride, smugness and self-assurance.<sup>137</sup> For his great melodies are more often than not funereal, melancholy, wistful, ruminative and introspective. Even the great motto theme of his first symphony, gloriously ennobled and triumphant as it appears towards the end of the last movement, never fully banishes the forces of doubt and darkness, diffidence and despair, which stalk through that work.<sup>138</sup> But, even though the real tenderness of his music was often forgotten in the expansive brashness of the words fitted to his tunes, his marches and melodies nevertheless established themselves as the indispensable accompaniment of all great royal occasions – and have since so remained.

Assisted by the strong personal contribution of these three men, the public image of the British monarchy was fundamentally transformed in the years before the First World War, as the old ceremonial was successfully adapted in response to the changed domestic and international situation, and new ceremonial was invented and added. And such changes are well reflected in the unprecedented manner in which these royal occasions were commercially exploited. For, although no precise figures are available, it is clear that the massive outpouring of royal commemorative pottery dates from this time, as manufacturers cashed in on the appeal of royal ceremonial to a mass market which had never existed before.<sup>139</sup> Likewise, new, consumer-oriented firms such as Rowntree, Cadbury and Oxo exploited royal events to help their advertising campaigns, and local authorities began to distribute beakers, mugs and other gifts in commemoration. In the same way, there were more private commemorative medals produced for sale for Victoria's Golden Jubilee than for the previous four great events combined, and the coronation of Edward VII was another medal-maker's paradise. In addition, in 1887, commemorative medals in the manner of campaign medals, to be worn on the left breast, were first issued, another novelty which was emulated at all subsequent coronations and jubilees in this period.<sup>140</sup> So, in mugs

<sup>137</sup> For this interpretation of Elgar, see: A. J. Sheldon, *Edward Elgar* (London, 1932), pp. 16, 33, 48; C. Lambert, *Music Ho!*, 3rd edn (London, 1966), p. 240; D. M. McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London, 1955), p. 181; B. Maine, *Elgar: His Life and Works* (London, 1933), ii, pp. 196–7, 297–300.

<sup>138</sup> For the most eloquent presentation of this interpretation, see: M. Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (London, 1968), pp. 132–53, 202–9.

<sup>139</sup> May, *Commemorative Pottery*, pp. 73–4; D. Seekers, *Popular Staffordshire Pottery* (London, 1977), pp. 30–1.

<sup>140</sup> Official medals were also produced by the Royal Mint – a further innovation – in 1887, 1897, 1902 and 1911. See Rodgers, *Coronation Souvenirs*, pp. 38–41; Edmundson, *Collecting Modern Commemorative Medals*, pp. 54–61; H. N. Cole,

and medals, as in music and magnificence, the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth was a golden age of 'invented traditions', as the appeal of the monarchy to the mass of the people in an industrialized society was broadened in a manner unattainable only half a century before.

Nor was this greater stress on ritual limited to the royal family. In many other spheres of activity, too, venerable and decayed ceremonials were revived, and new institutions were clothed with all the anachronistic allure of archaic but invented spectacle. In London the Lord Mayor's Show was revived as a grand pageant, and in provincial cities, the new baroque town halls and the enhanced concept of civic dignity were further evidence of an efflorescence in civic ritual. In the same way, the new generation of redbrick universities, with their deliberately anachronistic styles of architecture, their aristocratic chancellors, their antique gowns and lavish degree ceremonies, were part of a similar trend.<sup>141</sup> In the Dominions, the grand vice-regal régime introduced by Lord Dufferin to Ottawa when he was governor general of Canada (1872–8) set a precedent which was later emulated in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.<sup>142</sup> And in India, the three Delhi durbars of 1877, 1902 and 1911 marked a high point in the public face – although not the private power – of the Raj. At the same time, the honours system was greatly enlarged, with the creation of the Indian Orders, the Royal Victorian Order, the Orders of Merit and of Companions of Honour, and grand ceremonies of installation were revived for Knights of the Garter and of the Bath.<sup>143</sup> In short, the enhanced and ritualized public face of the British monarchy was but one example of a more general proliferation of new or revived ceremonial during this period, which characterized English, European and American public life, not only at the level of the head of state, but in a more widespread manner as well.

*Coronation and Commemoration Medals, 1887–1953* (Aldershot, 1953), p. 5. See also app., table 2.

<sup>141</sup> D. Cannadine, 'From "Feudal" Lords to Figureheads: Urban Landownership and Aristocratic Influence in Nineteenth-Century Towns', *Urban History Yearbook*, v (1978), pp. 26–7, 31–2; M. Sanderson, *The Universities and British Industry, 1850–1970* (London, 1972), p. 81.

<sup>142</sup> R. H. Hubbard, *Rideau Hall: An Illustrated History of Government House, Ottawa, from Victorian Times to the Present Day* (London, 1977), pp. 20–38.

<sup>143</sup> *Sir. I. de la Bere, The Queen's Orders of Chivalry* (London, 1964), pp. 129, 143, 144, 149, 168, 171, 177, 178; Perkins, *Westminster Abbey: Its Worship and Ornaments*, ii, p. 202.

VI

During the third period, from 1914 to 1953, the context once again shifts profoundly, so that the ritual of the British monarchy ceased to be merely one aspect of widespread competitive inventiveness, and became instead a unique expression of continuity in a period of unprecedented change. To begin with, the late-Victorian and Edwardian formula of a monarchy ceremonially grand but politically impartial was repeated in an even more strictly constitutional manner. For the limited power which Edward VII wielded was further eroded during the reigns of his three successors. Although, for example, George V was obliged to play some part in the constitutional crisis which he inherited on his accession, in the choice of a Conservative prime minister in 1923, and in the formation of the National Government in 1931, and although his private preferences were for the Conservatives, he maintained in his public, constitutional duties scrupulous rectitude and impartiality.<sup>144</sup> He was a figurehead in politics, aptly reflecting his position as a figurehead in ceremonial, realizing the prediction of one radical in 1913 who observed: 'In England the king does what the people want. He will be a Socialist king'.<sup>145</sup> The abdication of Edward VIII was further emphatic proof that it was parliament which made and unmade kings, and George VI was his father's son, not only in terms of his private preference for the Conservatives, but also in terms of his public impartiality. Even his rights to be consulted, to warn and to encourage were relatively attenuated. In 1940, he would have preferred Halifax as prime minister, and in 1945 was sorry to see Churchill depart. But on neither occasion did he have any power to influence events.<sup>146</sup> The evolution of constitutional monarchy was complete.

From impotence to aloofness to veneration to grandeur the line ran unbroken, reinforced by the high reputation of the monarchs as individuals. In particular, George V, by allying the private probity

<sup>144</sup> Nicolson, *King George the Fifth*, pp. 98–101, 218, 486–90, 597–601; E. Longford, *The Royal House of Windsor* (London, 1976), pp. 65, 91; R. Rhodes James (ed.), *Memoirs of a Conservative: J. C. C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers, 1910–37* (London, 1969), pp. 177–8.

<sup>145</sup> Quoted in J. A. Thompson, 'Labour and the Modern British Monarchy', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, lxx (1971), p. 341.

<sup>146</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI*, pp. 636–7, 649–50; Longford, *House of Windsor*, p. 91.

of his grandmother with the public grandeur of his father, created a synthesis which both his long-serving successors have emulated.<sup>147</sup> On the one hand, like his father, he was assiduous in attention to public ritual and ceremonial, and obsessed with matters such as the correct dress and manner of wearing decorations; but at the same time, his private life combined the unpretentiousness of the country gentleman with the respectability of the middle class.<sup>148</sup> Perhaps accidentally, but certainly with great success, George V contrived to be both grand and domestic, a father-figure to the whole empire, yet also in his own right the head of a family with which all could identify. (Significantly, Edward VIII overrode both elements of the Georgian synthesis, caring not at all for ceremony, and living an eventful and indiscreet private life.)<sup>149</sup> George VI, by contrast, deliberately took that name to emphasize the return to the style of his father. Indeed, on his accession, Baldwin noted that 'what will endear him to the people is that more than any of his brothers he resembles in character and mind his father'.<sup>150</sup> Once again, the monarch assiduously carried out public, ceremonial duties, while at the same time enjoying a domestic life which was the very antithesis of his elder brother's.<sup>151</sup> Like his father, his qualities were those of 'courage, endurance, kindness, devotion': the man who conquered his stammer and resolutely refused to leave London during the Second World War.<sup>152</sup> If his father was 'George the Well-beloved', he in turn was 'George the Faithful'.

