Fall 2014

Convocations of Empire: Public Spectacle and Ceremony in Britain, 1851-2012

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A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Studies

by
Ryan G. Hudnall
December, 2014

Mentor: Dr. R. Barry Levis
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Rollins College
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Dedication

While I was working on my thesis, I lost both my grandmother to a long and difficult illness and my great aunt to a sudden and unexpected health issue. I was supported by both throughout my years in school and I cared for both immensely. I was fortunate to be able to spend a good deal of time with my grandmother before she passed, and every time I saw her she told me how proud she was of the work I was doing in school. So now that my work is finished, I want to dedicate this project to both my Grandma Bernard and my Big Aunt Sara in their loving memory and in honor of their unwavering support for my academic endeavors. I miss them both and I dearly wish that they were here to see the work finally done.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of people for their unwavering support throughout my time as a candidate for the Master of Liberal Studies degree. Without the assistance of my loved ones, my friends, my fellow students, my professors, and a few great authors, musicians and filmmakers, I would have fallen flat on my face countless times by now. I am in your debt.

First, I must thank my fellow graduate students for challenging, exasperating, and encouraging me throughout my time at Rollins. In particular, however, I would like to thank my dear friends in the MLS "House of Satyricon": Mandy Turnbull, Mary Robinson, Matthew Williamson, Carolina Castaneda, and Chip Smith. I would not have lasted in the MLS program without each of you. Additionally, I want to thank Gerry Wolfson-Grande for her endless encouragement and many hours spent discussing writing, great books, and the like. You have all been wonderful companions on this academic journey, and I will look forward to remaining friends with each of you for many years to come.

I must also thank my closest non-Rollins friends for their steady companionship and fraternity for all these years. In particular, I want to thank my oldest friend, Chandra "Spookychan" Free, my dearest friend, Will "The Thrill" Lloyd, and my best friend, Jeff "Illyich" Hinzmann. Jeff merits particular acknowledgement as a brilliant academic interlocutor and as an unwavering supporter whenever I have been troubled or have simply had random thoughts I wish to discuss. You are all wonderful.

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge many of my other friends and acquaintances. There are too many of you to name, but I trust you know who you are. I do, however, want to give special acknowledgement to my friend Aaron "Air Bear" Volk in Chicago. As a fellow insomniac, he's been up late with me as I've pulled countless all-nighters—usually because he's

pulling them, too! Our text conversations have been sustaining and always interesting. I'm looking forward to continuing them for many years to come.

Perhaps unusually, I would also like to thank Sir Edward Elgar for giving me a very British soundtrack as I wrote about the Britain of days past. Along those lines, I'd also like to thank the Pink Floyd for reminding me that "hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way" whenever I had my own moments of desperation as a writer. Shine on, you crazy diamonds.

More importantly, however, I have several professors to thank who have taught me more than they'll ever know. Drs. Rubarth, Dennis, Chambliss, and Sinclair all overwhelmed me with their intelligence, scholarship, and teaching. From this student's perspective, each of you demonstrate what it means to be a fantastic professor. I would also like to thank Dr. Tom Cook, "Brother Cook," for getting me to think about new ideas, for engaging me in countless hours of genuinely kind and thoughtful conversation, and for taking me to Turkey to see an amazing cultural and historical crossroads state in action. Above all, I want to thank Brother Cook for being one of the very finest professors I will ever have the pleasure of knowing. You, Sir, are someone that I will never stop looking up to.

Of course, there are two professors that I must thank above all others: my thesis reader and longtime mentor, Dr. Susan Libby, and the great Dr. Barry Levis. Susan is one of the kindest and wisest people you could ever hope to meet. She's also a damn fine art historian and someone who has impeccable taste in art, music, film, fashion, and husbands. As a teacher, she's taught me far more than I think she realizes, both about art history and life. I've literally learned to look at the world differently thanks to her influence, and I could not be happier to have had my eyes opened. I can't say thank you enough for everything.

And then there is Barry Levis. His Lordship. I could write pages about what Dr. Levis has meant to me as a professor, confidant, mentor, and friend. Like so many students who have passed through Rollins, he gave me a sense of academic direction. He taught me to write. He challenged my worldview, my politics, and my worst habits as a student. He praised me when I deserved it, and he expressed his extreme displeasure when I deserved that, too. He pushed me always. In recent years, he's helped me to complete a thesis project that I am proud to say I wrote. Above all, I've always known that he's wanted me to succeed as a student and as a person. This is no surprise, really; that's what the great professors want. As a person, Barry is as kind and generous as he is smart, and he's as smart and well-read as anyone you could ever hope to meet. I should know… When he retired, he bequeathed to me many of his books. He has always been generous with me in such ways. I could go on and on, but I fear that I've already proven inadequate to the task of saying what it has meant to me to be advised and mentored by Barry Levis. Suffice it to say, he is as close to a hero as I will probably ever have. He has my most sincere gratitude and then some. Levis, you're the best.

Finally, I want to thank my family. My grandparents have always been there for me in loving support, and I love them back more than they'll ever know. I want to thank my father for his continuing support, and also for teaching me that public service matters in life. If I'm lucky enough to become a teacher someday, I'll be following in his footsteps when it comes to serving our community. I love and respect him for all that he's done, and I'm proud to call him my father. And, of course, I have to thank my wonderful, caring, supportive, and loving mother. I could not have gone back to graduate school without her support. She is, quite simply, the best mother in the world. No other words will suffice to express my admiration and love for her.

Preface

My decision to base this thesis project on the role of the major public events in modern British history originates with my childhood fascination for ceremony. Perhaps because I grew up in Orlando, Florida, with its many theme parks, I became accustomed at an early age to being entertained by a certain type of popular spectacle. As I grew older and became far more enamored with Britain and British history than I had ever been with Mickey Mouse, I found something very familiar with the British tendency to make a production over royalty, empire, and culture. After all, theme parks draw on many of the same concepts associated with the British spectacle—grand street parades, fairytale princes and princesses, nostalgia for bygone eras—to construct temporary realities for their spectating patrons. So there was from the start something comfortable and familiar with the idea that public spectacles held real draw for crowds of people.

Over time, and as my private life as an Anglophile received encouragement from fellow travelers, I grew fascinated with the particulars of what popular spectacles represented in British history and society. Specifically, I became deeply interested in the ways that contemporary spectacles continued to reflect upon the now defunct British Empire. It was not, however, merely certain historical homages within the events that fascinated me; rather, it was the fact that I saw how contemporary spectacles often built upon precedents established by previous events. Consequently, I realized that by tracing the evolution of spectacles, I might be able to say something interesting about the evolution of modern British history, particularly as it concerned the history of the British Empire. Knowing that my academic program required an interdisciplinary approach for any thesis project, I became convinced that in addition to exploring the fundamental historical framework surrounding modern British spectacles, I would also be able to explore the anthropological, sociological, and philosophical underpinnings

associated with the major convocations of the British Empire. Broadly speaking, such explorations constitute the main purpose of this project.

I have focused on what I believe to be the most significant and grand public gatherings of recent British history, starting with the Great Exhibition. I also consider the implications of the Jubilees of Queen Victoria, the war memorial movements and commemorations in the aftermath of the World Wars, the Coronation of Elizabeth II, and the various major events of recent decades. While this constitutes an expansive period of time, the distance between events allows for a wide-lens perspective on the rise and fall of the British Empire. I believe that this approach has benefitted the project, even if it requires the reader to make certain historical leaps forward with each new chapter. Finally, I have sought to reveal certain elements of propaganda, power, and discourse present in most of the events this project examines.

While this project constitutes a labor of love, I hope that my approach, purpose, and scholarship combine to propose some interesting and original ideas for the reader. Because as long as British spectacles such as Royal Weddings remain global media events, even disinterested observers will encounter the tradition of Britain's massive public gatherings. On a more localized level, large public gatherings in Britain continue to reveal something of "Britishness" to Britons and non-Britons alike. Indeed, the grand public spectacle represents nothing less than a key feature of British identity and cultural expression in the modern era. This project tells of that representation.

Ryan G. Hudnall
Orlando, Florida
November 11, 2014

Chapter One:

Introduction:
Finding Modern British Ceremonial History

As the news of an extraordinary incident taking place on the evening of October 16, 1834 spread quickly throughout London, throngs of Londoners gathered on the south bank of the Thames and in the streets of Westminster to witness the spectacle unfold: a massive fire had engulfed the Houses of the Lords and Commons in the Palace of Westminster.[1] As the *Times* put it, "the ill news spread rapidly through the town … attract[ing] the attention of not only passengers in the streets, but if we may judge from the thousands of persons who in a few minutes were seen hurrying to Westminster, of the vast majority of inhabitants of the metropolis."[2] Among the members of the crowd who bore witness to the scene was the painter J.M.W. Turner. Turner sketched the scene as it unfolded, later using his sketches to paint two masterpieces and numerous watercolors of the conflagration.[3] Turner's paintings of the scene, both entitled *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons,* captured the carnival atmosphere that accompanied the fire (Figs. 1.1, 1.2).[4]

Painted from two different angles, Turner established different perspectives on the incident. The painting currently housed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Fig. 1.1) shows the

[1] "Destruction of Both Houses of Parliament By Fire," *The Times*, October 17, 1834.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Edward Eigen, "On the Record: J. M. W. Turner's Studies for the "Burning of the Houses of Parliament" and Other Uncertain Bequests to History," *Grey Room,* 31 (2008): 69-70; *The Philadelphia Museum of Art: Handbook of the Collections*, ed. Sherry Babbitt (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1995), 189; Paul Gallagher, "Mystery of JMW Turner's famous 'Burning of the Houses of Parliament' solved at last," *The Independent*, March 18, 2014, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/mystery-of-jmw-turners-famous-burning-of-the-houses-of-parliament-solved-at-last-9200409.html. While scholars continue to agree that the two paintings that Turner made of the 1834 fire in Parliament do indeed represent attempts to capture that particular event, much debate centers around whether or not some of Turner's watercolors of the occasion actually depict the Westminster fire. Tate Gallery cataloger Matthew Imms recently argued that two of Turner's watercolors depict an entirely different fire at the Tower of London in 1841.
[4] Since both paintings bear the same name with only the most subtle of variations, this essay will distinguish between them by identifying the ownership of each painting whenever they are referenced individually.

fire from a vantage point directly across the Thames. The painting housed in the Cleveland

Fig. 1.1. J.M.W. Turner, *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, October 16, 1834*, 1835.[5]

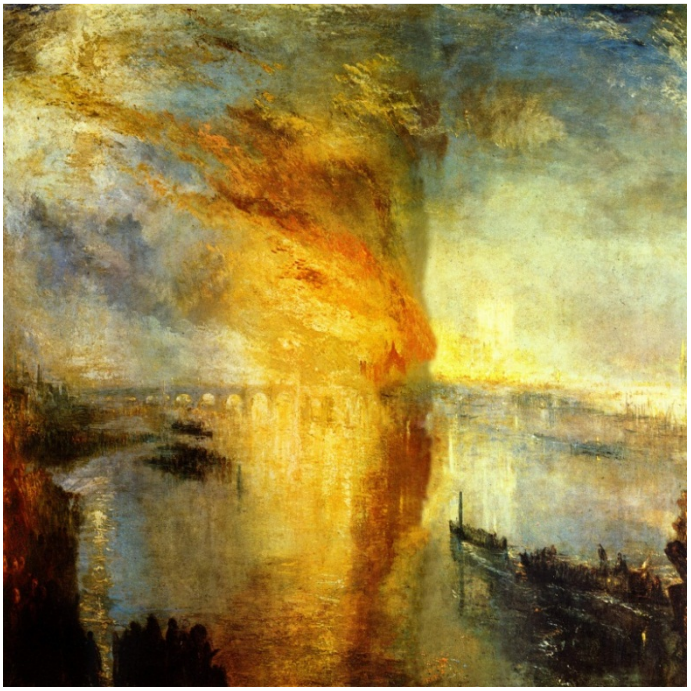

Fig. 1.2. J.M.W. Turner, *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16 October 1834*, 1835.[6]

[5] For more information, see: http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/103831.html
[6] For more information, see: http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1942.647

Museum of Art (Fig. 1.2) presents the scene from a greater distance.[7] Turner, while maintaining the vivid colors of the burning Houses of Parliament as the defining feature of both paintings, places a good deal of emphasis on the London observers of the fire, especially in the Philadelphia Museum of Art's (PMA) painting. The scene is set almost as if in a theater.[8] In the Cleveland Museum of Art's (CMA) painting, however, Turner pulls back from the fire far enough to allow the viewer to assume the position of one of the observers who did not venture into Westminster. In the CMA's painting, the majority of the spectators appear as either indistinct figures on boats or along the edges of the painting; the impossibly high flames dominate both the canvas and the viewer's attention. By highlighting these perspectival contrasts, each painting focuses on two different, though equally important, aspects of the event as it unfolded: the all-consuming nature of the fire itself and the popular observation of the fire as an unplanned urban spectacle.[9] Whereas the CMA's painting places more emphasis on the flames, which in turn shows off Turner's incredible skill with color as well as his artistic and philosophical respect for the sublime, the PMA's painting more clearly situates the event within the context of its broader popular participation and therefore speaks more powerfully to the history of the occasion.[10] Indeed, Turner and the others who gathered on that evening ultimately saw something more substantial than the burning of an important building. They witnessed a heavily symbolic event which underscored the fact that the Britain of 1834 was a nation in the

[7]David Blaney Brown, *Turner in the Tate Collection* (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), 145. Brown notes that Turner observed the fire from several vantage points, including from a boat on the Thames at one point.
[8] Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2000), 212. Ackroyd, in his remarkably enjoyable biographical sketch of London, points out the London tradition, dating to the Great Fire of 1666, of rushing to observe fires. In his words, "fire became one of the principal characteristics of the city." The firebug spell finally broke in the dark days of the Blitz in 1940.
[9] Brown, *Turner in the Tate*, 145. Some of Turner's watercolors of the fire in the Tate Collection also focus upon massed observers in a meaningful way. Clearly, the number of Londoners that turned out to watch the spectacle unfold made a significant imprint on Turner's memory of the event.
[10] For more information on Turner's appreciation for the sublime, see: Andrew Wilton, *Turner and the Sublime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). In fairness to Turner, both paintings, regardless of emphasis, serve as continuing demonstrations of his superior skill as a painter. Indeed, these paintings stand in this humble author's opinion as two of Turner's finest contributions to art.

midst of historic transition.