Under these circumstances, the monarchy appeared, particularly on grand, ceremonial occasions, as the embodiment of consensus, stability and community. Indeed, the great royal rituals, the Armistice Day ceremonial, and the ever-expanding cult of Christmas (in both of which latter events the royal family figured strongly) were the three greatest celebrations of consensus, in which the royal family, individual families and the national family were all conflated. During the years 1914–53, Britain experienced a series of internal changes

<sup>147</sup> J. A. Thompson and A. Mejia, Jr., *The Modern British Monarchy* (New York, 1971), p. 38.

<sup>148</sup> Longford, *House of Windsor*, p. 63.

<sup>149</sup> Thompson and Mejia, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 79.

<sup>150</sup> Quoted in R. Lacey, *Majesty: Elizabeth II and the House of Windsor* (London, 1977), p. 109.

<sup>151</sup> For the iconography of the royal family in the twentieth century, see: R. Strong, 'The Royal Image', in Montgomery-Massingberd (ed.), *Burke's Guide to the British Monarchy*, p. 112.

<sup>152</sup> Ziegler, *Crown and People*, pp. 76–7.



which far surpassed those of the preceding period in magnitude. Between 1910 and 1928, Britain moved from being a nation with one of the narrowest electoral franchises in Europe to full adult suffrage, with what was feared as 'a war-worn and hungry proletariat endowed with a huge preponderance of voting power'.<sup>153</sup> The Liberal Party was eclipsed by Labour as the second party in the state and, especially after the Second World War, the demise of the great aristocratic families left the crown increasingly isolated in London society. The General Strike and the Great Depression brought with them animosity and distress on an unprecedented scale, as did the two world wars. Accordingly, a politically neutral and personally admirable monarchy was presented, with great success, as 'the rallying-point of stability in a distracted age', the most effective aspect of which was its restrained, anachronistic, ceremonial grandeur.<sup>154</sup>

In part, this was greatly facilitated by the continuing obsequiousness of the media, which continued to report the great ceremonies of state in an awed and hushed manner. Indeed, how else was it possible to treat an institution which combined political neutrality with personal integrity: there was nothing to criticize or caricature after the manner of Rowlandson or Gillray. From Partridge to Shepherd and Illingworth, royal cartoons were restricted to tableaux, congratulating members of the royal family on successful imperial tours, hailing the House of Windsor, or mourning the death of a sovereign. Significantly, when Low tried to publish a cartoon in 1936 which was critical of the monarchy at the time of the abdication, no newspapers in London would accept it.<sup>155</sup> For editors and reporters, like cartoonists, remained deferential, as the gentleman's agreement among the press lords at the time of the abdication eloquently illustrated. In the same way, newspaper photographs, like newsreel films, were carefully edited. After the coronation of George VI, the earl marshal and the archbishop of Canterbury were empowered to edit 'anything which

<sup>153</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI*, p. 160.

<sup>154</sup> Longford, *House of Windsor*, p. 91.

<sup>155</sup> Walker, *Daily Sketches*, pp. 13, 23, 126–7; Wynn Jones, *Cartoon History of the Monarchy*, pp. 132, 157–64, 174–9. There were, of course, exceptions which tended to prove the rule. In 1937, Tom Driberg, then a reporter for the *Daily Express*, reported the coronation in a tone hostile to the 'hushed awe considered appropriate in most of the press', which provoked 'a storm of shocked rage' among the readers. See: T. Driberg, *Ruling Passions* (New York, 1978), pp. 107–9. The flood of commemorative and biographical literature also continued unabated during this period.

may be considered unsuitable for the public at large to see'. Likewise, in 1948, when Harold Nicolson was invited to write the public life of George V, he was explicitly asked to 'omit things and incidents which were discreditable to the royal family'.<sup>156</sup>

But the most important development during this period was the advent of the B.B.C., which was of profound significance in conveying the dual image of the monarchy so successfully built up by George V. On the one hand, the Christmas broadcasts, instituted in 1932 and immediately adopted as 'traditional', enhanced the image of the monarch as the father-figure of his people, speaking to his subjects in the comfort and privacy of their homes.<sup>157</sup> So successful a broadcaster was George V that his second son, although handicapped with a stammer, was obliged to continue the 'tradition'. At the same time, the B.B.C.'s first director general, Sir John Reith, himself a romantic devotee of pageantry and the monarchy, rapidly recognized the power of the new medium to convey a sense of participation in ceremonial which had never been possible before.<sup>158</sup> So, from the time of the duke of York's wedding in 1923, 'audible pageants' became a permanent feature of the B.B.C.'s programmes, as each great state occasion was broadcast live on the radio, with special microphones positioned so that the listener could hear the sound of bells, horses, carriages and cheering. In a very real sense, it was this technical development which made possible the successful presentation of state pageants as national, family events, in which everyone could take part. And, if the evidence of Mass Observation is any guide, they did: record audiences were a constant feature of the outside broadcasts of great royal occasions.<sup>159</sup>

The combination of the novelty of the media and the anachronism of the ceremonial rendered royal ritual both comforting and popular in an age of change. For by now, the monarchs' mode of conveyance, already unusual and grand in the preceding period, had become positively fairytale. At the coronation of George VI, for example, even the majority of peers attending arrived in cars. Henry Channon,

<sup>156</sup> Lacey, *Majesty*, p. 333; Jennings and Madge, *May the Twelfth*, p. 16.

<sup>157</sup> Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 31; Nicolson, *King George the Fifth*, pp. 670-1.

<sup>158</sup> A. Boyle, *Only the Wind Will Listen: Reith of the B.B.C.* (London, 1972), pp. 18, 161, 281.

<sup>159</sup> J. C. W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (London, 1949), pp. 94, 168-9, 221, 238-41, 279-82; A. Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, 4 vols. so far (Oxford and London, 1961-79), i, pp. 290-1; ii, pp. 11, 81, 100-1, 112-13, 157, 266, 272, 396, 505.

whose eye for colour and romance was unerring, counted only three in coaches.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, by then, the horse-drawn society of the mid-nineteenth century was so long forgotten that the scavengers who cleared up the horse droppings after the main procession had passed by received some of the loudest cheers of the day.<sup>161</sup> In the world of the aeroplane, the tank and the atomic bomb, the anachronistic grandeur of horses, carriages, swords and plumed hats was further enhanced. As one book on coaches noted in 1948, even great families had ceased to use state carriages; they were now limited to 'such purely ceremonial, walking-pace vehicles as the carved and gilded Royal State Coach, the coach of the Lord Mayor of London' and the 'rarely used Speaker's coach'. Indeed, by the time of Elizabeth's coronation, even the royal household possessed insufficient coaches to accommodate all the visiting royalty and heads of state, and it proved necessary to borrow seven extra carriages from a film company.<sup>162</sup>

The advanced organization involved in acquiring these extra carriages was evidence that the tradition of administrative expertise initiated by Esher was fully maintained. The sixteenth duke of Norfolk, Hereditary Earl Marshal, although only twenty-nine at the time of the coronation of George VI, soon acquired a reputation for punctuality, showmanship and theatrical flair which rivalled that of Esher. Indeed, by 1969, when his last great pageant was produced, the investiture of the Prince of Wales, his experience of royal ritual spanned forty years. At the 1937 coronation, he was prepared to pay a colleague £1 for every minute that the actual crowning was too late or too early, and he lost only £5.<sup>163</sup> For that ceremony, Norfolk was assisted by the archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, himself described by Hensley Henson as 'a born actor', and by his biographer as displaying great 'attention to the minutest details of an occasion which called for all the drama and pageantry which, with him, were so strong an impression of religious feeling'. Like Norfolk, the archbishop thought in 'the language of the theatre', and it was these representatives of church and state who dominated the three committees and superintended the eight rehearsals in preparation for

<sup>160</sup> R. Rhodes James (ed.), *'Chips': The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (London, 1967), p. 123.