As a matter of sheer coincidence, the Westminster fire came at the dawning of a new era in British history. It followed the British triumph in the Napoleonic Wars and immediately preceded the emerging Victorian era. The fire also came during a time of economic transition away from a system of colonial expansionism built upon the slave trade and towards a new industrial-capitalist system which supported a far-flung empire and embraced technological and industrial advancements underwritten by alienated labor. In addition, the old Parliament buildings burned to the ground after a centuries long, relatively measured shift in power away from the Crown and to the Parliament. Owing to these overlapping transitions, the Westminster fire, at least symbolically, represented not so much the tragic demise of a great public building but the ending of the old Britain.

In the years that followed the fire, the British rebuilt the Palace of Westminster in a neo-Gothic style.[11] The neo-Gothic rebuilding effort symbolically conserved a romanticized conceptualization of the British past even as the government received a new home.[12] Yet even before the new Parliament building cemented the links between the past and the present, the crowds that gathered on the banks of the Thames and in the streets of Westminster had served as witnesses to the obvious transitional symbolism of the occasion. Such gatherings became a pattern. Just as they did on that October night, Britons afterwards gathered on many subsequent occasions to observe and participate in the newly unfolding eras of British history. Such gatherings reflected a broader historical metanarrative about the nature of British spectacles as

[11] Sean Sawyer, "Delusions of National Grandeur: Reflections on the Intersection of Architecture and History at the Palace of Westminster, 1789-1834," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6, no. 13 (2003): 243. As Sawyer points out, Sir Charles Barry's design for the rebuilt Palace of Westminster reflected a growing trend towards the Gothic as the preferred national architecture stemming from the Napoleonic era: "As Revolutionary France co-opted the imagery of a mythologised republican Antiquity, a reactionary and assertively monarchical Britain abandoned Neoclassicism and embraced Gothic as a more sincere and even native style."
[12] Ibid., 238.

representative expressions of national identity, imperialism, and later the British post-imperial situation.

Among the many state occasions and other spectacles which marked the evolution of British history from the Victorian era to the present day, Britons publicly coalesced around especially notable events including the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Jubilees of Queen Victoria in 1887 and 1897, the war memorial movement and commemorations following the World Wars, the Coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953, and latter-day events designed to mark the new millennium, the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth II in 2012, and the London Summer Olympic Games of 2012. These events, with only occasional exceptions such as the Millennium Dome debacle, almost always demonstrated popular support for the institutions, personalities, and values of those agents responsible for their presentation. As such, the institutions of state and British public life—monarchy, government, industry—regularly sponsored grand national spectacles in the hopes of accomplishing or securing various ends, including the dissemination of political propaganda, the self-serving reinforcement of popular support for various British institutions, and, above all else, the validation of the broader, ongoing British imperial project that so dominated the Victorian worldview. These convocations of empire, therefore, provide a glimpse into the British socio-historical situation as it unfolded over time, especially when taken as a collective series of events. To wit, popular spectacles, particularly when understood as semi-routine examples of performative "Britishness," act as visible benchmarks for gradually evolving political, cultural, and social values and practices. Taken on an individual level, however, each ceremonial spectacle focused upon the specific circumstances of time and place particular to each event. Considering these massive events, therefore, means "decoding" them as individual reflections of Britain at a specific time in history while also recognizing their role as

touchstone moments within a wider historical metanarrative about the transitional forces at work in imperial and post-imperial Britain.

The process of decoding British spectacles in order to place them within both their particular and broader historical contexts requires a mixture of interdisciplinary research and critical analysis rooted in a deeper understanding of the relevant historical circumstances at play. In addition to those numerous historians who discuss British ceremonials as part of their research into particular aspects of modern and contemporary British history, several notable figures emerge as valuable commentators about the cultural and sociological forces which govern ceremonial occasions in the public sphere. In particular, the postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault and the symbolic anthropologist Clifford Geertz represent invaluable voices for any considered discussion about the role of ceremonies in public life. Additionally, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas,[13] by virtue of defining the modern "public sphere," and the sociologist Richard Sennett,[14] as a result of his efforts to define the role of "public man," also lend significant authority to scholarly discussions and debates about the nature of public life. Foucault and Geertz's respective perspectives, however, provide the ultimate framework and tools by which to explore ceremonies and their place within the historical context.

Foucault's unique approach to philosophy—in which he probed questions relating to the dynamics of power, discourse, and oppression, among other topics—provides an invaluable framework for exploring some of the most substantial implications concerning the role of ceremonies in public life.[15] In addition, Foucault's efforts to move beyond some of the traditional understandings of structuralism and hermeneutics illuminate both the various

[13] See: Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).
[14] See: Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1974).
[15] For an excellent, accessible introduction to Foucault's approach, see: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

rationales behind the staging of public ceremonies and the transactional experience of those ceremonies.[16] Foucault's highly critical approach to the role of institutions and structures in public life, as well as what he perceived as their negative implications for the individual, presents similar opportunities to critique British ceremonial events, even though Foucault himself never addressed the topic explicitly. After all, ceremonies, large and expensive affairs on the whole, constitute efforts on the part of their organizers to appeal to, respond to, or sway popular sentiment down to the individual level. Any Foucauldian approach, therefore, inevitably asks of such ceremonies: to what end? *Cui bono*? As Foucault explains:

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger.[17]

Any application of Foucault's admonition to the topic of popular spectacles, as well as the subsequent exploration of his broader critiques as a framework for answering the question of who stands to benefit from public events, invites a critical appreciation of the individual events in and of themselves. Crucially, however, a Foucauldian framework leaves plenty of space for the consideration of popular convocations as continuously evolving social constructions. Spectacles are, after all, organized affairs. Thus, while the Foucauldian approach applies to both the particular and universal characteristics of the public spectacle, it holds especially powerful implications insofar as such events reflect a broader, perhaps more insidious, historical metanarrative about the structures of power within a society. Considering the vastness of the

[16] For more information on Foucault's relationship to structuralism and hermeneutics, see: Hubert L Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics: Second Edition with an Afterword by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[17] Michel Foucault, afterword to *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics: Second Edition with an Afterword by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 231-232. Foucault makes this claim during an interview and after declaring that he would like to create a "genealogy of problems" in the absences of viable non-Christian ethics. Clearly, he thought big.

British Empire, such implications reached global proportions.

If the Foucauldian perspective creates a philosophical framework from which to consider the nature of public spectacles, Geertz's approach to symbolic anthropology provides more specific tools for how to interpret public ceremony. Geertz's famous elucidation of Gilbert Ryle's phrase "thick description" about the difference between superficial and substantive interpretations of individual and cultural behavior provides an example of Geertz's methodology in a nutshell.[18] Geertz essentially describes the difference between blinking and winking as a way of introducing his conceptualization of worthwhile ethnography (i.e. the study and recording of human cultures). According to Geertz, blinking conveys a simple biological response; winking, however, passes along assigned behavioral meaning to a biological response.[19] Obviously the act of implying behavioral meaning represents something worthy of investigation to Geertz. Importantly, finding "thick description" via the study of behavior also applies to entire cultures. As Geertz explained:

> The point for now is only that ethnography is thick description. What the ethnographer is in fact faced with … is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render.… Culture, this acted document, thus is public, like a burlesqued wink or a mock sheep raid.… The thing to ask is what their import is: what it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride, that, in their occurrence and through their agency. is getting said.[20]

Thus the use of Geertzian analysis, a kind of close reading of public practices and events, provides the essential tools for the critical investigation of cultural and behavioral symbolism present in public ceremonies. In other words, critical, well-researched examination of public

[18] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), 6.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 9-10.

spectacles offers up the possibility of finding the so-called "thick description" present in those events, and alongside that discovery of thick description comes the opportunity to explain "what is getting said."

Ultimately, any investigation into the historical role of ceremonies in public life depends upon an interdisciplinary course that considers anthropology, philosophy, and sociology. Across this interdisciplinary spectrum, Foucault and Geertz offer up both the strongest framework and the most powerful tools for excavating the legacy of the recent major British convocations. Yet the fundamental course of any such investigations remains tied to the historical context from which individual events emerge. Only by situating an event within the proper historical context can any inquiry into its purpose, or into the purpose of similar events, receive proper consideration. Moreover, the purpose of inquiry into modern and contemporary British convocations stems from the fact that those events act as benchmark reflections of a deliberate, ongoing project. From 1851 to 2012, Britain's greatest convocations all dealt with the implications of first building an empire, then defending their empire, and then finally dealing with the legacy of that empire.

The British imperial project coming out of the Victorian era completely drives the need for massive public spectacles, and almost all such events deliberately engage some element of imperialism—from economic hegemony to racial oppression—in their final presentation. As such, the orchestration of grand national convocations deliberately invokes the subject of British history in a glaringly self-aware manner. Even as the contemporary, post-imperial situation of the present day unfolds, popular ceremonies still comment upon, and actively reinforce, certain Victorian ideals about class construction, social status, and cultural superiority in sometimes retrograde fashion. Further to the point, the end result of British spectacles almost always serves

to bolster largely conservative ideals and values within British society, government, and industry. British public ceremonies, in short, simultaneously defend and export a particular kind of "Britishness" that remains deeply rooted in the imperial past. By tracing the evolution of the great national events from 1851-2012, the full scope of a historical metanarrative emerges: British ceremonials consistently reveal deliberately planned efforts to project British culture, values, and power both at home and throughout the world.

The metanarrative of convocations as important events marking the evolution of the British Empire truly began with the era-ending transitions symbolized in Turner's paintings of the burning Parliament buildings, as well as by the subsequent rebuilding of the Palace of Westminster as a neo-Gothic monument to the past. The first of the spectacular imperial events to follow the 1834 fire, however, actively moved the metanarrative firmly into the Victorian era. The Great Exhibition of 1851 signaled the arrival of a new Britain. At the Exhibition, Britons and visitors from around the globe queued up time and time again to marvel at the spectacle of British industrial achievement. The setting, Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, presented new works of industry as yet another feature of British imperial superiority. Meanwhile, the British establishment reveled in the popular success of the Exhibition. The Great Exhibition's popularity suggested the potential for future British gatherings to triumphantly showcase the value of empire, industry, and Victorian moral order. Perhaps inevitably, therefore, future showcases presented to their massed audiences the collective accomplishments—and sometimes the unexpected failures—of the British Empire project. As a result, Britain's convocations of empire, dating from the imperial triumph of the Great Exhibition to the postmodern staging of the 2012 London Olympic Opening Ceremonies, gave witness to the rise and fall of the single most powerful global force since the collapse of Rome. Their importance as a part of that

imperial history presents itself accordingly.

Chapter Two:

"The Compass of the World":
The Great Exhibition of 1851[1]

The "Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations," held in London from May to October of 1851, remains a lasting symbol of the Victorian era. Yet, the legacy of the Great Exhibition represents much more than that of a showcase event ostensibly designed to celebrate industrial "progress." The Great Exhibition now broadly emblemizes what W.L. Burn called the "Age of Equipoise."[2] Coming at the forefront of a period of peace and prosperity, the Exhibition incorporated into its myriad exhibits the commercial, artistic, and industrial achievements of the day. Located in Hyde Park and staged in Sir Joseph Paxton's large steel and glass "Crystal Palace," which the popular British press claimed resembled a "cathedral," patrons of all walks of life, both foreign and domestic, made something of a mass pilgrimage to see the Exhibition.[3] Many made return visits. In addition to the spirit of public accessibility, the Great Exhibition displayed what one historian describes as "a rich vein of national self-congratulation on social and political grounds as well as economic ones."[4] Albert, Prince Consort to Queen Victoria, and a driving force behind the development and implementation of the Great Exhibition, used the Exhibition's State Opening to make clear the goals of the event: "[W]e have

[1] Taken from the title page of the *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations* (London: Spicer Brothers, Wholesale Stationers; W. Clowes & Sons, Printers; Contractors to the Royal Commission, 1851). http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015009221915;seq=5;view=1up. The actual inscription on the title page reads: "The Earth is the Lord's, and All That Therein Is: The Compass of the World and They That Dwell Therein."

[2] W.L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1964), 71. Burn, one of the finest modern British historians of the nineteenth century, used the term "Age of Equipoise" to apply to the mid-Victorians; however, in regards to the Great Exhibition he says: "The Great Exhibition of 1851 can be regarded as the symbol of the utilitarian, commercial, middle-class age. It can be seen also (and perhaps more truly) as the culmination of the romantic age, displaying the well-known phenomena of the apocalyptic vision, the sense of uniqueness, and the conviction that the doors of the new world were opening."