<sup>161</sup> Jennings and Madge, *May the Twelfth*, pp. 112, 120.

<sup>162</sup> H. McCansland, *The English Carriage* (London, 1948), p. 85; C. Frost, *Coronation: June 2 1953* (London, 1978), pp. 57–8.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

the coronation.<sup>164</sup> Moreover, by this time, largely as a result of the efforts of Dean Ryle and the sacrist, Jocelyn Perkins, Westminster Abbey itself was a more fitting setting for ceremonial. The choir was improved and the stalls gilded; the bells were restored in the towers and processions with banners and copes were revived. Indeed, during the years of Ryle's decanate (1914–25), no fewer than eighty-six special services were held, including the interment of the Unknown Warrior. The 'development of stateliness and colour in the services of the Abbey' meant that the additional demands of the great royal ceremonials could be met with unprecedented ease, experience and expertise.<sup>165</sup>

Likewise, as far as music was concerned, the innovations of the previous period were consolidated and further extended. In 1924, on the death of Parratt, Elgar himself was made Master of the King's Musick, the first composer of distinction to occupy the position for over a century, thus giving emphatic recognition of the importance of his music in royal ritual.<sup>166</sup> Thereafter, the post has continued to be filled by composers of merit, and the incumbent has retained control of the musical arrangements of royal ceremonies. By the time Elgar was appointed, his creative passion was spent, and no more great works or popular music came from his pen. But other composers assumed his mantle, and continued the recently established tradition that each great royal occasion was also to be a festival of contemporary British music.<sup>167</sup> Bax, Bliss, Holst, Bantock, Walton and Vaughan Williams all wrote music to command for the coronations of George VI and Elizabeth II. Indeed, Walton's two coronation marches, 'Crown Imperial' (1937) and 'Orb and Sceptre' (1953), rivalled Elgar himself, not only in their melodic richness and

<sup>164</sup> H. Henson, *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life*, 3 vols. (London, 1942–50), i, pp. 380–5; J. G. Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang* (London, 1949), pp. 408–23.

<sup>165</sup> Perkins, *Westminster Abbey: Its Services and Ornaments*, i, pp. 113–17, 193–4; ii, p. 207; iii, pp. 180–7; M. H. Fitzgerald, *A Memoir of Herbert E. Ryle* (London, 1928), pp. 290–2, 307–10; L. E. Tanner, *Recollections of a Westminster Antiquary* (London, 1969), pp. 65–8, 144–52.

<sup>166</sup> Since 1924, the incumbents have been as follows: Sir Edward Elgar (1924–34), Sir Walford Davies (1934–41), Sir Arnold Bax (1941–52), Sir Arthur Bliss (1953–75), Malcolm Williamson (1975–). See: Blom, *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, v, p. 627. For the work of one particular incumbent, see: H. C. Coles, *Walford Davies: A Biography* (London, 1942), pp. 157–61.

<sup>167</sup> For the music performed at the coronations of George VI and Elizabeth II, see: *Musical Times*, lxxviii (1937), pp. 320, 497; xciv (1953), pp. 305–6.

colourful orchestration, but also in that they have both become regular, established concert-hall pieces.<sup>168</sup> These developments in the domestic context of royal ritual were accompanied by even greater changes in the international sphere. In the previous period, British ceremony, however much improved on the mid- and early-Victorian era, was of a piece with other nations' grand pageants. But in this third phase, it ceased to be one instance of competitive inventiveness, and became instead unique, by default. For during the reign of George V, the majority of great royal dynasties were replaced by republican régimes. In 1910, the German emperor, eight kings and five crown princes attended the funeral of Edward VII as representatives of their respective nations. But during the next quarter of a century, 'the world witnessed the disappearance of five emperors, eight kings and eighteen minor dynasties – one of the most spectacular political landslides in history'.<sup>169</sup> And again, at the end of the Second World War, the Italian and Yugoslavian dynasties were vanquished, and the Japanese emperor was discredited. In this spectacularly changed international context, the ritual of the British monarchy could be presented as the unique embodiment of a long and continuing tradition in a way that had not been possible before.

In 1937, for example, one commentator on the forthcoming coronation noted that 'an English Coronation is a thing apart from all other ceremonies: there is in fact no other spectacle of any kind so impressive, so awe-inspiring, to be witnessed anywhere else in the world'.<sup>170</sup> By then, such words were, indeed, true. But only twenty-five years before, with similar ceremonial to be found in Moscow, Berlin, Vienna and Rome, they would have been demonstrably false. Of itself, survival had rendered venerable in an age of change that which had recently been novel in an era of competition. Percy Schramm, in his *History of the Coronation*, made the same point, with greater rhetorical luxuriance:

Everything at Westminster remains as of yore, while Aachen and Rheims are desolate. There is no longer an *Imperator Romanorum*. Even the Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns have had to lay aside their

<sup>168</sup> I. Holst, *The Music of Gustav Holst*, 2nd edn (London, 1968), pp. 46, 162; C. Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax* (London, 1973), pp. 181–2; S. Pakenham, *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Discovery of his Music* (London, 1957), pp. 118, 164–5; F. Howes, *The Music of William Walton*, 2nd edn (London, 1974), pp. 119–21.

<sup>169</sup> Nicolson, *King George the Fifth*, p. 154.

<sup>170</sup> W. J. Passingham, *A History of the Coronation* (London, 1937), p. vii.

imperial titles, and the Crown, sceptre and robes of the old imperial treasury are gazed at as exhibits in a museum. In France, not even this memory of the past survives. . . If we look more wisely about us, we shall see on every side old state traditions flung on the rubbish heap. There is hardly a country that has succeeded in so continually adapting her medieval institutions as to avoid their complete overthrow or their entire re-construction. Indeed, it is one of the symptoms of our age that countries, in the enjoyment of newly-awakened powers, create an entirely new form of state, and consciously throw the past aside. In the midst of these scenes of construction and destruction, no tokens of the past as symbols of the present remain in existence save the Cathedral Sancti Petri at Rome and the choir of King Edward at Westminster.<sup>171</sup>

The contrast between adaptation and reconstruction was not only metaphorical; what was true of constitutions was true of capital cities as well. For while the rebuilding of London had largely been completed before the First World War, the capitals of other new, or newly assertive, powers were constantly being reconstructed as further expressions of national greatness. In Italy, for example, it was Mussolini's wish that Rome 'must appear marvellous to all the peoples of the world – vast, orderly, powerful, as in the time of the Empire of Augustus', and the 1931 Master Plan had as its first objective the creation of a splendid monumental capital, including the making of the Piazza Venezia, and the great, monumental access roads, such as the Via dell'Imperio, which led to the Coliseum.<sup>172</sup> In Germany, too, the massive, monumental, megalomaniac buildings of the Third Reich, the fruits of collaboration between Hitler and Albert Speer, embodied a similar view. The House of German Art, the Berlin Chancellery, and the buildings and parade grounds of Nuremberg, to say nothing of the later, and unrealized schemes for triumphal ways and arches in Berlin, all reflected Hitler's abiding belief that a civilization was judged by the great buildings it left behind.<sup>173</sup> Nor was such innovative neo-classicism confined to Fascist powers. In Moscow, the making of Red Square as a ceremonial centre may be

<sup>171</sup> Schramm, *History of the English Coronation*, pp. 104–5.

<sup>172</sup> Fried, *Planning the Eternal City*, pp. 31–3; E. R. Tannenbaum, *Fascism in Italy: Society and Culture, 1922–1945* (London, 1973), p. 314; S. Kostof, 'The Emperor and the Duce: the Planning of Piazzale Augusto Imperatore in Rome', in Millon and Nochlin (eds.), *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics*, pp. 270–325.

<sup>173</sup> A. Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York, 1970) chaps. 5, 6, 10, 11; B. M. Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918–1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 185–95; Barden, *Nuremberg Party Rallies*, ch. 6.

seen as part of a similar expression, as was the massive (and unrealized) plan for the Palace of the Soviets in stupendous, neo-classical style.<sup>174</sup> And in Washington, the completion of the Lincoln Memorial, the building of the Jefferson Monument and the Arlington Bridge, as well as a clutch of administrative offices on Constitution Avenue, showed the force of the same influence on the other side of the Atlantic.<sup>175</sup>

But, in buildings as in constitutional arrangements, London was once more the exception. For while other countries completed or rebuilt the theatres in which the ruling élite performed its pageants, in London the stage remained largely unaltered after the Buckingham Palace–Admiralty Arch *ensemble* was inaugurated. In the inter-war years, only County Hall was added to the great public buildings, and that had been begun before 1914. Even the Cenotaph, for all its symbolic connotations, was a relatively insignificant addition to London's architectural heritage. So, buildings which had been novel in 1910 became, compared with the rush of construction in other capitals, venerable within two decades. Instead of smugly accepting chaos, as in the first phase, or belatedly seeking to catch up and compete, as in the second, Londoners now viewed their city as the most stable capital architecturally – a physical stability which aptly reflected the stability of its politics. As Harold Clunn, surveying the changes which had taken place between 1897 and 1914, put it:

Taking into consideration the enormous improvements which have been carried out all over Central London. . . , it would seem that the London of the present day probably eclipses Paris in magnificence. While opinions regarding the merits of different cities vary enormously, London undoubtedly has an almost undisputed claim to be considered the finest capital city in the world.<sup>176</sup>

In building, as in constitutional arrangements, survival rendered venerable in an age of change that which had recently been novel in an era of competition.

These contrasts are exactly reflected in the ceremonial itself. In

<sup>174</sup> M. F. Parkins, *City Planning in Soviet Russia* (Chicago, 1953), pp. 33–43; A. Kopp, *Town and Revolution: Soviet Architecture and City Planning, 1917–1935* (London, 1970), pp. 219–26; J. E. Bowlt, 'Russian Sculpture and Lenin's Plan of Monumental Propaganda', in Millon and Nochlin (eds.), *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics*, pp. 182–93.

<sup>175</sup> Reps, *Monumental Washington*, pp. 167, 170–4; Craig, *Federal Presence*, pp. 309–27.

<sup>176</sup> H. Clunn, *London Rebuilt, 1897–1927* (London, 1927), p. 10.

Italy, as in Russia, the new political order brought with it strident, emotional, technologically sophisticated forms of ritual, the very antithesis of those prevalent in England. In Germany, in particular, the use of tanks, planes and searchlights implied a commitment to technology and an impatience with anachronism at odds with state coaches and ceremonial swords. Instead of lining the streets, cheering but orderly, as was the case with Londoners, one quarter of a million Germans participated annually in the Nuremberg rallies, where they listened with 'delirious rapture' to the 'unbridled emotionalism' of Hitler's oratory. The semi-liturgical chanting and intercession between speaker and audience; the manner in which the words seemed to erupt through the body of the Führer; the state of almost sexual exhaustion in which he was left after his speeches: all this contrasted strongly with the 'unassailable dignity' of George V and his queen.<sup>177</sup>

However backward-looking and derivative much Fascist ritual (and building) has subsequently been discovered to be, to contemporaries in England, it was its strident, hysterical novelty that was noted, and compared with the more obvious traditionalism of the monarchy. As Bronislaw Malinowski explained, at the time of the coronation of George VI, the dictators:

create in a hurry, from all kinds of ill-assorted odds and ends, their own symbolism and ritual, their own mythologies, and their directly religious and even magical creeds. One of them becomes the Aryan godhead incarnate; the other, blatantly, places the bays of the ancient Roman emperors on his own head... Pomp and ritual, legend and magical ceremonies, are enacted round them with an *eclat* which outshines the time-honoured, historically-founded institutions of traditional monarchy.<sup>178</sup>

Of course, insofar as the traditions of British monarchy related to ritual, they were 'time-honoured' and 'historically-founded' in a relative sense; it was only when compared with recent rival rituals that they could plausibly be described in this way. But, in the inter-war years, this is exactly the viewpoint which was taken. In 1936, for example, the *New Statesman* compared the 'kind and fatherly common sense of the king's Christmas broadcast' with the Nazi

<sup>177</sup> J. P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People* (London, 1975), pp. 39, 82, 85–6, 88–91; Sir N. Henderson, *Failure of a Mission: Berlin, 1937–1939* (London, 1940), pp. 70–1; Barden, *Nuremberg Party Rallies*, pp. 113–20, 125, 133–4; S. Morley, 'A Talent to Amuse': *A Biography of Noel Coward* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 193.

<sup>178</sup> B. Malinowski, 'A Nation-wide Intelligence Service', in C. Madge and T. Harrison, *First Year's Work, 1937–38* (London, 1938), p. 112.



official who 'ended by asking his audience all to join with him in offering the Nazi Christmas greeting to the leader – "Heil Hitler"'. Or, as Kingsley Martin put it even more pithily in the same year, 'if we drop the trappings of monarchy in the gutter . . . , Germany has taught us some guttersnipe will pick them up'.<sup>179</sup>

In these diverse and disorienting national and international circumstances, the appeal of Empire, and the ceremonial association of the crown with it, only increased – partly as a distraction from internal problems, and partly as an expression of the comforting belief that, in a newly competitive world of great power politics, Britain and her empire remained at the forefront. The Irish treaty, the independence of Egypt, the end of the Raj in India and the departure of Ireland and Burma may have implied that it was already on the wane. But the outstandingly successful tours of the Prince of Wales and the duke of York to the Dominions and India only cemented the bonds between crown and empire the more closely, so that each royal ritual remained an imperial, as well as a domestic occasion.<sup>180</sup> Here, for example, is Professor Malinowski's interpretation of the 'meaning' of the coronation of George VI:

The Coronation was, among other things, a large-scale ceremonial display of the greatness, power and wealth of Britain. It was also an occasion on which the unity of the Empire, the strength of its bonds, was publicly enacted . . . Psychologically, I think, there was no doubt that the Coronation generated an increased feeling of security, of stability, and the permanence of the British Empire.<sup>181</sup> Or, as George VI himself put it more succinctly in his own coronation broadcast: 'I felt this morning that the whole Empire was in very truth gathered within the walls of Westminster Abbey'.<sup>182</sup> And the coronation of his daughter was seen in the same broad, ample perspective. As Philip Ziegler has explained:

The Empire was already crumbling, but the Commonwealth still seemed a powerful reality. Bound together by its common monarchy, it would grow in strength and cohesion. Britain, still clinging valiantly to the trappings of a great power, would regain her proper place in the world.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>179</sup> *New Statesman*, 25 Jan. 1936; K. Martin, 'The Evolution of Popular Monarchy', *Political Quarterly*, vii (1936), pp. 155–6.

<sup>180</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI*, pp. 199, 215, 254, 302–4, 371–81; F. Donaldson, *Edward VIII* (London, 1976), chaps. 6–8.

<sup>181</sup> Malinowski, 'A Nation-Wide Intelligence Service', pp. 114–15.

<sup>182</sup> *The Times*, *Crown and Empire* (London, 1937), p. 184.

<sup>183</sup> Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 97.

Indeed, it is in this context that Elizabeth's own words must be set: 'I am sure that this, my Coronation, is not a symbol of a power and a splendour that are gone, but a declaration of our hopes in the future'.<sup>184</sup>

## VII

Under these circumstances, the 'meaning' of royal ritual was further developed and extended. Assuredly, the political power and personal appeal of the monarch, the attitude of the media, the condition of London and the state of technology, all of which had changed profoundly during the previous period, remained unaltered. As before, the monarch was the father of his people, and the patriarch of Empire, and the royal ceremonial was as splendid and successful as in the days of Esher. Yet, paradoxically, it is such very real elements of *continuity* which both disguise and explain *changes* in 'meaning'. For it was the very fact of continuity, at a time of internal unrest and international revolution, which imparted to royal ritual in England those attributes of uniqueness, tradition and permanence which, in the previous period, they had so conspicuously lacked. It was not so much despite, as because of, the continuity in style and circumstance, that the 'meaning' of royal ritual altered once more.