[3] "The Great Exhibition," *The Times*, May 1, 1851; Liza Picard, *Victorian London: The Life of a City, 1840-1870* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 216-217; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 33, 204.

[4] Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain: 1851-1875* (London: Fontana Press, 1971), 250.

made diligent inquiry… namely into the best mode of introducing the productions of your Majesty's colonies and of foreign countries into this kingdom… The Exhibition is divided into four great classes of— 1. Raw Materials; 2. Machinery; 3. Manufactures; 4. Sculpture and the Fine Arts."[5] This fusion of science and aesthetics openly presented to the people of Great Britain, to Britain's imperial dominions, and to other competitor nations the burgeoning self-confidence of a nation enjoying the sort of stability, peace, and prosperity that no other imperial power possessed during the mid-nineteenth century.

On the other hand, the Great Exhibition did not come into being as a universally embraced, self-congratulatory event; many concerns were expressed over the Exhibition's staging, the access the event granted to foreigners, and public's response to the event.[6] These moments of trepidation reflected broader worries among Britain's political elites about the changing class structures brought on by industrialization, revolutionary political movements at home and abroad, and the "otherness" of foreigners.[7] The planning for the Exhibition came to reflect and incorporate many of these worries. Indeed, part of the Exhibition's success stemmed from the ability of its planners to enfold the pragmatic concerns of entrenched members of the British establishment into the overriding idealistic optimism that the Prince Consort confidently expressed in his March 21, 1849 speech backing the Exhibition scheme: "[W]e are living at a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish that great era to which, indeed, all history points—the realisation of the unity of mankind."[8] By means of balancing

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[5] "The Opening of the Great Exhibition," *The Times*, May 2, 1851.
[6] "The speech of Mr. H. F. HOPE to the Commons," *Times*, July 2, 1850. Members of Parliament, always eager to grandstand on such issues, took every opportunity to do so. One particularly florid, if dire, warning over the consequences of the Exhibition came from one Mr. H.F. Hope in his address to his fellow Commoners: "But it is too exasperating to reflect that our beautiful Park is to be given up to these hordes of invaders even for a season."
[7] Picard, *Victorian London,* 214-215.; See Edward Said's work on the subject of "Orientalism" for more information on English conceptions of "otherness."
[8] Qtd. in "Editorial," *The Times,* April 18, 1851; "Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations," *The Times*, October 18, 1849; Also Qtd. in Picard, *Victorian London*, 215.

pragmatic and idealistic interests, the Exhibition became a staging ground for more than just "works of industry"; the event became an establishment-pleasing celebration of British imperial power projection and propaganda. So, just as the Great Exhibition managed to achieve an internalized cohesion that directed its pragmatic and idealistic interests, the broader practices of British imperial policymaking also found a home within the Exhibition.

The confluence of pragmatic and idealistic influences on the Exhibition remains the key to understanding both its pervasive contemporary influence and its lasting historical legacy as a symbol of all things "Victorian." The Exhibition perfectly blended the early-Victorian values which one of the great commentators on the Victorian era summarized as "the parallel operation of Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism."[9] By bringing these values forward into the public sphere, the Exhibition built upon this new unity of purpose by centralizing and exhibiting "the religious experience of a nation undergoing a moral revival, [and] its social experience during a revolution in the methods of production."[10] Put broadly, the fusion of moral self-certainty and the utility of economic "progress" became a national effort worthy of display and export, hence the internationalization of both exhibition space and the invitation of foreign guests.[11] The planners of the Exhibition, for better or worse, resolved to share with the world both the fruits of British labors and the values that underpinned British stability and self-assuredness. The legacy of this approach, at least according to another prominent commentator, symbolically allowed for the Exhibition to represent more than just the sum of its parts: "the Great Exhibition has become the quintessential postmodernist event, a projection screen for attitudes towards Victorian Britain as

[9] G.M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 11-12.
[10] Ibid.
[11] John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Exhibitions 1851-1893* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 60-61. Burris points out that "progress" sometimes proved difficult to quantify for British scientists observing the different nations at the Exhibition because of "quality versus quantity" subjectivity in the various displays.

well as a reflection of broader historical trends."[12] Such ruminations upon the event's legacy speak to the success of the event as a deliberately staged spectacle. The showcasing of the Exhibition effectively synthesized three major propagandistic achievements which fueled its popularity and cemented its legacy as the *ultimum demonstratio* of British modernity and imperial ascendency: the awe-inspiring use of modern construction materials and technologies to call attention to the staging of the event and to promote its significance to visitors from around the world, the prominent display of material advancements—economic, industrial, and technological—to foreign and domestic visitors, and the purposeful juxtaposition of British cultural achievements with those of "less-developed" or "Oriental" peoples.

The most telling feature of the building that housed the Great Exhibition, its steel and glass façade, presented to the world the thoroughly modern, utilitarian sensibilities of the Exhibition. Specifically, Sir Joseph Paxton's architectural design used revolutionary techniques to display the new technological and industrial modernity brought on by the Industrial Revolution. The Crystal Palace became the world's first freestanding iron-frame building ever constructed to such a large scale (Fig. 2.1).[13] In total, the structure provided around one million square feet of floor space, comprising some 4500 tons of iron, 293, 655 panes of glass (roughly 900,000 square feet), and 600,000 cubic feet of timber.[14] A further 3300 cast-iron columns supported the roof.[15] Reaction to the structure often provoked breathless excitement. Upon first seeing the Crystal Palace, Queen Victoria wrote to her Belgian uncle: "*You* will be astounded at this great work when you see it!—the beauty of the building and the vastness of it all. I can never thank God enough. I feel *so* happy, so proud. Our dear guests were much pleased and

[12] Jeffery Auerbach, "Introduction," *Britain, The Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851*, eds. Jeffery Auerbach and Peter Hoffenberg (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), ix.
[13] Michael R. Katz, "But This Building—What on Earth Is It?," *New England Review* 23, no.1 (Winter 2002): 66.
[14] Ibid., 65-66.
[15] Ibid., 66.

impressed."[16] Undoubtedly, the Exhibition's planners fully intended to make just such an impression. After all, only a thoroughly modern building could present the progress of "The Works of Industry of All Nations." The modern, functional aesthetics of the building also represented a public shift in mid-Victorian cultural self-perception. As one art historian put it:

Fig. 2.1. The Crystal Palace, *Dickensons' comprehensive pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851*, 1852.[17]

"Until that time, the Victorian soul had been confined in the airless, lightless, overdecorated limbo of Neo-Gothic taste. The Crystal Place, through its thousand windows that looked out into infinity, dared to let the sunlight in."[18] Ergo, just as the newly rebuilt Neo-Gothic Parliament buildings had referenced continuity with the glories of the British political by means of invoking an older style of architecture, the Crystal Palace looked to the commercial and industrial future of the Empire.

Daring to let the sunlight in remained a central goal of event planners throughout the development and implementation of the Exhibition, both literally and metaphorically.

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[16] Queen Victoria to King Leopold I, May 3, 1851, in *Letters of Queen Victoria: , A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal Vol. II*, ed. George Earle Buckle (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1932), 383-384.

[17] For more information, see: http://archive.org/stream/Dickinsonscompr1#page/n9/mode/2up

[18] Edward Fenton, "The Palace Made of Windows," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 10, no. 4 (Dec., 1951), 114.

Specifically, the Exhibition plans intended to bring a new and accessible utilitarian conceptualization of modernity into the public sphere.[19] If the Exhibition intended to showcase new industry and economy, it would do so through maximal openness. Other than Paxton with his architectural vision, no one person did more to drive the modernization principles behind the staging of the event than Prince Albert. A hands-on figure, the Prince Consort acted as the president of a special Royal Commission designed to set the entire enterprise into motion.[20] Throughout the preliminary planning of the Exhibition, Albert demonstrated a commitment to the project's openness by embracing its internationalization, while simultaneously arguing for the Exhibition to remain accessible to the public at large.[21]

Other planners, however, feared that by giving access to the working classes, not to mention foreigners, the event might quickly transition from a peaceful mingling of peoples and become a gathering of rebellious Chartist types who could potentially combine with radical elements coming over from the Continent that carried with them the revolutionary spirit of 1848.[22] At times, the anti-foreign sentiment took on a shockingly xenophobic tone. Even some of the old prejudices re-appeared in advance of the Exhibition's opening. For example, it fell to Henry Grattan Jr., a Member of the House of Commons from Dublin, to rebut a concern

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[19] A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003), 129. Wilson suggests the planners intended to go further than this, even. By his lights, Paxton's design reaffirmed nothing less than Macaulay's "Whiggish optimism." A pithy claim though it may be, Wilson's claim nevertheless links the symbolism inherent to a "Crystal Palace" with the new openness of direction found in the mid-Victorian period.

[20] Robert Rhodes James, *Prince Albert: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 196. James details how from the start Albert worked closely with other prominent persons in government and the private sector, chief among them Henry Cole, to bring about the Exhibition. Ultimately, however, Albert's weight as Prince Consort, as well as his tireless personal involvement, cleared many paths to the staging of the event. That said, no matter how herculean Albert's work ethic on the matter, the Exhibition came about as a vast "team effort," with much involvement from Parliament, the British private sector, and from international cooperation. As Rhodes notes, members of the Royal Commission that Albert led included: the Prime Minister, other Members of Parliament, including Gladstone and Cobden, nine fellows of the Royal Society, the Presidents of the Institute of Civil Engineering and the Geographical Society, and Charles Barry, the architect of the new Palace of Westminster.

[21] Ibid, 195.; "The Great Exhibition of Industry, 1851: Meeting at the Mansion House," *The Times*, January 26, 1850.

[22] Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain*, 252.

circulating about Irish Catholics attending the Exhibition: "Could they [critics] with any decency tell the Catholics of Ireland, when they came over to the great Exhibition, that they were idolaters, and deserved to be stigmatised and reprobated?"[23]

Nevertheless, with the industrious Albert spearheading the effort, and with the powerful Royal Commission working to assuage security and establishment concerns, the Exhibition went forward with the intent to open as an inclusive event.[24] Of course, the potential benefits to be found in a successful showcase for the burgeoning might of the new British industrialization and its many attendant success stories also weighed heavily in favor of the arguments for more access to the event. According to one historian, the end result of allowing the Great Exhibition to go forward as both a fully public and triumphant an event as possible helped to make "the hungry forties and the radical thirties suddenly [seem] remote. The mid-Victorian calm was announced and enthusiastically acclaimed.…"[25] Such a success story effectively began the day the Exhibition itself was announced, and subsequently propagandized, to the British public and to the world by means of a grand State Opening presided over by Queen Victoria and sanctified by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Over several centuries of practice, the staging of British Royal ceremonials evolved into a carefully choreographed and elaborately planned series of spectacles the likes of which few nations or institutions have ever successfully attempted to rival. On May 1, 1851, the full visual power of public displays of Royal authority came to bear for the State Opening of the Great

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[23] 1 Parl. Deb., H.C. (3d ser.) (1851) 108-110. See also: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1851/feb/04/address-in-answer-to-the-speech. Interestingly, the Honorable Member made these comments on no less an occasion than the Commons' debate over the Queen's Speech—a very serious occasion on the Parliamentary calendar to raise such an issue!

[24] Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria: Born to Succeed* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), 222. Longford points out that Albert needed to secure private guarantors because he did not successfully convince the government to fully fund the Exhibition. This proved unnecessary in the end as the Exhibition made a profit off of its nearly six million ticket sales.

[25] Best, *Mid-Victorian England*, 253.

Exhibition. *The Times* described the scene thus:

> A line of carriages swept past, and then came a troop of Life Guards at the trot, and the voices of the people hailed the Queen again and again with hearty cheers, as she came by bowing kindly and graciously. As the *cortège* drove up to the Palace, the reception of Her Majesty was enthusiastic, and she entered the building amid a burst of genuine good feeling from the outside.… More grateful than the Royal flourish of trumpets and the rolling of drums which announced her arrival. The Queen seemed full of emotion at the greatness of the occasion and at the welcome.[26]

Victoria herself later recounted the event as comparable to her Coronation.[27] By the time the

Fig. 2.2. Eugène Louis Lami, *The Opening of the Great Exhibition, 1851*, The Royal Collection, Watercolor, 1851.[28]

ceremony concluded with the singing of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," some 25,000 spectators, the entire Royal Family, and ambassadors from all around the world had witnessed the kind of

[26] "The Opening of the Great Exhibition," *The Times*, May 2, 1851.
[27] Longford, *Victoria*, 224.
[28] For more information, see: http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/452380/the-opening-of-the-great-exhibition-1851

pomp and circumstance reserved for only the most important of national occasions (Fig. 2.2).[29] The moment not only served to announce the Exhibition but to legitimize it. Further to this point, the Archbishop of Canterbury brought another level of legitimization to the event by bestowing the blessings of God upon the proceedings.[30] Thus by the impartation of both divine grace and Royal assent, the Exhibition began. Questions, however, lingered as to the impact of the State Opening and its subsequent "good press" for the Exhibition.[31] Though judging by the eager public response and the jaw-dropping attendance figures, the State Opening heralded a unique and continuously popular attraction.