Moreover, the impression of continuity and stability was further enhanced by innovation, as new ceremonials were invented. One such series of innovations was centred on Queens Consort. During the period from the 1870s to the 1910s, no spouse of a monarch had died: Albert predeceased Victoria, and Alexandra outlived Edward. In this third phase, however, the role of the Queen Consort and Queen Dowager became important, and this was reflected in royal ritual. At her death in 1925, Queen Alexandra was accorded a state funeral which owed more to the precedent of her late husband than to Prince Albert.<sup>185</sup> Again, there was a lying-in-state (this time in Westminster Abbey), followed by the procession through the streets of London and then the private interment at Windsor. And, in the case of Queen Mary in 1953, the ceremonial resembled that of the monarchs themselves even more closely, for she actually lay in state in Westminster Hall. Equally new was the fact that, so as to give

<sup>184</sup> Frost, *Coronation*, p. 136.

<sup>185</sup> Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*, p. 302; Tanner, *Recollections of a Westminster Antiquary*, p. 67.

maximum proof of family solidarity, Queen Mary attended the coronation of her son as George VI, another novel precedent which was followed by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in 1953.<sup>186</sup>

The two public funerals of dowager queens were not the only new royal occasions invented during this period. Because of the age of Victoria and Edward, there were few weddings of the monarch's children during the second period, the last being in 1885 when Princess Beatrice married Prince Louis of Battenberg. But with two relatively young kings on the throne between 1910 and 1953, the potential for ceremonial derived more from the rites of passage of the earlier stages of the family life cycle was enhanced. In 1922, Princess Mary married Viscount Lascelles, and George V took the occasion to transfer royal marriages back from the privacy of Windsor or the Chapel Royal to the streets of London, by staging the ceremony in the Abbey, with a full procession beforehand.<sup>187</sup> As the duke of York explained, the result was a great public success: 'it is now no longer Mary's wedding, but (this from the papers) it is the "Abbey Wedding" or the "Royal Wedding" or the "National Wedding" or even the "People's Wedding"'.<sup>188</sup> This was followed in 1923 by the marriage of the duke of York, the first time a prince of the royal house had been wed in the Abbey for five hundred years. In 1934, the duke of Kent was also married there, and in 1947 so was Princess Elizabeth. But, significantly, the wedding of the duke of Gloucester, which took place in 1935, was staged in the relative seclusion of the Chapel Royal at Buckingham Palace, for fear that, in jubilee year, there might be too much royal ceremonial, and that its scarcity value might be eroded.<sup>189</sup>

But the novelty of Abbey weddings for royal children and state funerals for dowager queens was far surpassed by the Silver Jubilee of George V, for which, again, there was no exact precedent, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Victoria's accession having fallen at exactly the time of Albert's death and her seclusion. Once more, the innovation was a great success, arousing widespread feelings of enthusiasm and support. In Lord Salisbury's opinion, the occasion represented 'an astonishing testimony to the deeply founded stability and solidarity of this country and empire under Your Majesty's

<sup>186</sup> Lacey, *Majesty*, p. 116.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76–8; Nicolson, *King George the Fifth*, p. 92.

<sup>188</sup> J. Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary, 1867–1953* (London, 1959), pp. 519–20.

<sup>189</sup> Lacey, *Majesty*, p. 78; Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI*, p. 151.

authority'.<sup>190</sup> And Ramsay Macdonald, who described the service on jubilee day as 'glowing with emotion', was even more moved by a reception for the Dominion prime ministers: 'Here the Empire was a great family, the gathering of a family reunion, the King a paternal head. We all went away feeling that we had taken part in something very much like a Holy Communion'.<sup>191</sup> The idea of the monarchy as secular religion could not be more explicitly articulated. But the most extensive and, it seems, realistic appraisal of the popular feeling which the jubilee evoked is summarized in Harold Nicolson's biography:

There was pride in the first place, pride in the fact, that, whereas the other thrones had fallen, our own monarchy, unimpaired in dignity, had survived for more than a thousand years. Reverence in the thought that in the Crown we possessed a symbol of patriotism, a focus of unison, an emblem of continuity in a rapidly dissolving world. Satisfaction in feeling that the sovereign stood above all class animosities, all political ambitions, all sectional interests. Comfort in the realisation that here was a strong, benevolent patriarch, personifying the highest standards of the race. Gratitude to a man who by his probity had earned the esteem of the whole world. King George represented and enhanced those domestic and public virtues which the British regarded as specifically their own. In him, they saw, reflected and magnified, what they cherished as their own individual ideals – faith, duty, honesty, courage, common sense, tolerance, decency and truth.<sup>192</sup>

Whether such sentiments, expressed on this occasion, should be seen as evidence of the success of mobilizing bias or as a genuine efflorescence of collective opinion, or whether, indeed, they were some combination of the two, will no doubt remain a matter for debate. But that such feelings existed cannot be contested.

The remainder of the pageants of this period were of the type already established in the preceding phase of development. George V's funeral was an act of thanksgiving for the king who had survived the war and weathered the peace.<sup>193</sup> George VI's coronation was an extravagant, imperial re-affirmation of the stability of monarchy after the interruption of the abdication. And, again, his funeral was

<sup>190</sup> Longford, *House of Windsor*, p. 94.

<sup>191</sup> D. Marquand, *Ramsay Macdonald* (London, 1977), p. 774.

<sup>192</sup> Nicolson, *King George the Fifth*, pp. 671–2.

<sup>193</sup> The fullest account of this is given in *The Times*, *Hail and Farewell: The Passing of King George the Fifth* (London, 1936).

a further expression of national appreciation for a man who had not wished to be king, but had triumphed over war and a stammer by a strong sense of duty. The records of Mass Observation record widespread grief, shock and sympathy, so much so, indeed, that it seems likely that Richard Dimbleby's famous radio commentary describing the lying-in-state at Westminster Hall did in fact embody the feelings of the majority of his audience:

The oak of Sandringham, hidden beneath the rich, golden folds of the Standard. The slow flicker of the candles touches gently the gems of the Imperial Crown, even that ruby that Henry wore at Agincourt. It touches the deep, velvet purple of the cushion, and the cool, white flowers of the only wreath that lies upon the flag. How moving can such simplicity be. How real the tears of those who pass by and see it, and come out again, as they do at this moment in unbroken stream, to the cold, dark night and a little privacy for their thoughts... Never safer, better guarded, lay a sleeping king than this, with a golden candlelight to warm his resting place, and the muffled footsteps of his devoted subjects to keep him company... How true tonight of George the Faithful is that single sentence spoken by an unknown man of his beloved father: 'The sunset of his death tinged the whole world's sky.'<sup>194</sup>

The contrast between this proud, loyal, reverential, popular broadcast, and the savage *Times* editorial on the occasion of the death of George IV, well illustrates the extent to which popular attitude towards royal ceremony and royal occasions had altered.

The last great ceremony in this sequence, successfully conflating monarchy and empire, stressing stability in an age of change, and celebrating the continuity of Britain as a great power, was the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953. For it was still avowedly an *imperial* occasion, with the queen's dress containing embroidered emblems of the dominions, with regiments of Commonwealth and colonial troops marching in procession, with the prime ministers of the Dominions and India present in the Abbey, and an assortment of heads of state from various exotic colonial protectorates.<sup>195</sup> At the time, it seemed as though the threats and challenges of the war and austerity period had been surmounted: the empire was still largely

<sup>194</sup> Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby*, pp. 227–9; L. Miall (ed.), *Richard Dimbleby: Broadcaster* (London, 1966), pp. 75–6. For popular reaction to the death of the king, see: Ziegler, *Crown and People*, pp. 84–96.