Visitors to the Exhibition came in astonishing numbers. Over a period of six months, six million people entered the Crystal Palace for an average of one million visitors a month, or over thirty thousand a day.[32] On one day alone, 109,915 people came to see the Exhibition.[33] One 84-year-old fisherwoman living near Penzance walked for five weeks to get to London and see the spectacle.[34] Many travelled by train, while some came by ship from other countries; however, no integrated public mass transportation grid yet existed on a scale to easily accommodate the millions who visited.[35] In spite of this fact, people crowded into the still

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[29] David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 50-51.
[30] Burris, *Exhibiting Religion*, 51. Burris notes that the Archbishop of Canterbury "was in an awkward position: how to put into perspective an event based on rampant materialism that had all the markings of a new age of profound irreligion. He set the tone for later religious analyses of the Great Exhibition by downplaying materialism and emphasizing the hopeful, if tenuous, possibilities of brotherhood." I would suggest that this instance of religious idealism acts as another example of how the Exhibition stands as a perfect model for defining the so-called "equipoise" of the era: idealistic fervor fueled by evangelical underpinnings combined with the modern utilitarian underpinnings of the new materialism.
[31] Geoffrey Cantor, "The Great Exhibition: Commerce and Christianity," *History Today* 60, no. 7 (July 2010), 46. Cantor notes that the kinds of good press associated with Exhibition did not just come from the popular press; rather, many ministers gave sermons devoted to extolling the Christian virtues of the Exhibition, especially during the period immediately following the Exhibition's opening.
[32] Katz, "But This Building—What Is It?," 67-68.
[33] Picard, *Victorian London*, 224. Picard notes that it was the second to last day before the Exhibition's close that set the attendance record.
[34] Ibid., 224.
[35] Katz, "But This Building—What Is It?," 67-68.

limited number of new train stations springing up across Britain—another symbol of the Industrial Revolution at work—while Thomas Cook travel agents further arranged for another 150,000 people to visit the Exhibition.[36] Important public figures came, including the Duke of Wellington, Charlotte Brontë, and, of course, Queen Victoria.[37] Charles Dickens, meanwhile, notably omitted mention of the Great Exhibition in *Bleak House*, the only major event of 1851 to escape his notice in that novel.[38] Indeed, some Dickens scholars suggest that the title *Bleak House* directly contrasts the "Crystal Palace."[39] Dickens, of course, concerned himself greatly with other facets of British society than those on display under the steel and glass. Though the denizens of Dickens' novels remain, in their own way, linked to the same spirit of 'progress' that Paxton's Palace presented. Karl Marx paid careful attention to the symbolism of the event as the celebration of industrial power intent upon abolishing national barriers.[40] *The Times* kept up a steady stream of vivid, largely positive reporting.

Ultimately, however, the affordability of tickets made it possible for many people from many different walks of life to see for themselves what the Exhibition entailed. Regular patrons purchased season tickets for three guineas, while general admission was £1 for the first two days, 5s a day until May 24, and then 1s a day until the Exhibition's close, except for on Sundays when the building shut to all patrons.[41] Affordable access combined with the anticipation driven by the appearance of Paxton's modern building, the Exhibition's grand opening, and the international exoticism of its displays fueled interest from all classes. As a result, and at its best,

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[36] Picard, *Victorian London*, 223.
[37] Ibid., 219, 223.
[38] Sabine Clemm, "'Amidst the heterogeneous masses': Charles Dickens's Household Words and the Great Exhibition of 1851," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 27, no. 3 (September 2005), 209.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Paul Young, "Mission Impossible: Globalization and the Great Exhibition," *Britain, The Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851*, ed. Jeffery Auerbach (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 21.
[41] Picard, *Victorian London,* 219.

the Exhibition became a kind of public concourse of social reconciliation.[42] As a forum for peaceful interactions that cut across class, the Exhibition provided what one historian called "the conviction that the doors of a new world were opening."[43] With the opening of those doors, the Exhibition planners effectively concluded its first great propaganda coup: the people responded to the allure of the building, the spectacular State Opening, and the theme of the event. They came because they wanted to witness, understand, and interact with the new utilitarian and industrial modernity that pervasively acted as a revolutionary agent in their daily lives. What the people saw when they walked into the Exhibition was nothing less than the full-scope of the British Empire on display—a thoroughly modern empire in a thoroughly modern setting.

The second great propagandistic accomplishment of the Great Exhibition centered on the actual exhibits within the Crystal Palace: those visual representations of the material and economic triumph of an ascendant British Empire. The industrial "progress" of capitalism as witnessed by the viewer provided affirmative conceptualizations of the free market, national interests, and the modern world. As one Marxist historian put it:

> If Europe had still lived in the era of baroque princes, it would have been filled with spectacular masques, processions and operas distributing allegorical representations of economic triumph and industrial progress at the feet of its rulers. In fact the triumphant world of capitalism had its equivalent. The era of its global victory was initiated and punctuated by giant new rituals of self-congratulation, the Great International Exhibitions, each encased in a princely monument to wealth and technical progress—the Crystal Palace in London (1851), the Rotunda ('larger than St. Peter's in Rome') in Vienna, each displaying the growing number and variety of manufactures, each attractive native and foreign tourists in astronomic quantities.[44]

These affirmative conceptualizations of the capitalist spirit, the staging of exhibitions, served to reinforce the policy direction of the state, bolstered social values regarding hard work and piety,

[42] Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain*, 253. Here I must credit Best for the brilliant first use of the term "object of social reconciliation."
[43] Burn, *Age of Equipoise*, 71.
[44] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital*, 32-33.

and fostered a sense of public self-assuredness in the utility of the new industrialized modernity. Of course, both the state and the industrialists needed to make certain affirmative reassurances to people; the advancements of the new industrial modernity came on the backs of a new proletariat that worked extremely hard, lived in poor conditions, and did not experience or enjoy tremendously high economic growth rates by historical standards.[45] In light of the times, Marx commented that "the bourgeoisie of this world is erecting, with this exhibition, its Pantheon in the modern Rome where it will exhibit its Gods, which it has itself created, with proud self-satisfaction."[46] That said, the enjoyment of witnessing the spectacle of the Exhibition no doubt proved a welcome entertainment for many in the working class who wished to share in the collective "self-satisfaction" Marx referenced. Also, thanks to the internationalization of the event, Britons gained an opportunity to measure British "progress" against those of competitors and, at least according to the nineteenth-century mindset, inferiors. The same principle held true in reverse: other nations and dominions had the option to measure themselves against the might of the British Empire. Many undoubtedly found themselves wanting.

On the day before the Great Exhibition's opening, *The Times* published a guide on what to expect for visitors.[47] The guide provided a broad and useful overlay of the exhibitions presented within the Crystal Palace. It also provided commentary that demonstrated common British attitudes about foreign nations:

> Having invited the whole world to our Exhibition it was only right that we should share equally with them such accommodations as we had to offer—accordingly while the western half of the Crystal Palace has been occupied by the industrial products of the

[45] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 146.
[46] Qtd. in Wolfram Kaiser, "Cultural Transfer of Free Trade at the Great Exhibition," *The Journal of Modern History* 77, no. 3 (September 2005), 578. Originally from: Karl Marx, "Revue Mai bis Oktober," in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung: Politischo¨konomische Revue* (1850), 311.
[47] "The Great Exhibition," *The Times*, May 1, 1851.

> British Empire, those from other countries have been installed in the eastern division … the transept was declared the equator of the world in Hyde-Park. On one side India and the colonies, on the other China, Tunis, the Brazils, Persia, Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt were grouped around it as the torrid zone. That arrangement, while it harmonized admirably with the character of the building, destroyed all ideas of preference as to locality, and any feeling of jealousy founded thereon. Behind the colonies, in the western division, comes the products of our native industry, and after the foreign states mentioned, follow in the eastern division the contributions of the great European communities and of our descendants across the Atlantic.[48]

It seems clear that the term "share equally" suffers from certain pre-existing attitudes, as does the suggestion of geographic inequality amongst those nations of the "torrid zone." Nevertheless, housed within the Exhibition were examples of industrial and technological inequality between nations even more vast than the *Times* suggested. The cover of the Great Exhibition's official catalog, which guided visitors to explore the various material and cultural achievements on display in over 100,000 exhibits as presented by some 14,000 exhibitors, featured a passage from Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is: the compass of the world and they that dwell therein."[49] The biblical quote linked Britain's self-conceptualized progressive stewardship of global affairs with that of the Lord's stewardship of the world. Putting this link on display, at least in the case of the Exhibition, meant that "all that therein is" must inevitably reveal that mutual divine and temporal stewardship. Consequently, the Great Exhibition focused on displaying the British section first and foremost.

Those items represented in the British section of the Exhibition included painted glass, hardware, furniture, woolen products, flax products, furs, cotton products, minerals, carriages, coal-based machinery, movable machinery, and hardware.[50] Some of the more notable items in

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Taken from the title page of the *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition*; Michael Katz, "But This Building—What Is It?," 65; Longford, *Victoria*, 224. Longford contends that Prince Albert selected the Bible passage himself.
[50] *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition,* 3.; Nash, Haghe, and Roberts, *Dickensons' comprehensive pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (London: Dickinson, Brothers, Her Majesty's Publishers, 1854), 15. http://archive.org/stream/Dickinsonscompr1#page/n10/mode/1up

the British section included statuary from the Royal Collection, Sheffield cutlery, a steam hammer, locomotives, power looms, naval models, surgical models and apparatuses, bees and beehives, organs, clocks and watches, chemical and pharmaceutical products, hemp materials, and even the famed "Koh-i-Noor" diamond.[51] Essentially, the British section alone contained all the representative samples that a patron needed to see to get a sense of the material "progress" of the Industrial Revolution. Materialism and progress effectively represented the same ideal. The British section of the Exhibition also provided the viewer with wide collection of oddities to titillate the popular imagination. In these ways, the composition of the British section deliberately awed, intrigued, and confounded the viewer's expectations. As one famous cultural critic asserted: "[the exhibitions] open up a phantasmagoria that people enter to be amused," while willingly submitting themselves "to being manipulated while enjoying their alienation from themselves and others."[52] In other words, a wide-eyed viewer might process the Exhibition's displays without truly seeing them for what they symbolized: a modern empire built on the backs of workers turned wage slaves that was well on its way to becoming the most advanced industrial power on earth.

If indeed the Crystal Palace acted as a kind of steel and glass cathedral, while the people behaved as modern day pilgrims coming to pay homage to its various commercial relics, then it fit for London to serve as the host city for the showcasing of the Great Exhibition. There exists a unique parallel between London as the geographic nexus of the British Empire and the

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[51] *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition,* 3-5. The "Koh-i-Noor" diamond can still be seen as a part of the British Crown Jewels in the permanent display at the Tower of London. For more information, see the British Government's official webpage for the Royal Family, under the section on the Crown Jewels: http://www.royal.gov.uk/the%20royal%20collection%20and%20other%20collections/thecrownjewels/overview.aspx

[52] Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, and Autobiographical Writing*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 150-152.; Hélène Gill, "Discordant Messages in Official Representations of Empire," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 7, no. 3 (2004), 154.

Exhibition as a conflux for commercialization, industry, and free trade. Just as London acted as the central hub of the United Kingdom, so too did the United Kingdom act as the "Mother Country" to a far-flung empire. This sort of global geo-political arrangement solidified through the advancements of the Industrial Revolution. Railroads combined with the steamer and the telegraph to produce what Marx bemoaned as that "which finally represented the means of communication adequate to modern means of production."[53] As one Marxist historian further explained: "the geographical size of the capitalist economy could suddenly multiply as the intensity of its business transactions increased. The entire globe became part of this economy. This creation of a single expanded world is probably the most significant development of our period."[54] Of course, the early globalization of the "single expanded world" was dominated by the presence of the British Empire. Not until the 1860s did the impact of the Industrial Revolution influence enough of the so-called "Great Powers" that the economic and geopolitical trade winds enjoyed by Great Britain for much of the nineteenth century begin to shift.[55]

By displaying the advancements of the Industrial Revolution, the Great Exhibition operated according to the movement consistent with an outside-to-inside effect: it drew people from the fringes to the heart of the empire, both literally and symbolically. The Exhibition therefore not only highlighted the totality of British material achievements, it showcased the city of London as the progenitor of the imperial marketplace for free trade. The parallelism between the roles of the Exhibition and the city represented both a microcosm and macrocosm of the Victorian world order for patrons of the Exhibition: those who came to London witnessed material and economic triumph in the displays held within the Crystal Palace while also

[53] Qtd. in Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, 33.
[54] Ibid., 33.
[55] Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 145.

observing the outside commerce of the city.[56] In keeping with the mood of celebration so commonly associated with this witnessing, Britons basked in the cultural triumph of their era, even while many of them bore the brunt of its economic cruelties. This second great propagandistic triumph of the Exhibition—the clear sense of British industrial triumph over the material—allowed for the Exhibition to fulfill one last major propagandistic objective: British cultural triumph over "the other."