<sup>195</sup> Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets*, p. 498.

intact; the problem of Indian independence and republican status within the Commonwealth had been triumphantly resolved; Churchill was back at 10 Downing Street; Britain had once more asserted her place as a great power; there was a new Elizabethan age around the corner. All this was not only implicit, but was self-consciously articulated at the time of the coronation. According to the *Delhi Express*,

the second Elizabethan era begins on a note of spiritual buoyancy which Britain has never experienced before. At no time in British history has she enjoyed the moral prestige which the Commonwealth, including Britain, now commands.

In this excessively euphoric context, it is not entirely surprising that the archbishop of Canterbury should feel that Britain was close to the Kingdom of Heaven on Coronation Day, or that Elizabeth herself should make her ringing declaration of faith in the future.<sup>196</sup>

The appeal of this sequence of ceremonies is well gauged by the high level of commercial exploitation and commemoration. Once more, at jubilees and coronations, commemorative pottery proliferated. Indeed, so anxious were domestic manufacturers to profit from the coronation in 1937 that a 100 per cent import duty was imposed on all foreign, imported souvenirs. In 1953, Birmingham Corporation offered local children a choice between a Bible, *Elizabeth Our Queen* by Richard Dimbleby, a spoon and fork, two commemorative mugs, a tin of chocolate, propelling pencils, a pen knife or a dish with a portrait of the queen.<sup>197</sup> Commemorative medals in the manner of campaign badges were once more awarded, and collectors' medals were again privately produced.<sup>198</sup> But these were in smaller numbers than before, largely because two new modes of commemoration were appearing. The first was the planting, throughout the empire, of trees, an innovation particularly noteworthy at the coronations of George

<sup>196</sup> Briggs, *History of Broadcasting*, iv, p. 470; Martin, *Crown and the Establishment*, p. 15. The best accounts of all the great royal ceremonials, from the Silver Jubilee of George V to the coronation of his granddaughter, are those by Sir Henry Channon. See: Rhodes James, 'Chips', pp. 32-3, 54-7, 123-6, 464-5, 472-4, 275-7.

<sup>197</sup> Rodgers, *Commemorative Souvenirs*, pp. 38-43.

<sup>198</sup> See app., table 2. Official medals were again produced at the Royal Mint for George V's jubilee and George VI's coronation, in the manner customary since 1887. But in 1953, there was no official Coronation Medal from the Royal Mint, only a Crown. Edmundson's comment is instructive: 'It was argued by collectors that not to produce such a medal was a serious break with tradition, but it was pointed out that in modern times, the 'tradition' had only existed since the Coronation of Edward VII.' Edmundson, *Collecting Modern Commemorative Medals*, pp. 65-6.

VI and Elizabeth II.<sup>199</sup> The second, dating from the time of George V's Silver Jubilee, was the issuing by the Post Office of specially designed commemorative stamps. Previously, the issuing of royal commemoratives had been limited to the empire, and in England only such secular festivals as the Empire Exhibition at Wembley had received notice. But from 1935, every royal jubilee, coronation, major wedding and wedding anniversary (but not, significantly, births or funerals) has been the subject of a special issue.<sup>200</sup> Once more, it was an innovation; but well within 'traditional' moulds.

### VIII

By definition, the period since the coronation in 1953 is too recent for detailed or satisfactory historical analysis. While it seems clear that the 'meaning' of royal ritual has entered a new phase, in which many of the presuppositions of the previous period have ceased to be valid, it is not as yet entirely clear how, positively, it might be described. But, in the interest of completeness, here are some observations consistent with the analysis employed thus far. To begin with, the political power of the monarch remains limited, or at least is exercised so discreetly that it seems not to matter. In a recent poll, 86 per cent of those asked felt that the queen 'was a figurehead, signing laws and doing what the government directs her to do'.<sup>201</sup> At the same time, the queen has carried on those traditions of 'extreme consciousness and dutifulness' which have characterized the British monarchy since the reign of her grandfather, and remained loyal to the Georgian synthesis of private probity and public grandeur. Above all, in a period when large parts of London

<sup>199</sup> E.g., Coronation Planting Committee, *The Royal Record of Tree Planting, the Provision of Open Spaces, Recreation Grounds and Other Schemes Undertaken in the British Empire and Elsewhere, Especially in the United States of America, in Honour of the Coronation of His Majesty King George VI* (Cambridge, 1939).

<sup>200</sup> L. N. and M. Williams, *Commemorative Postage Stamps of Great Britain, 1890–1966* (London, 1967), pp. 9, 25–40; T. Todd, *A History of British Postage Stamps, 1660–1940* (London, 1941), pp. 211, 214, 215, 217; H. D. S. Haverbeck, *The Commemorative Stamps of the British Commonwealth* (London, 1955), pp. 89–94. See also app., table 5. It is noteworthy that Britain was slow to adopt commemorative stamps in comparison with both Europe and the empire. In most European countries, special stamps had been issued for anniversaries and jubilees in the period 1890–1914, and in the empire, Newfoundland had issued special stamps to commemorate the coronation of George V. See: Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions', p. 19.

<sup>201</sup> Rose and Kavanagh, 'The Monarchy in Contemporary British Culture', p. 551.

have been rebuilt, men have been put on the moon, and Concorde has brought New York within commuting distance, the romantic glamour of anachronistic ceremony has become all the more appealing. As Sir Charles Petrie explains, 'the modern world has been so mechanised that its inhabitants are clutching at every chance which presents itself to escape from its monotony', and the monarchy, whose 'pageantry and ceremonial' brings 'glamour, mystery and excitement' into the lives of millions, is especially well equipped to do this.<sup>202</sup> If, for example, the queen had travelled to St Paul's Cathedral in a limousine for her Jubilee Thanksgiving Service, much of the splendour of the occasion would have been lost.

Of greater significance has been the way in which royal ceremony has been an antidote to, or legitimation of, social change domestically, in a manner closely reminiscent of the previous period. As the lengthening perspective makes clear, the effect of the Second World War was in many ways far greater, socially and economically, than that of the First. The aristocracy has virtually vanished as part of government. There has been a decline in public conformity to Christian ethics. Problems of race, colour, violence, crime and drug addiction have proliferated. Opinion, and legislation, has changed markedly on issues such as the death penalty, abortion, pre-marital sex and homosexuality. Wealth and income have been redistributed, not drastically, but certainly more than ever before this century. So, in an 'egalitarian, sexually permissive and multi-racial society', the monarchy remains true to that public, ceremonial role identified by Harold Nicolson when describing the Silver Jubilee of George V: 'a guarantee of stability, security, continuity – the preservation of tradition values'.<sup>203</sup> Or, as a recent opinion poll put it, more fully:

Its existence means safety, stability and continued national prestige: it promises religious sanction and moral leadership; it is 'above party' focus for group identification; it means gaiety, excitement and the satisfaction of ceremonial pageantry; it is an important, and perhaps an increasingly important, symbol of national prestige.<sup>204</sup>

As those concluding words suggest, the role of royal ritual has also acquired a new meaning in an international context, as Britain's

<sup>202</sup> Sir Charles Petrie, *The Modern British Monarchy* (London, 1957), p. 215; Harris, *Long to Reign Over Us?*, pp. 27, 55.

<sup>203</sup> Lacey, *Majesty*, p. 245; Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 198; A. Duncan, *The Reality of Monarchy* (London, 1970), p. 95.