The third great propagandistic triumph of the Great Exhibition, at least according to the perspective of the mid-Victorians, stemmed from the Exhibition's ability to project power to outsiders. Mid-Victorian cultural attitudes towards the subjects of its empire, its competitor nations, and the "oriental" tended towards the smugly superior. While patriotic nationalism was hardly unique to the British, a series of British triumphs preceding the mid-Victorian era, the British triumphs in the Napoleonic wars chief among them, led to a great sense of national confidence. The words of "Rule Britannia," that famous unofficial British anthem, offer a familiar and powerful glimpse into the popular British imagination:

> When Britain first, at heaven's command,
> Arose from out the azure main,
> This was the charter of the land,
> And guardian angels sung this strain—
> "Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
> Britons never will be slaves."
>
> The nations, not so blest as thee,
> Must in their turns to tyrants fall;

[56] Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, *1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 28. Wiener argues that "The Great Exhibition embodied to the world the new ideals that seemed to have become the national ideals of Victorian Britain. Industry was taking on a heroic aura.…" Wiener's romantic argument stands as correct insofar as it matches the idealistic underpinnings of the Exhibition. The capitalist spirit, one might even go so far as to suggest, effectively operated as a new religion within the confines of the cathedral-like Crystal Palace. Thanks, however, to the inherent propagandistic structure of the Exhibition, the new celebrations were understood by the event goers to transcend the boundaries of the event itself—they spiritually glorified the quintessence of the material and utilitarian Victorian mindset to Britons, imperial subjects, and outsiders.

While thou shalt flourish great and free,
The dread and envy of them all.
"Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
Britons never will be slaves."

Still more majestic shalt thou rise,
More dreadful from each foreign stroke;
As the loud blast that tears the skies
Serves but to root thy native oak.
"Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
Britons never will be slaves."[57]

Written over a hundred years before the Great Exhibition, the overt nationalism implicit in the words—"the nations not so blest as thee, must in their turn to tyrants fall," and so on—remain as succienct and efficient a summary of the British mindset, even during the peaceful equipoise of the mid-Victorian era, towards non-Britons as at any time since the words were first written. If anything, the jingoistic attitudes expressed in the song politely underplay the prevailing sentiment of the era towards foreigners. The unrivaled growth of the Empire made the sentiment more than aspirational; many Britons simply saw themselves precisely as blessed rulers. Nevertheless, the Exhibition supposed to demonstrate the "Works of Industry of All Nations," and so the event invited the participation of "the other." Many responded to the invitation.

Participant nations in the Exhibition included a diverse array of British dominion states and other nationalities. European countries, the United States, Russia, Persia, Turkey, Greece, Mexico, Brazil, and China represented a far-flung sample of the geographic diversity at the Exhibition.[58] Of the dominion states, none attracted more attention than India.[59] Meanwhile,

[57] James Thompson, "Rule Britannia," *The Seasons*, (1725). From: www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174671. The words to "Rule Britannia" were taken from a poem by James Thompson. Thomas Arne later set them to music, which made them famous as a sort of unofficial national anthem. There are several verses I omitted from this paper, but the general themes remain consistent throughout.
[58] *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition*, 4.
[59] Gill, "Discordant Messages," 159-160. Gill asserts that the prominent display of the "Koh-i-Noor" diamond actually served as the focus of the entire exhibition—the symbolic sublimation of Indian continental power into the Crown. While I find this argument persuasive as neat symbolism, I must dispute the claim that the entire Exhibition

some of the participating countries, including Turkey, attended the Exhibition as an extension of Westernization projects.[60] Others came to bear witness to the so-called progress of the Industrial Revolution even as their own countries gradually began to undergo industrial transformation. Some, such as the American delegation, came without the cooperation of their governments.[61] Still others came with even less official representation—they came as individuals, not as members of any international delegation. One working-class woman, Lorenza Stevens Berbineau, travelled from Boston to London in 1851.[62] She recorded her experience at the Exhibition in a series of fragmented descriptions that go on for several pages in her travel diary:

> [W]ent to Hyde Park to the great Exhibition It was magnificent I saw things from the United States handsome lamps mechinery farming implements also [things?] from France … I saw several things of Carved Ivory they were made in India … there was a good deal of mechinery from Different parts of the world som [sic] of it was in motion I saw them make bricks they put the clay in it came out formed into brick … I saw different types of Ore that was taken from the mines … I was there about 3 hours to day I got very ~~tired~~ [sic].[63]

Lorenza Berbineau's experience at the Exhibition gives some sense of the ground-level perspective that a foreign visitor had coming to the Crystal Palace. She detailed impressions of awe at the spectacle, recognition of the internationalism of the event, appreciation for its technical impressiveness, and exhaustion as a result of trying to process the experience. A contemporary reader of her diary likely concludes that the Exhibition overwhelmed her.

While Exhibition planners intended to invite foreigners to participate in the Exhibition, it seems clear that astonishing those visitors with the sheer scope of British material might was an

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project can be atomized in such a manner. As I have argued, many diverse aspects of the Exhibition gave the event its enduring power of propaganda. As such, the Exhibition remains better understood as a holistic event containing myriad symbolic parts, including the "Koh-i-Noor."

[60] Güname Turan, "Turkey in the Great Exhibition of 1851," *Design Issues* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2009), 66.

[61] Marcus Cunliffe, "America at the Great Exhibition of 1851," *American Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1951), 118.

[62] Lorenza Stevens Berbineau, *From Beacon Hill to the Crystal Palace : The 1851 Travel Diary of a Working-Class Woman*, ed. Karen Kilcup (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002).

[63] Ibid., 66-67. Entry dated: July 31, 1851.

additional, inescapable impression which the British were keen to impart. The principle of overwhelming visitors held particularly true for participating dominion states and those countries representing "the other." After all, as the British Empire expanded throughout the nineteenth century, it pushed into two major global zones previously uncontrolled by Western powers: the "Dark Continent" of Africa, which became the great hobbyhorse of the late-Victorians, and the "Orient," as represented by the eastern peoples and cultures of the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and even parts of Asia.[64] The Orient, in particular, saw much of the Empire's trade. Consequently, it remained important for the British imperial project to establish themselves as a not just the political and economic master of the Orient, but also as its cultural hegemons. Along these lines, Edward Said, in his famous work on the topic of "Orientalism," defined the concept of the Orient as "an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles."[65] He further asserted that:

> Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views on it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.

At the core of his argument, therefore, Said contends that the Western powers take complete control over the Orient by means of establishing not only forms of economic and political control but also the construction of a power discourse in which the West holds the balance of power. It

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[64] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Said tends to focus on the "Orient" and its geographic locus as being largely centered upon adjacent lands to Europe, Persia for example. I am, however, suggesting that the British, by means of their vast seafaring empire, hold a somewhat wider view of the Orient in terms of its physical status. I contend that for the British it is the eastern trade routes stretching all the way from the Mediterranean to the Far East which more accurately constitute a working definition of where the Orient is located. More broadly, British imperialism focuses on two primary thrusts: into the vast "Orient" and into the more self-contained Africa. It is not, however, until the late-Victorian era that the British turn their full attention to Africa.
[65] Ibid, 2.

follows from this premise that the Great Exhibition, with its open inclusion of nations from the Near Middle East, Middle East, and Far East, demonstrated the material and cultural appropriation of the Orient by the West in a notably concentrated fashion. More importantly, perhaps, the Great Exhibition served to validate the broader discourse surrounding the Orient in an experiential sense. Attendees witnessed the juxtaposition of British "progress" with the otherness of the Orient.

Said's discussion of "discourse" owes much to Michel Foucault and his post-structural work on social and historical power dynamics. Said explains:

> I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in the *Archeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand that the enormously systemic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.[66]

Plainly speaking, Foucauldian discourse analysis deals with the relationship between language and power and the various levels—individual, social, historical—in which that relationship is instantiated. Foucault used his work on discourse to analyze particular institutions and structures of power (e.g. the clinic) with the intention of revealing the ways in which individuals and societies interacted, sometimes unknowingly, with the centers of power. Said saw the usefulness of employing a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis when he considered the ways in which the imperial West sought to draw a contrast between its own narrative of cultural superiority, already assumed to be in place, and the narrative of cultural inferiority that the West assigned to the Orient:

[66] Ibid., 3.

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on.[67]

Public exhibitions also, of course, present a potential platform for forming an "account concerning the Orient." Just as readers of a text respond to the information contained therein, visitors going to staged attractions actively engage and interact with a deliberately staged narrative. Those attending the Great Exhibition, therefore, saw among other things a staging of the Orient, and as they witnessed that staging they became participants in the discourse the West had imposed upon the Orient and its peoples.

Owing to its internationalization, the Great Exhibition allowed the viewer to form a comparison between the material progress of nations. Such comparisons proved especially powerful in forming and reinforcing cultural conceptualizations of the Orient. Writing for the *Inverness Courier,* one reviewer of the Great Exhibition noted the following of one such model of comparison:

> I do not think that any one of the compartments of the Exhibition so completely transports the visitor into the region which it represents as that of Tunis. The figs and dates and luscious fruits of the land, the rich-scents and the odiferous matting with which the floor is carpeted, fill the atmosphere with the air of Barbary; and the admirable taste with which the whole stall is arranged—the prominence given to the skins of wild beasts, to the dresses of uncouth domestic utensils used by the people, to the natural products of the soil, the war implements and the riding gear, conjure up at once a picture of the rude, solitary, half barbarous, half-luxurious life of the modern inhabitants of the ancient territories of Carthage.[68]

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[67] Ibid.
[68] "The Great Exhibition: Fifth and Concluding Article from Our Special Correspondent," *The Inverness Courier*, June 5, 1851.

This single comment on the Tunisian display at the Exhibition reveals the totality of how the event reinforced the discourse of the Orient for the patrons. Moreover, the review showed how Western attitudes towards the Orient remained locked into a kind of ancient, unchanged conceptualization (e.g. the "air of Barbary" and the "modern inhabitants of the ancient territories"). In short, comparing the cultural goods of Tunis with that of Britain reinforced the discourse that one nation had civilized whereas the other had remained perdurable. As Said explained, "'Orientals' for all practical purposes were a Platonic essence…. The crime was that the Oriental was an Oriental, and it is an accurate sign of how commonly acceptable such a tautology was that it could be written without even an appeal to European logic or symmetry of mind."[69] Indeed, the newspaper reporter's ability to "conjure up at once a picture of the rude, solitary, half barbarous, half-luxurious life" relies upon his readers to also automatically "conjure" such an image. It was, perhaps, the expected image: not one of a contemporary people living in their own lands but of Carthaginians still waiting on the civilizing process to take hold. The deliberate placement of the industrialized goods of Western nations next to the crafts and goods of non-industrialized peoples produced such narratives. As a result of such maneuvers, the Great Exhibition's narrative legitimized the popular, academic, and official discourse surrounding the Orient in comparison to the "civilized" West. It was, in short, a propagandistic triumph for the British Empire project on both a material and cultural level.

The threefold accomplishments of the Great Exhibition—the use of modern construction materials and technologies which called attention to the event on a global scale, the exhibiting of "progress" through the lens of material and capitalistic development, and the purposeful juxtaposition between the cultures and economies of the West and the Orient in accordance with the dominant Western power discourse—all served to make the Exhibition an event of outsized

[69] Said, *Orientalism*, 38-39.

importance in nineteenth-century Britain. The Exhibition, with its vast attendance and well regarded global publicity, so effectively achieved its goals that it became, effectively, a symbol not just of its era but of Victorian cultural identity as well. Yet the Great Exhibition did not serve as a moment from which a newly constructed form of cultural identity emerged; rather, it perfectly reflected the ongoing imperialization efforts spurned on by both British political sensibilities and social attitudes. Indeed, for all the internationalization and idealization of "progress" present within the Crystal Palace, the Great Exhibition ultimately displayed more about what was central to mid-Victorian identity and values than anything else: self-assuredness, a commitment to trade and industry, a sense of religious destiny, a rising sense of jingoism, and a commitment to sharing and spreading Britain's self-assumed cultural superiority.

Finally, the magnanimous spirit backing the Great Exhibition as a showcase for international progress in industry did not extend so far as to invite equality between peoples. As the Great Exhibition unfolded, Britain assumed the dual role of international host and industrial leviathan with its willful juxtapositions between its achievements and those of others. Indeed, the British commitment to their own cultural superiority so readily on display within the Crystal Palace only grew with time. By 1869, Matthew Arnold had proclaimed in a famous work that: "culture [is] the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits…."[70] Arnold's comments fitted how the British saw themselves as the conservationists of culture; although, theirs was a culture which also accommodated a certain conceptualization of progress. Indeed, the Great Exhibition had modeled the very kind of cultural transmission that Arnold thought so vital, albeit through

[70] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

industrial progress rather than learning. Through the exhibition space, the new technology, and the internationalization of the exhibits, the British revealed what they saw as the best forms of "progress" the nations had to offer to each other. This also meant that the British, by virtue of staging the Exhibition, assigned to themselves the role of proprietor for what "progress" meant in the modern world. On the other hand, this also suggested that the British became an authoritative voice on what it meant to lack progress in the modern world. It follows from these privileged positions of authority and power that the British controlled, more than any other people, the discourse surrounding both the civilized and the uncivilized, the modern and the archaic, the West and the East. The Great Exhibition, therefore, made into material reality those modes of discourse from which the British defined their imperial program. It became the first great modern spectacle of the British Empire by virtue of its imperialistic totality.

The success of the Great Exhibition assured that future grand events which spoke to the broader discourse of Empire would become a fixture of popular entertainment and patriotic celebration in Britain. As the mid-Victorian era gave way to the late-Victorian period, the tone began to shift from one of self-assuredness in British economic and political superiority to that of growing bellicosity in the face of rising challenges to not just British global dominion but also to the supremacy of British cultural superiority. The narrative of the great late-Victorian spectacles changed to reflect these shifting realities. Nevertheless, the Great Exhibition established the value of the massive popular spectacle as an important cultural, social, and political experience from which the British would occasionally renew their control over the discourse of empire. Consequently, and emerging from the success of the Great Exhibition, grand British spectacles reflected the course of British imperial developments while simultaneously becoming a loadstone for the broader discourse of empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Chapter Three:

"Lo, All Our Pomp of Yesterday":
The Jubilees of Queen Victoria and the Two Families of the World[1]

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Britons and subjects alike gathered in London in 1887 and again in 1897 to celebrate the final public spectacles of not just a Sovereign but of an era: the Golden and Diamond Jubilees of Queen Victoria. By the time of her Diamond Jubilee, Victoria sat enthroned as the Queen and Empress, *Regina Imperatrix*, of nearly a fifth of the earth's surface.[2] The British Empire comprised some twelve million square miles of land and approximately one quarter of the world's population.[3] Famously, the maps of British schoolchildren marked out the boundaries of the Empire in pink.[4] British civil servants managed far-flung imperial possessions from Asia to the Americas, while forever plunging British expeditions deeper and deeper into Africa. At sea, the Royal Navy ruled the waves. As the Victorian era came to a close, Britain exercised a kind of authority and power throughout the world seldom seen since the fall of Rome. When the crowds poured into the streets to celebrate the culmination of Victoria's reign, the people also did so to mark the end of an unquestionably British century.

All, however, was not well. By the end of the century Britain had acquired economic and military rivals. International strife and internal rebellion troubled the imperial dominions. European countries, meanwhile, began to enjoy the boom times accompanying their rapid turn towards industrialization. Under these pressures, Britain's imperial standing gradually began to

[1] Excepted from Rudyard Kipling's 1897 poem *Recessional*. For the complete poem, see: http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/176152
[2] David Harris Willson and Stuart Prall, *A History of England* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 551.
[3] Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 224.
[4] According to the National Maritime Museum, "The practice of colouring in the Empire in pink on maps and globes began in the 19th century. Pink is actually a printer's compromise, as the colour that is really associated with the British Empire is red. However, a red background made it difficult to read letters overprinted in black, and so pink was used as a colour close to red but light enough for the lettering to be clearly legible." For more information, see: http://www.rmg.co.uk/explore/sea-and-ships/facts/faqs/why-is-the-british-empire-coloured-pink-on-maps

slip. If the mid-Victorian era represented a period of industrial-economic expansion and relative domestic and international peace, then the late-Victorian era represented a period of turbulence and growing conflict, especially abroad.[5] The equipoise of mid-Victorian times found public expression with the internationally harmonious staging of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Yet unlike the mid-Victorian calm embodied in the Exhibition, the public response to the growing change, strain, and decline of the late-Victorian era became apparent with the elaborate staging of Victoria's Jubilees. The Jubilees operated according to a much different purpose than did the Great Exhibition. Whereas the Exhibition intended to showcase the triumph of a new, industrial modernity set amidst a scene of international cooperation, the events of the Jubilees contended primarily with a British establishment eager to maintain its carefully cultivated position of authority over the two great global "families" of the nineteenth century: the fraternity of newly-ascendant European nation states and the collection of overseas dominions under Britain's imperial control.

Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees differed substantially in terms of content. The Golden Jubilee of 1887 celebrated Victoria in her role as a symbolic grand matriarch over an extended family of mostly harmonious European nation states. Nearly all of these nations found common interest in shared imperial ambitions, and in many ways the Golden Jubilee events highlighted imperial glory. The processions through the streets and the events surrounding the occasion all made reference to the power of Empire in action. It therefore made sense when the crowned heads of Europe, many of them directly connected to the British Royal Family through a series of marriages with Victoria's own children, all converged on London for the Golden

[5] G.M. Young, *Victorian England*, 187. Young closes his famous account of the Victorian Era with among other points a derisive recrimination of what he saw as the late-Victorian's lasting legacy of failure: "That time has left its scars and poison with us, and in the daily clamour for leadership, for faith, for a new heart or a new cause, I hear the ghost of the late Victorian England whimpering on the grave thereof."

Jubilee celebrations. The Jubilee acted as a sort of international family reunion. Meanwhile, the spectacle revealed to viewers the largely-shared values of the Western powers in a gilded family setting. Taken together, the Golden Jubilee effectively propagandized the British international vision of empire while simultaneously affirming to the public an air of harmonious good feelings among relations familiar and distant. Change, however, came rapidly to the family relations on display in 1887; and by 1897 the sentiments of good feelings gave way to growing international competition and discord.

The Diamond Jubilee of 1897 recognized Victoria much more exclusively in her role as the symbolic matriarch of the British imperial family. With the closing of the economic gap between Britain and the newly industrialized European states, a growing rivalry emerged between the British and some of the same European nation states which had so happily participated in the celebrations of 1887. In particular, Germany emerged to follow its own *Sonderweg*, or "special path," in direct challenge to British global hegemony under the leadership of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the emotionally unstable grandson of Queen Victoria.[6] So event planners in 1897 deliberately gathered representatives from the overseas dominions of the Empire as replacement figures intended to take the ceremonial places occupied by European heads of state during the Golden Jubilee. Additionally, the government under the premiership of the Marquess of Salisbury used the occasion to display its expansionary military policy aimed at countering challenger nations. The Diamond Jubilee, therefore, in direct contrast with the events of the Golden Jubilee, revealed to the world the beginnings of nothing less than an imperial

[6] Wilhelm II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs: Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, 1888-1918*. Translated by Thomas Ybarra (New York: Howard Fertig, 1976), 85. Wilhelm's relationship with his grandmother remained deeply fraught from his early life until her death in 1901, a point that Wilhelm often struggled to reconcile, as evidenced by his sometimes contradictory comments about her in his memoirs. On one occasion, Wilhelm speaks of Victoria as "commanding great respect," while on another he laments his half-English heritage: "statements were flying about among the people; it was being said that the Emperor was, after all, half an Englishman, with secret English sympathies; that he was certainly under the influence of his grandmother, Queen Victoria; that the dictation emanating from England must cease once for all; that the Emperor must be freed from English tutelage, etc."

family feud. With the coming of this feud, the events of 1897 also signaled the end of the Victorian century. Long gone were the days of "Crystal Palaces" and international competition in the name of collective progress. The glass had given way to the cold grey steel of the battleship. The ascent of Britain had ended; a century of conflict and imperial regression lay ahead.

Ultimately, the Jubilees of Victoria acted as public displays which showcased the changing relations between the established global authority of the British Empire and the emergence of nascent European powers, particularly Germany.[7] As a result, the shift in programmatic content from the internationally harmonious Golden Jubilee to the more militaristic and exclusive Diamond Jubilee makes obvious the rapid developments in world affairs associated with the late-Victorian era. In the course of a decade, the strain and growing conflict between the two families of the world—the vast but aging British Empire versus their upstart European neighbors—manifested itself in stark terms through the propaganda of the Jubilee spectacles.

By the Jubilee decade of 1887-1897, Britain's global standing appeared dominant in terms of economic capacity, imperial reach, and power projection; however, each of these ostensibly secure facets of the overall British imperial structure faced growing background challenges.[8] In general terms, the run-up to 1887 saw the British Empire enter a period of

[7] Ivo Nikolai Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 31-32. As Lambi discusses, the emergence of Germany as a direct military threat to Britain's interests coincides with the ascension of the young Wilhelm II in 1888 and his near-obsession with matching and challenging British naval capacity.

[8] Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, 244-246. As Newsome points out, perhaps a bit too uncritically, the Jubilee decade saw the public rejoining while "national pride soared to new heights."; Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 215. Brendon, however, more bluntly, and accurately, described the period as one in which the "theme of [Kipling's] *Recessional* was rehearsed again and again as imperial growth failed to stem 'industrial decline.'

increasing geographic expansion undermined by declining economic viability.[9] These strains produced a series of challenging management paradoxes which only grew throughout the Jubilee Decade.[10] Coming out of the golden decades of the mid-Victorian period, the British economy depended almost entirely on the successful maintenance and exploitation of its large overseas empire.[11] This arrangement stemmed from the fact that "at no time since the industrial revolution had the manufactures of the United Kingdom been particularly competitive on the markets of industrialized economies.… To preserve as much as possible of its privileged access to the non-European world was therefore a matter of life and death for the British economy."[12] As European competitor nations followed their own periods of industrialization at home with colonial growth abroad, the British had little choice but to counter such expansion by endless and costly security reinforcements overseas, as evidenced by the growing naval budgets.[13] Such moves towards enhanced security, however, eventually produced a deleteriously circular effect on the imperial economy. British imperial objectives started to center not on economic growth but on defenses against international encroachment on overseas colonial control and investments.[14] The trajectory of ever-increasing military expenditure, especially naval, during

[9] Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1976), 104. From 1874-1902, the British Empire added some 4,750,000 square miles of land and 90 million subjects.

[10] A.L. Levine, *Industrial Retardation in Britain: 1880-1914* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 14-17. Levine provides statistical evidence which points out that Britain held relatively level to American and German rates of industrial growth from 1870-1890; however, during the period between 1890-1907 American productivity reached some twenty times the rate of British growth, with German industrial capacity outstripping American growth rates by 2·6 to 1·6% per annum. In other words, by the late-Victorian era, Britain found itself under real economic strain from its main industrial competitor nations.

[11] Nicolas Lambert, *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 2. Lambert points out that some 90% of the world's trade came from sea trade, a point which supports Britain's well-established position as commanders of the sea.

[12] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 74.

[13] Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan : Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 152-155.

[14] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, 75.; Avner Offer, "The British Empire, 1870-1914: A Waste of Money?" *The Economic History Review* 46, No. 2 (May, 1993), 217. Offer points out an interesting fact: in the period between 1885 and 1904, domestic economic activity in Britain outperformed activities taking places in the Empire and

the late-Victorian period underscored these developments.[15] Economic decline throughout the Empire, therefore, directly led to new defensive postures.

By comparison, British competitor states enjoyed deep-seated internal advantages which enabled them to expand over time their own economic, and in turn military, capacity and capabilities. With the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War and the unification of the German state in 1871, the British found themselves facing a new European power. By the turn of the century, the newly unified Germany saw a state-of-the-art industrialized economy go into overdrive.[16] The German economic surge, coupled with a coalescing nationalism, eventually provided the first true militant challenger to British global authority since Napoleon led France.[17] One historian, in noting an important causal explanation for European, specifically German, ascent running in conjunction to British decline, describes economic (and political) developmental differences between Britain and Germany thus:

> In Germany … capitalism and liberalism were devalued far more than industrialism, whereas in England it was industrialism and not capitalism or liberalism whose development was inhibited. In this way, the conjunction of modernization with an entrenched aristocracy led in Germany to obstructed political development, and in Britain to inhibited economic development.[18]

These differences put both nations on the path to the coming military conflicts, but in the late-Victorian era they underscored the gradually shifting economic balance of power between Britain and Europe.[19] Germany also began to expand its interests overseas, cautiously under

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overseas. We may speculate that this shift complicated always-fraught bureaucratic battles over spending and the national balance sheet during the period which concerns this paper.

[15] Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 152-155.

[16] Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 210-211.

[17] For a definitive account on the historical causes of German aggression see: A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961).

[18] Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit,* 9.

[19] In this sense, the efforts of recent historians such as Professor Weiner provide a much clearer sense of the roots of conflict between Britain and Germany than some of the traditional assumptions made by "old-guard" commentators

Bismarck at first, and later more aggressively under Wilhelm II.[20] Further, Germany's rise disrupted the mid-Victorian narrative of a rising, cutting edge, and morally superior empire so carefully displayed in spectacles like the Great Exhibition. Britain, consequently, found itself in the troubled position of operating as the world's only (declining) superpower, a fact recognized by a growing sense of self-awareness in certain quarters. As Joseph Chamberlain famously described the late-Victorian predicament: "The weary titan, staggers under the too vast orb of its fate."[21]

Staggering though they may have been, the British remained economically tethered to their global imperial system no matter the extraordinary military costs associated with maintaining it.[22] The untenable steps towards rebalancing British foreign policy solvency came at great cost, and as the British system moved ever further away from the equipoise of the mid-Victorian period, military affairs slowly began to supplant economic and imperial expansion as the driving force in British policymaking.[23] While economic changes caused the global conflicts between nations, the resulting shift towards increasing militarization dominated the actions of the

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such as Michael Lewis, who asserted that the loss of absolute naval superiority effectively ended the *Pax Britannica*, and G.M. Young, who effectively blamed the degradation of mid-Victorian values, among other things.

[20] Arthur Rosenberg, *Imperial Germany: The Birth of the German Republic, 1871-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 25. Rosenberg goes to some lengths to argue "Bismarck never allowed his disputes with England over colonial questions to go to such lengths that a breach of peace was rendered possible." Obviously, Wilhelm II shared no such concern for shattering this peace with Britain.

[21] Qtd. in Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, preface.

[22] Lance Davis and Robert Huttenback with Susan Gray Davis, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The political economy of British imperialism, 1860-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 145-146. Davis and Huttenback point out that the defense burden for the Empire was a source of constant grief for the bureaucrats attempting to manage the beast: "The struggle over the defense burden was fought in two areas: overseas, between the colonies and the British government, and domestically, between the Treasury – guardian of the public purse – and the Colonial Office." Further, "Parliament usually was more concerned with the costs of the Empire than with any glories it might impart to the British Crown." One such exception, of course, would seem to be the Jubilees, as historians such as Piers Brendon have pointed out.