<sup>204</sup> Harris, *Long to Reign Over Us?*, p. 137.



world position has declined profoundly. The fond, euphoric hopes of the coronation – that there was a new Elizabethan age ahead – have proved vain. Indeed, to perceptive observers at that ceremony, the writing was already on the wall. One American commentator, not taken in by the buoyancy of the occasion, suggested that ‘this show’ was in part ‘put on by the British for a psychological boost to their somewhat shaky empire’.<sup>205</sup> And, significantly, Elizabeth’s title was much less grandly imperial than that of her three predecessors. For she was neither empress of India, nor ruler of ‘the British Dominions beyond the Sea’, but merely ‘Head of the Commonwealth’.<sup>206</sup> Since then, the slide into impotence has only accelerated, with the break up of the colonial empire, the disappearance of the last generation of imperial statesmen like Smuts and Menzies, the fiasco of Suez, the problems of Biafra and Northern Ireland, recurrent economic crises and the entry of Britain into the Common Market. Indeed, the state funeral of Sir Winston Churchill in 1965, poised exactly half way between Elizabeth’s coronation and Silver Jubilee, was not only the last rites of the great man himself, but was also self-consciously recognized at the time as being the requiem for Britain as a great power.<sup>207</sup>

So, ‘as the power of Britain waned... pride grew in the Royal family as something which was uniquely ours and which no country could match’.<sup>208</sup> Just as, in previous periods of international change, the ritual of monarchy was of importance in legitimating the novelty of formal empire and in giving an impression of stability at a time of international bewilderment, so in the post-war world it has provided a comfortable palliative to the loss of world-power status. When watching a great royal occasion, impeccably planned, faultlessly executed, and with a commentary stressing (however mistakenly) the historic continuity with those former days of Britain’s greatness, it is almost possible to believe that they have not entirely vanished. As Richard Dimbleby noted condescendingly at the time of the coronation, the Americans might be ‘a race of such vitality’, but they were so ‘lacking in tradition’ that ‘they must wait a thousand years before they can show the world anything so significant

<sup>205</sup> Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, p. 471.

<sup>206</sup> Longford, *House of Windsor*, p. 196; Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets*, pp. 498–9.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 545–57; Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby*, pp. 370–5; B. Levin, *The Pendulum Years: Britain in the Sixties* (London, 1972), pp. 399–407; R. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 3 vols. (London, 1975–7), i, pp. 141–3, 145.

<sup>208</sup> Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 84.

or so lovely'.<sup>209</sup> And, since 1953, this attitude has become more widespread, as evidence of decline has proved inescapable. In the words of D. C. Cooper, 'while people can see the gloved hand waving from the golden coach, they feel assured that all is well with the nation, whatever its true state'. The 'tendency to elevate royalty as national prestige declines', to stress as never before the grandeur and uniqueness of its ceremonial in particular, has been especially marked in post-war Britain.<sup>210</sup>

As such, it has been greatly facilitated by the impact of television, which has made the royal pageants accessible in a vivid and immediate manner which neither the radio nor newsreels could achieve. Here, as in other ways, the coronation of Elizabeth was a bridge between an older era and a new phase of development. For while the tone of Richard Dimbleby's commentary placed it in a world which had more in common with 1935 (or even 1897) than 1977, the fact that it was a television commentary, and that more people *watched* the ceremony on television than *listened* to it on radio, made it clear that a new way of reporting the great occasions of state had been perfected.<sup>211</sup> Largely as a result of television, Elizabeth was, indeed, the 'first British sovereign truly to be crowned, as the rubric requires, "in the sight of the people"'. Hence the comment of Shils and Young, who regarded the whole occasion as an 'act of national communion'.<sup>212</sup> For never before had it been possible for the population as a whole to see the ceremonial as it happened, thereby obtaining an unprecedented sense of active participation.

But, as with the press or radio, the medium of television also contained a message. And, significantly, while television has cut politicians down to size, so that the grand manner in parliament or Whitehall is now no longer effective, it has continued to adopt the same reverential attitude towards the monarchy which radio pioneered in the days of Reith. On the one hand, such programmes as the film 'Royal Family' have successfully perpetuated the picture of the queen and her family as quintessentially middle-class.<sup>213</sup> On

<sup>209</sup> Miall, *Richard Dimbleby*, p. 83.

<sup>210</sup> D. C. Cooper, 'Looking Back in Anger', in V. Bogdanor and R. Skidelsky (eds.), *The Age of Affluence, 1951-64* (London, 1970), p. 260; Harris, *Long to Reign Over Us?*, pp. 18, 52.

<sup>211</sup> Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, pp. 457-73; Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby*, pp. 223-39.

<sup>212</sup> Lacey, *Majesty*, p. 208; Shils and Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation', p. 80.

<sup>213</sup> Ziegler, *Crown and People*, pp. 131-7.

the other, the coverage of the great state ceremonials has enhanced the picture of grandeur and fairytale splendour which Reith and B.B.C. Radio did so much to promote. Of special significance in this regard were the commentaries of Richard Dimbleby, who covered every major royal occasion for the B.B.C. between the coronation and his death in 1965. For his eloquent, emotional commentaries, lit up by profound devotion to the monarchy and a romantic feeling for history and tradition, described royal ritual in the most fulsome, obsequious terms. By explaining the ceremonial and expressing a sense of history in the manner he did, Dimbleby's commentaries were of the greatest significance in presenting the ritual of monarchy as a festival of freedom and celebration of continuity in a worried and distracted age. As his biographer notes, in the 1950s and early 1960s, Richard Dimbleby, by his commentaries, 'did more than any other individual to secure the position of the monarch in the affections of the British people'.<sup>214</sup>

So, despite the initial misgivings about the live broadcast of the coronation, it proved to be so successful that all subsequent royal ceremonial occasions have been primarily television spectacles. Indeed, this element has brooked so large that it has even influenced the nature of the rituals themselves. At the Prince of Wales's investiture at Carnarvon, for instance, the canopy above the dais was deliberately made transparent so that the television cameras might see through it.<sup>215</sup> As for the ceremonies themselves, they have again had more in common with the monarchies of George V and VI than with Victoria or Edward: they have been the rites of passage of a relatively young family, rather than the jubilees, funerals and coronations of venerable monarchs. The weddings of Princess Margaret (1960), the duke of Kent (1961), Princess Alexandra (1963) and Princess Anne (1973), the investiture of the Prince of Wales (1969) and the Queen's Silver Jubilee (1977), as well as the state opening of parliament since 1958 have all been essays in television ritual.

It is in this 'traditional' but changed context that the Silver Jubilee of 1977 may most usefully be set. At one level, that of public reaction, that occasion may be seen as part of a tradition harking back to the

<sup>214</sup> Miall, *Richard Dimbleby*, pp. 145–6, 157, 161, 167; Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby*, pp. 225–52, 326–30.

<sup>215</sup> For an account of television coverage of royal ceremonial, see: R. Baker, 'Royal Occasions', in Mary Wilson *et al.*, *The Queen: A Penguin Special* (Harmondsworth, 1977), pp. 105–27.

Silver Jubilee of George V and the more venerable celebrations of Victoria: a popular piece of well-planned pageantry which the public enjoyed. At another level, however, the grand, unrivalled pomp and circumstance of the occasion was seen as a perfect tonic to Britain's declining self-esteem:

We were all sharing a rich piece of history... Somebody said that Britain may have lost out on a number of things, but we can still show the world a clean pair of heels when it comes to ceremonial. Yesterday's pageantry was a superb example... It proves there is something to be said for doing things the old-fashioned way.<sup>216</sup>

But, at the same time, the experts also recognized that the diminished scale of the ceremonial placed the event emphatically in a new, post-imperial age:

Only a few members of the Royal Family would accompany the queen on her drive to St Paul's; there would only be a handful of troops from overseas to supplement the anyway modest British contingent; no foreign potentates... would lend exotic glamour to the proceedings.<sup>217</sup>

In different ways, then, the jubilee ceremonial was an expression of national and imperial decline, an attempt to persuade, by pomp and circumstance, that no such decline had really taken place, or to argue that, even if it had, it really did not matter.

## IX

The account of the evolution of royal ritual which has been sketched in here would certainly surprise both those nineteenth- and twentieth-century authorities quoted at the beginning of this article. Ceremonial which was badly performed has now become so well stage-managed that the British have been able to persuade themselves (despite overwhelming historical evidence to the contrary) that they are good at ritual because they always have been. And, however much literacy and education have increased, the liking which the British public has for royal pageant and display has grown rather than lessened. Old ceremonies have been adapted and new rituals invented, the combined effect of which has been, paradoxically, to give an impression of stability in periods of domestic change, and of continuity and comfort in times of international tension and decline. While there may be a sense in which the British monarchy legitimates the status quo, the fact remains that during the last two hundred years or so,

<sup>216</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 8 June 1977.

<sup>217</sup> Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 176.

the status quo has itself changed profoundly, and the public, ceremonial image of the monarchy has changed along with it. If, as seems possible, the next coronation takes place without a house of lords, a Commonwealth or an Established Church, the role of the ceremonial in creating the comforting picture of stability, tradition and continuity will only be further enhanced. The dynamic dialogue between ritual and society, between text and context, will continue.

At the same time, the picture of evolution, development and change which has been presented here may surprise those commentators and journalists who, on every great royal ceremonial occasion, talk glibly of a 'thousand-year-old tradition'. Of course it is true that the monarchy and some of its ceremonies are, genuinely, thus antique. Nor can it be denied that in England, as in much of Europe, there was a previous period in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when lavish and splendid royal ceremony abounded. But, as Professor Hobsbawm has argued, the continuity which the invented traditions of the late nineteenth century seek to establish with this earlier phase is largely illusory.<sup>218</sup> For while the materials out of which they were forged may have been on occasions genuinely venerable, their 'meaning' was specifically related to the social, political, economic and cultural circumstances of the time.

In Britain, as in Europe generally, there seem to have been two great phases of royal ceremonial efflorescence. The first was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and was centred on absolutism in pre-industrial society. By the early nineteenth century, after a last gasp under Napoleon, this phase of development was past, and was succeeded by a second period of invented, ceremonial splendour which began in the 1870s or 1880s, and lasted until 1914. In Austria, Russia and Germany, it was once more centred on royal power, however much it might be declining. But in England, it was centred on royal weakness, and in France and the United States it was centred, perhaps less successfully, on republican loyalties. Moreover, this second major phase of ritualistic efflorescence took place in societies whose economic and social structures differed profoundly from those which had existed in the previous period of ceremonial inventiveness, with the result that the motives of those who promoted and invented such new 'traditions', and the manner in which contemporaries interpreted and understood them, had also changed profoundly.

It is, then, in this second period of international, competitive,

<sup>218</sup> Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions', pp. 1, 11.

ceremonial inventiveness that can most immediately be located the *origins* of those grand and splendid rituals which English commentators assume go back for a thousand years. But at the same time, the most important element in the *survival* of these 'traditions' to the present day lies in the unique continuity preserved between pre- and post-First World War royal ritual. In Austria, Germany and Russia, the rituals invented in the period from the 1870s to the First World War were swept away in the years 1917–19 along with the monarchies whose image they were designed to enhance. So the new ruling élites which replaced them in the inter-war years were obliged to begin again. In Britain, by contrast, the monarchy survived, and the 'invented traditions' along with it. So, to the extent that innovation did take place in the ceremonial image of the British monarchy in the inter-war years, it was within, not outside, the formula which had been evolved in the years before the First World War.

Of necessity, this is a limited account of a broad and complex subject, and even in a chapter of this length, it has been impossible to pursue all the themes and ramifications in the detail which they merit. All that has been attempted here is a description of the changing nature, performance and context of royal ritual, in the hope that this offers some explanation of how it is that similar ceremonies have meant different things to different people at different times. Of course, the phases of evolution are more easily (and, no doubt, too crudely) identified than the dynamics of change are explained. But at least this approach seems to make more sense of the evidence, at the level of meaning, than the approach of those anthropologists who look at ritual *indépendant de tout sujet, de tout objet, et de toute contexte*, or of those sociologists who see the context as static and unchanging. And if, in such an essay in 'thick' description, the text of ceremony has on occasions disappeared in the context of circumstance, that only serves to demonstrate just how 'thick' the description needs to be. For if, indeed, cultural forms are to be treated as texts, as imaginative works built out of social materials, then it is to an investigation of those social materials and of the people who – consciously or unawares – do the building, that our attention needs to be directed, rather than to an intricate and decontextualized analysis of the texts themselves.<sup>219</sup> Using the example of British royal ceremonial during the last two hundred years, this essay is one tentative step in that direction.

<sup>219</sup> Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 449.

## Appendix: statistical tables

Table 1. *Expenditure on coronations*

Coronation	Cost (£)
George IV, 1821	238,238
William IV, 1831	42,298
Victoria, 1838	69,421
Edward VII, 1902	193,000
George V, 1911	185,000
George VI, 1937	454,000
Elizabeth II, 1953	912,000

Sources: H. Jennings and C. Madge, *May the Twelfth* (London, 1937), pp. 4–5; C. Frost, *Coronation, June 2 1953* (London, 1978), p. 24.

Note: In the case of Elizabeth's coronation, the parliamentary estimates for 1952–3 came to £1,560,000; but £648,000 was recovered from the sale of seats.

Table 2. *Commemorative medals struck to celebrate royal events*

Reign	Occasion	Date	Number
George IV	Coronation	1821	40
William IV	Coronation	1831	15
Victoria	Coronation	1838	30
Victoria	Golden Jubilee	1887	113
Victoria	Diamond Jubilee	1897	80
Edward VII	Coronation	1902	100
George V	Coronation	1911	42
George V	Silver Jubilee	1935	12
Edward VIII	Coronation	1937	36

Source: J. A. Mackay, *Commemorative Medals* (London, 1970), pp. 75–8, revising M. H. Grant, 'British Medals since 1760', *British Numismatic Journal*, xxii (1936–7), pp. 269–93, xxiii (1938–41), pp. 119–52, 321–62, 449–80.

Table 3. *Choral settings of the national anthem*

Decade	Number	Decade	Number
1801–10	2	1871–80	4
1811–20	2	1881–90	3
1821–30	3	1891–1900	7
1831–40	6	1901–10	14
1841–50	3	1911–20	3
1851–60	4	1921–30	1
1861–70	1	1931–7	3

Source: P. A. Scholes, 'God Save the Queen'!: *The History and Romance of the World's First National Anthem* (London, 1954), pp. 274–9.

Table 4. *Commemorative statues erected in London and Washington*

Decade	London	Washington	Decade	London	Washington
1801-10	3	0	1871-80	13	7
1811-20	1	0	1881-90	14	8
1821-30	2	0	1891-1900	11	6
1831-40	5	0	1901-10	18	14
1841-50	8	0	1911-20	13	7
1851-60	7	2	1921-8	7	8
1861-70	10	1			

Sources: Lord Edward Gleichen, *London's Open Air Statuary* (London, 1973 edn), *passim*; J. M. Goode, *The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C.: A Comprehensive Historical Guide* (Washington, 1974), *passim*.

Note: This list is confined to commemorative, free-standing or equestrian statues, and excludes reliefs, allegorical, fountain, animal, abstract and cemetery sculpture. But if all these were added, the same trend would still be apparent.

Table 5. *Issues of royal commemorative stamps*

Reign	Occasion	Date Stamps issued	Total sold
George V	Silver Jubilee	1935 ½d., 1d., 1½d., 2½d.	1,008,000,000
George VI	Coronation	1937 ½d.	388,731,000
George VI	Silver Wedding	1948 2½d., £1	147,919,628
Elizabeth II	Coronation	1953 2½d., 4d., 1s.3d., 1s.6d.	448,849,000
Elizabeth II	Investiture of Prince of Wales	1969 5d., 9d., 1s.	125,825,604
Elizabeth II	Silver Wedding	1972 3p, 20p	66,389,100
Elizabeth II	Silver Jubilee	1977 8½p, 9p, 10p, 11p, 13p	159,000,000

Sources: A. G. Rigo de Righi, *The Stamp of Royalty: British Commemorative Issues for Royal Occasions, 1935-1972* (London, 1973), pp. 14, 19, 26, 33, 41, 48; S. Gibbons, *Great Britain: Specialised Stamp Catalogue*, ii, *King Edward VII to George V*, 3rd edn (London, 1974), pp. 172, 207, 211; *idem*, *Great Britain: Specialised Stamp Catalogue*, iii, *Queen Elizabeth II: Pre-Decimal Issues* (London, 1976), pp. 148-9, 254-6; H. D. S. Haverbeck, *The Commemorative Stamps of the British Commonwealth* (London, 1955), pp. 91, 92, 94.

Note: Haverbeck gives the figure of 450,000,000 for the 1937 coronation issue. I have taken the lower figure from Gibbons.