[23] The concept of foreign policy "solvency" which I am describing comes from Walter Lippmann analysis of the practice of modern foreign policy, and who famously said: "a foreign policy consists in bringing into balance, with a comfortable surplus of power in reserve, the nation's commitments and the nation's power." Late-Victorian foreign policy, however, failed to meet these goals, in spite of strenuous efforts to the contrary. For more information see: Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1950), 9.

Great Powers in the run up to the bloody years of total war.[24] This militarization became *the* underpinning focus of Britain's collective national efforts. The Jubilee decade of 1887-1897 saw the beginnings of this shift take root.

Because of the costs and efforts associated with the military-based mobilization of resources, and the desire to retain imperial standing, public support became a necessity. As ever, national events were opportune moments for propagandizing the benefits of new policy, and a comparative exploration of the differences between the public celebrations of 1887 and 1897 demonstrates just how rapidly the British publicly responded to the evolving world scene. [25] Indeed, by the end of the Jubilee Decade, the British propaganda model shifted from public self-congratulation over the empire they had built to the steeled resolve of defending an empire under threat. Whereas the 1887 Golden Jubilee events tended to harken back to the broad successes of the earlier part of the century, the 1897 Diamond Jubilee more closely reflected the events of the decade since 1887. The 1897 celebrations took on a bellicose air, and mood in the London streets indicated a celebratory but worried nationalistic patriotism. In just ten short years, the British position weakened to the point where the integration of openly ostentatious military power demonstrations into public spectacles such as the Diamond Jubilee became a necessary reflection of the new, costly, and primary focus of British policymaking. Against this backdrop came the public juxtaposition of the two families of the world on public, ceremonial display: the slowly declining British Empire and its rapidly ascending European challengers.

Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee of 1887 slowly came together as a largely perfunctory,

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[24] This project does not aim to take a hard stance on the debates over the origins of modern wars, even though its author tends to mostly agree with those historians who have argued that economic causes best explain the underlying roots of most modern international conflicts.

[25] Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, 215. According to Brendon, "The Diamond Jubilee was, indeed, a fanfare designed not just to exalt the imperial spirit but to subdue national fears about an end of the "British Century."

even reluctant, affair. The aging Sovereign did not want to celebrate much of anything in her mournful, latter-days somnolence. The impact of the Prince Consort's death had never fully abated in Victoria's private world; she remained in deep emotional pain for the rest of her life. Old age brought troublesome health in the form of painful rheumatism.[26] She grew obese, and she often behaved according to erratic moods. In her physically weakened and emotionally unsteady state, public appearances became taxing, and she attended very few of them. That said, the decrepitude of old age did not truly account for her withdrawal from public life; Prince Albert's death more than any other factor assured her general reclusiveness. Unsurprisingly, Victoria all but dreaded her own Golden Jubilee, and it took some time to persuade her of the merits of such an event.[27] After all, a state occasion such as a Jubilee demanded much personal attention. Numerous events for the Jubilee necessarily included delegations from the Empire, Europe, and across Great Britain. Military celebrations traditionally accompanied any festivities surrounding the Monarch, especially on state occasions. Perhaps most troubling of all, the people expected to see their Queen. Nevertheless, Victoria's personal reluctance aside, tradition dictated that the fiftieth anniversary of the Sovereign's Accession to the Throne merited a public celebration, and on the 21st of June, 1887 Victoria received hers.[28]

On the day of Victoria's official Jubilee celebrations in London, *The Times* published "A Jubilee Retrospect."[29] The paper welcomed a day that became noteworthy for looking back in time, not forward: "The long reigns of the Third Henry, the Third Edward, and the Third George,

[26] Longford, *Victoria*, 497.
[27] Ibid., 496.
[28] George III celebrated a Golden Jubilee on October 25th, 1809, a mere seventeen years before Victoria's Accession. Victoria's Accession Day fell on June 20th; however, public celebrations happened on the day after. For more information, see:
http://www.royal.gov.uk/HMTheQueen/TheQueenandspecialanniversaries/HistoryofJubilees/Overview.aspx
[29] "A Jubilee Retrospect: 1837-1887," *The Times,* June 21, 1887.

were all like that of Victoria, epochs of great and far-reaching transformations."[30] In making this claim, the *Times* undoubtedly sought to place the entirety of the Victorian era alongside those of the ancient, legitimizing past. As late as 1887, the British remained largely unrivaled in terms of command of the sea, the reach of its empire, and in the scope of its economic advancements. American and German industrialization, however, posed looming global economic challenges. In addition, the British economy no longer grew at the breakaway pace as it did during the mid-Victorian era. Yet these factors still seemed far off in the distance during the mid-summer of 1887. After all, the entire world did not come to London to pay homage to the leader of an utterly spent British Empire. Both the old lady and her Empire still had a great deal of life and stubborn vitality left in them.

On the night before the grand London public events took place, June 20th, 1887, an assortment of some fifty kings, queens, princes, highnesses, and other figures of royalty dined with Victoria.[31] No other nation on earth held the power to engender such symbolic obedience towards a single figure. Moreover, Victoria's matriarchal connections to so many European blood relatives no doubt helped to bolster attendance. Victoria described the evening as "a large family dinner."[32] This description curiously downplayed description for one of the more elite family dinners in the history of the world. The dual homage paid to both the Queen and the occasion, the marking of British collective accomplishments, repeated a week later during a formal State Banquet that acted as a send-off for the foreign dignitaries.[33] In the interim, the public celebrations crowded the streets of London.

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[30]Ibid.
[31] Longford, *Victoria*, 500.
[32] Victoria, R.I., *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal, 3 vols. Edited by George Earle Buckle.* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1932), 321. Victoria also noted that the luncheon held that afternoon happened in the "large Dining-room, which I had not used since '61." For kith and kin, literal and figurative, the event planners pulled out all of the stops.
[33] "Her Majesty's Jubilee: The Queen's Visitors," *The Times,* June 27, 1887.

In the late morning light of June 21, 1887, Queen Victoria left Buckingham Palace to celebrate with her subjects an event the *Times* described as a moment of "righteous pride: a ceremonial procession to Westminster Abbey for a Service of National Thanksgiving."[34] Victoria chose to wear a white bonnet, a symbolic nod from the ever-mournful Queen that she was finally willing to embrace her public role in the Jubilee events fully.[35] The *Times* captured the scenes which unfolded on the London streets as affirmation of her decision to celebrate the day in a spirit of optimism: "Hats were thrown up into the air, handkerchiefs were waved in welcome, everybody vied with his neighbor in active demonstrations of loyalty and delight."[36] The recognition of public loyalty stands as especially noteworthy after Victoria's many long public absences.[37] Republicanism became a source of growing popular, even political, influence spurred-on in part by the Queen's retreat from public duty. As a typical pamphlet on the aims of Republicanism asserted: "The true Republican is peaceable and law-abiding: his mission is to eliminate all that is evil from the institutions of his country, and substitute nothing but good in its place."[38] So in some quarters the perception existed that the Crown did little for either the public good or the public purse. In terms of public relations, the Golden Jubilee undermined such claims. As an example of the careful public relations effort, but also the extent to which negotiating the costs of Monarchy with publicly elected officials in Parliament remained a tricky issue throughout Victoria's long reign, the Queen contributed the lion's share of the outlays for the Jubilee.[39] The total government expenditure on the Golden Jubilee amounted to £16,089; the

[34] "Her Majesty's Jubilee: The Celebration in London," *The Times,* June 22, 1887.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Victoria spent considerable time over a period of many years in relative Court seclusion at both Balmoral Castle in Scotland and Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, both of which the Prince Consort purchased, and, in the case of Osborne House, designed. Undoubtedly, both estates reminded Victoria of her beloved, late husband.
[38] John Kirkup, "Lecture on Republicanism: Its Aims and Objects," *Bristol Selected Pamphlets* (1885), 3.
[39] William Kuhn, "Queen Victoria's Civil List: What Did She Do With It?" *The Historical Journal* 36, No. 3 (September, 1993), 657.

Queen's personal contribution totaled in excess of £50,000.[40] Nothing, however, reinforced the role of the Crown as an essential, functioning member of government and British life quite like the symbolic appearance of Victoria at the center of the spectacle.

The orchestrated visuals of the Jubilee procession emphasized the Crown's centrality by magnifying Victoria's status as a family matriarch and an imperial sovereign. The proceedings, therefore, coalesced around Victoria as a personal celebrant in a larger imperial affair. To the public, the imperial trappings of the event represented national successes, and the placement of Victoria as the focus of the celebrations reinforced her part in the totality of nineteenth-century British triumph. Specifically, the embodied symbolism of Victoria at the middle of the lengthy parade mirrored the centrality of British involvement in far-reaching world affairs. She was the national mother of the Mother Country. Britain managed from afar, yet it managed with central authority. Signaling further parallels with the distant past, the Jubilee events allowed the British Crown to lend publicly its symbolic imprimatur to British imperial policymaking—all symbolized through Victoria as *Regina Imperatrix*—in a similar manner to how the Roman Senate once transmitted its universal authority through the totemic standards born by the legions and bearing the watchwords of power: "SPQR: the Senate and the People of Rome."[41] Thus, in addition to providing a glittering, crowd-pleasing spectacle for patriotic Britons, the Jubilee informed its observers, both at home and abroad, of the "roles" its participants played according to their proximal hierarchical standing in relation to the centrally important British Crown. Specifically, the organizational structure of the ceremonial itself reflected the symbolic hierarchy of the contemporary powers dominating international matters in 1887; and Britain, as

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, 212-216. I must credit Brendon with drawing some vague connections between Roman spectacle and Victoria's Jubilees; however, I have expanded upon this analogy somewhat. Brendon's efficient description of the Diamond Jubilee remains the best succienct account of the event that I have read to date.

represented by the Crown, remained at the heart of most global affairs. Victoria's extended family played their supporting roles accordingly.

During the Jubilee procession, the Queen's extended family remained at her side, earning rapturous adulation from the crowds. As the *Times* specifically noted:

> Surely no nobler sight has ever been witnessed than that of our Queen, accompanied by a guard of honour composed solely of her kin by blood and her relations by marriage, and yet representing half the royal families of Europe, as she made her progress through the Abbey. The English people, who assembled literally in their millions to watch the gorgeous scene from first to last, have certainly much cause for gratitude to those illustrious guests of their Queen who have come to honour them and her by their presence on this occasion of universal jubilee.[42]

The *Times*' allusion to the "gratitude" of the English people, however, did not trump the largely honorific role that the press, and presumably the flag-waving public, identified the foreign dignitaries as playing. Victoria's extended family of European crowned heads "guarded" her in the sense that they took on a subservient role to her position and status during the Jubilee ceremonies. While their secondary role in the ceremony submitted to the practices of tradition and followed according to diplomatic orders of precedence, the nature of the occasion—a powerful public acclimation of both the British Crown and the British Empire—meant that the other crowned heads essentially yielded in deference to British standing and authority. The spirit of deference also extended to Victoria's subjects; those who came to pay her obedience in the streets. Finally, it extended to her peoples in the realms across the seas; those subjects of the Empire. The ceremony reinforced the unmistakable message communicated by all such symbolic consecrations of regal authority: the notification that British power, authority, and dignity emanated from the legitimacy of the Crown. Importantly, and unlike other more localized British spectacles of royalty, the Golden Jubilee notified a global audience that the

[42] "Her Majesty's Jubilee: The Celebration in London," *The Times,* June 22, 1887.

Victorian world order remained upon them. The rest of the world, however, already understood this as reality, and they willingly participated in the show. In part, this willing participation occurred because the rest of the world powers shared many of the same values as the Victorians, and many of them sought to emulate those values on the world stage.

Shared values between late-Victorian British imperialists and like-minded aristocratic imperialists in European nations aligned harmoniously in many ways before the rapid rise of competing economic aims, and the subsequent rise of militarism, led to direct conflict. These shared values included similar ideas about the ethnic superiority of the "Occident" over the "Orient," a common sense of destiny concerning the economic progress of industrialization, the retention of varying forms of aristocratic governance in an age of revolution, and a commitment to alliances through the loose connections of royal marriages and increasingly important political arrangements. The participation of so many willing European heads of state in the Golden Jubilee reaffirmed the state of international cooperation along the lines of these shared values. Yet while these forms of cooperation as driven by values extended far enough to bring everyone together for a Jubilee parade, other developing tensions quickly began to emerge, especially between Great Britain and Germany. The Germans, emboldened by national unification and growing economic vitality, saw themselves as emerging from the nineteenth century shaping their own ascendant destiny. Indeed, the Germans became committed to the notion of a unique *Sonderweg*.

The German *Sonderweg*, or "special path," theoretically represents a kind of German exceptionalism took hold in Germany following the leadership and influence of Bismarck.[43] The *Sonderweg* thesis, which remains deeply controversial among historians, holds in part that late-

[43] Michael Stürmer, "A Nation State against History and Geography: The German Dilemma," ed. Gregor Schöllgen, *Escape into War: The Foreign Policy of Imperial Germany* (New York: Berg, 1990), 63.

nineteenth-century German historians believed in a largely positive German destiny shaped by a powerful constitutional monarchy that anticipated and instituted popular social reforms from above.[44] These special standards contrasted with the so-called "normalized" historical forces which acted in other nation states, including Great Britain.[45] These normalized forces reflected traditional nation state models that behaved reactively to social pressures originating according to popular demand "from below."[46] The German *Sonderweg*, on the other hand, saw the German polity acting in a kind of universal accord designed to actualize a sense of national destiny through a dedicated "top-down" approach. Today, historians hotly debate the implications of whether or not German history hinges upon any "special path," especially in light of the global atrocities of the twentieth century and Germany's critical role in the manifestation of those events. Nevertheless, late nineteenth-century German historiography did not foresee that the German "special path" as ultimately contributing to global catastrophe.[47] Instead, the notion of a uniquely positive national destiny paralleled the largely positive currents of German unification and burgeoning economic industrialization. This is crucial, for as some influential historians argue, the eventual atrocities associated with German economic rise and subsequent militarization originated in the special sense of destiny which Kaiser Wilhelm II and his Court

[44] Jürgen Kocka, "German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German Sonderweg" *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (January 1988), 3.
[45] In contrast to German *Sonderweg*, the British polity experienced change much more directly from "below." In this sense, the "normalized" process of Parliamentary reforms, such as the various Reform Bills of the nineteenth century, came about as reactions to growing social pressure. For more information see: Jürgen Kocka, "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German Sonderweg," *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (February 1999), 43-44.
[46] Kocka, "German History before Hitler," 5. Kocka points out that historians dispute the extent to which forces "from below" were reflected in Germany, even assuming the *Sonderweg* thesis as valid.
[47] For more information on the role in which Germany's active historical responsibility—a not universally agreed upon subject within the historical scholarship—in causing the global conflicts of the twentieth century, see Professor Fritz Fischer's body of work on the subject. Of particular note for English-speaking readers: Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967).

fully embraced as *Weltpolitik* following his accession in 1888.[48] Accordingly, the slow decline from Bismarckian stability to the horrors of the twentieth century, culminating through the terrible genocide of the Holocaust, irreversibly inverted the German *Sonderweg* from a positive to negative path.[49]

Setting aside the future implications of the *Sonderweg* inversion, German national action in the 1890s flowed from the belief that a special positive path lay before the nascent German nation, and that ascendant belief ultimately serves to explain why the Golden Jubilee of 1887 acted as the last symbolic gathering of the two families of the world during a time of harmonious peace and broadly shared values. The Golden Jubilee also evidenced the last occasion in which all parties recognized that the British Empire still unquestionably dominated world affairs. Between the Golden Jubilee in 1887 and the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, German *Sonderweg* had taken hold. Simultaneously, British decline continued to take shape. As a perhaps inevitable reaction to these events, the Diamond Jubilee came to reflect the rapidly changing global situation far more than mirroring the successful theme international harmony and accord present during the 1887 events.

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee far surpassed the Golden Jubilee in terms of scope and scale, size and cost, effort, and execution. Some historians noted that for all the public relation

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[48] For more information on this highly controversial claim, see: A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of Germany Since 1815* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962). Indeed, Taylor goes so far as to suggest in *The Course of German History* that a negative *Sonderweg* emerged as an inevitable offshoot of a militant German national character. He lavishes special attention to the moral character of Wilhelm II, linking him to the sense of negative German destiny run amok in the 1890s: "Wilhelm II, still under thirty, was a product, and a characteristic one, of the Germany which Bismarck had made. He had experienced none of the dangers of the 'sixties, knew nothing of the risks which had been run nor of the narrow margin by which success had been achieved. He had been formed in the shadow of Germany's expanding and seemingly limitless might. His character reinforced the effect of his environment … He was … hysterical, grandiloquent, craving popularity, pursuing limitless dream-projects and abandoning them unfinished—in short the perfect representative of the Germany of the eighteen-nineties," (138-139); Klaus Hildebrand, "Opportunities and Limits of German Foreign Policy in the Bismarckian Era, 1871-1890: 'A System of Stopgaps?' ed. Gregor Schöllgen. *Escape into War: The Foreign Policy of Imperial Germany* (New York: Berg, 1990), 88.

[49] Ibid. Hildebrand points out that in direct contrast to Bismarck's emphasis on caution, Wilhelm II's policies of *Weltpolitik* gained immediate popularity with the German people.

successes of the Golden Jubilee, it actually underwhelmed in terms of execution for an event of such magnitude.[50] No such issues afflicted the Diamond Jubilee. In fact, the Diamond Jubilee procession to St. Paul's Cathedral for a Service of Thanksgiving on June 22, 1897 remains one of the largest spectacles ever seen in the city of London. Some 46,000 troops drawn from across the armed services and the Empire escorted a Royal party of seventeen carriages through the streets.[51] Over a quarter million pounds were spent on decorations throughout the capitol.[52] According to first-hand accounts, the decorations appeared "more lavish and in better taste than they had ever been before."[53] Queen Victoria wrote in her diary that the event was "a never-to-be-forgotten day."[54] Andrew Carnegie, a notable spectator, commented to interested audiences in America:

> Certainly the world has never seen such a procession as that which traversed the streets of London on the 22d day of June in commemoration of the blessings showered upon the motherland under the reign of Queen Victoria…. Nor is the world likely to see anything like this again. After viewing such a spectacle no one can question that our English-speaking race is the spreading, colonizing, conquering race of the world.[55]

Carnegie's impression, full of jingoistic racism and complicated national pride, did not take into account the full reality of the situation: the German-speaking peoples believed in a different world order than the absolute supremacy of Anglo spheres of influence. Of course, neither the English-speaking peoples nor Europeans cared much about the autonomy of those countries the growing imperial competition subjugated. The challenge to power in the late-nineteenth century remained a European affair. The Diamond Jubilee's ambitious scale spoke to this fact. Indeed,

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[50] Young, *Portrait of an Age*, 182. Young described the Golden Jubilee as "homely and somewhat slipshod festivities."
[51] "The Diamond Jubilee: Celebration in London," *The Times*, June 23, 1897.; Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, 213.
[52] Ibid.
[53] "The Diamond Jubilee: Celebration in London," *The Times*, June 23, 1897.
[54] Victoria R.I., *Letters of Queen Victoria,* June 22, 1897.
[55] Andrew Carnegie, "Some Important Results of the Jubilee." *The North American Review* 165, no. 491 (October, 1897), 497.

the 1897 events directly confronted the challenges arising from the fluid European situation in two ways: reassurance and defiance.

All convocations of empire ultimately seek to reassure the public as to the validity and importance of imperial projects. Within the English polity, the Monarchy acted as a dignified focal point around which the coalescence of reassuring and dignifying spectacles occurred.[56] Unlike in 1887 when the public streamed onto the streets to celebrate a period of virtually unrivalled British strength, the 1897 spectacles demanded a greater sense of dignified pomp and ceremony to reinforce the idea that British imperial policymaking remained a workable source of stability heading into the post-Victorian era. Through such displays imperial weaknesses could be masked, at least theoretically. Ironically, such a role for the Diamond Jubilee came about almost by happenstance. Queen Victoria, primarily for reasons of health, but also in the hopes of avoiding her vexing grandson, Wilhelm II, became unwilling to entertain her extended family of European royal relatives as she done in 1887.[57] Victoria's stubbornness provided Lord Salisbury, then Prime Minister, and Joseph Chamberlin, then Colonial Secretary, the opportunity to modify the structure of the events from the 1887 model of a celebratory family reunion and move to redefine them as a true imperial spectacle of Britishness.[58] As such, the imperial dominions all acquired enhanced roles in the Diamond Jubilee, including as contributors to the vast military contingent.[59] The Diamond Jubilee, therefore, was deliberately designed to bolster public awareness and appreciation for continued British investment in the Empire. In this way,

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[56] William Kuhn, "Ceremony and Politics: The British Monarchy, 1871-1872," *Journal of British Studies* 26, no. 2 (April 1987), 133. Kuhn provides excellent commentary, expanding on the idea of Monarchy as dignity—originally a conceptualization of Walter Bagehot.
[57] Walter Arnstein, "Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee," *The American Scholar* 66, no. 4 (Autumn 1997), 594-595.
[58] The Marquis of Salisbury to Queen Victoria, June 5, 1897 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal*, 3 vols. Ed. George Earle Buckle (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1932); Walter Arnstein, "Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee," 594-595.; Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, 215. Brendon points out that Salisbury grudgingly recognized that "the multitudes needed circuses as well as bread."
[59] "The Diamond Jubilee: Celebration in London," *The Times,* June 23, 1897.

the Diamond Jubilee reassured the public of imperial stability under the auspices of royal dignity.

The other great purpose of the Diamond Jubilee centered on a defiant projection of strength to competitor nations, especially Germany. To accomplish this goal, the planners embraced a theme with a decidedly militaristic edge. As the *Times* explained: "Rain would have marred the splendor of the military pageant, which had been made military not because the glories of the Victorian era had been principally military, but because soldiery make a brave show."[60] In reality, the brave show signaled a real concern that while the glories of the Victorian era had not come from armed triumph, the security of the Empire going forward likely required armed deterrence, even open conflict on a global scale. So, the grand procession this time saw the sunlight glistening off of the breastplates and swords of tens of thousands of troops dedicated to the task of defending the Empire. British policy mandarins paid careful attention to the reaction of the German ruling class to the Jubilee displays, and the *Times* dutifully reproduced what the Prussian newspaper of record, the *Kreuz Zeitung*, published:

> England is the land which is most closely akin to us in civilization, morality, and religion, and that we are to-day in the position of her opponent in many questions is chiefly due to the fact that we are not yet strong enough … The present opposition will continue until a compromise has been affected against which all the instincts of our English cousins are to-day up in arms.[61]

The special correspondent reporting from Berlin noted that the German newspaper also admitted the British imperial position remained largely impenetrable thanks to the strength of the Royal Navy, and also that any attacks on India by German forces "are far easier to plan than to execute."[62] The reporting demonstrates competing propaganda efforts in action. For the

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[60] Ibid.
[61] "Latest Intelligence. The Diamond Jubilee. The World-Wide Celebrations. (From Our Correspondents)," *The Times,* June 24, 1897.
[62] Ibid.

Germans, the message conveyed an ever-increasing desire for military strength and confrontation. For the British, the reporting reflected the anxiety over the German challenge while simultaneously justifying the show of force incorporated into the Diamond Jubilee events. Moreover, while the troops in the streets certainly contributed to the projection of British military might, everyone in the world knew where British military strength truly rested: the combined firepower of the Royal Navy.

As an integral part of the history of the island nation, the Royal Navy traditionally fulfilled both a defense and ceremonial role, and five days after the London procession came the single most important ceremonial event of the late-Victorian period: the Jubilee Review of the Fleet at Spithead.[63] On June 27, 1897, the Royal Navy mustered a massive fleet for the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, to review in the name of the infirm and grounded Queen.[64] Faithfully patriotic in its reporting of such events, the *Times* described the scene in gloating detail:

> The splendid panorama is all in perfect harmony, and one almost forgets the vast forces which are latent in this peaceful assemblage of warships. The white ensign flies from 165 vessels, ranging from the torpedo-boat to the Majestic of nearly 15,000 tons. No smoke shows from the forest of funnels; but on board 130 vessels only more than 914,000 horse-power can be brought into full play in a few hours. About 38,000 highly-trained officers and men, with an organization the most complete that mankind has devised, are under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief. Yet this unique naval display has not entailed the withdrawal of a single ship from foreign stations, wither indeed two vessels have very lately been despatched.[65]

The ships assembled in four long allées to give the Royal salute and face inspection (Fig. 3.1).[66] Yet unlike the Jubilee events in London, the watery nature of the Spithead review did not allow

[63] Victoria's Golden Jubilee had also merited a Fleet Review. While the number of ships participating in the two events proved comparable, the strengths of the fleets differed. Many smaller vessels took part in 1887 than in 1897. For more information see: "The Naval Review," *The Times*, July 25, 1887.
[64] "Review of the Fleet by the Prince of Wales. Magnificent Illuminations," *The Times*, June 28, 1897.
[65] "Reflections on the Naval Review," *The Times,* June 28, 1897.
[66] Ibid.

for throngs of spectators to witness the naval review in person; the vast majority of the public necessarily learned of the details through media sources. Nevertheless, the Spithead review played an important propaganda role in terms of national reassurance. Even more importantly, the strength of the British Navy, as acknowledged in the German newspapers, affirmed what the British wanted to remind the world: no one challenged British naval supremacy with ease. The lessons of British history informed this prideful naval policymaking. Dating back to 1588 and the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and in some instances even before that, the Royal Navy provided the essential line of defense against invasion[67]. By the late-Victorian era, the Royal Navy had globalized that role to assure the security of the entire Empire. British power flowed through the navy. The Spithead review served notice that the British intended to continue their long tradition of maritime dominance, and that the navy remained virtually unassailable. Massed British naval strength did not however stop Britons from casting their eyes towards Germany and wondering: "would it all last?"

Concerns over British naval capacity to resist German and European shipbuilding expansion regularly surfaced throughout the 1880s. These worries reached a fever pitch in the summer of 1888 when fears over budget cuts to the Royal Navy prompted no less a figure than Queen Victoria to question the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, about the matter.[68] Salisbury's government reversed course dramatically, instituting a series of recommendations brought forward by a Parliamentary committee headed by the First Lord of the Admiralty and tasked with reviewing British naval capabilities.[69] Britain began a five-year building program which funded

[67] Ryan Hudnall, "God's Navy: The Puritan Origins of English Naval Supremacy" (paper presented at the National Convention of the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honors Society, Orlando, FL, January 3, 2012).
[68] Lambert, *Planning Armageddon*, 26.; Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan,* 146-147.
[69] Ibid., 147.

the construction of ten battleships, forty-two cruisers, and eighteen torpedo boats.[70] According

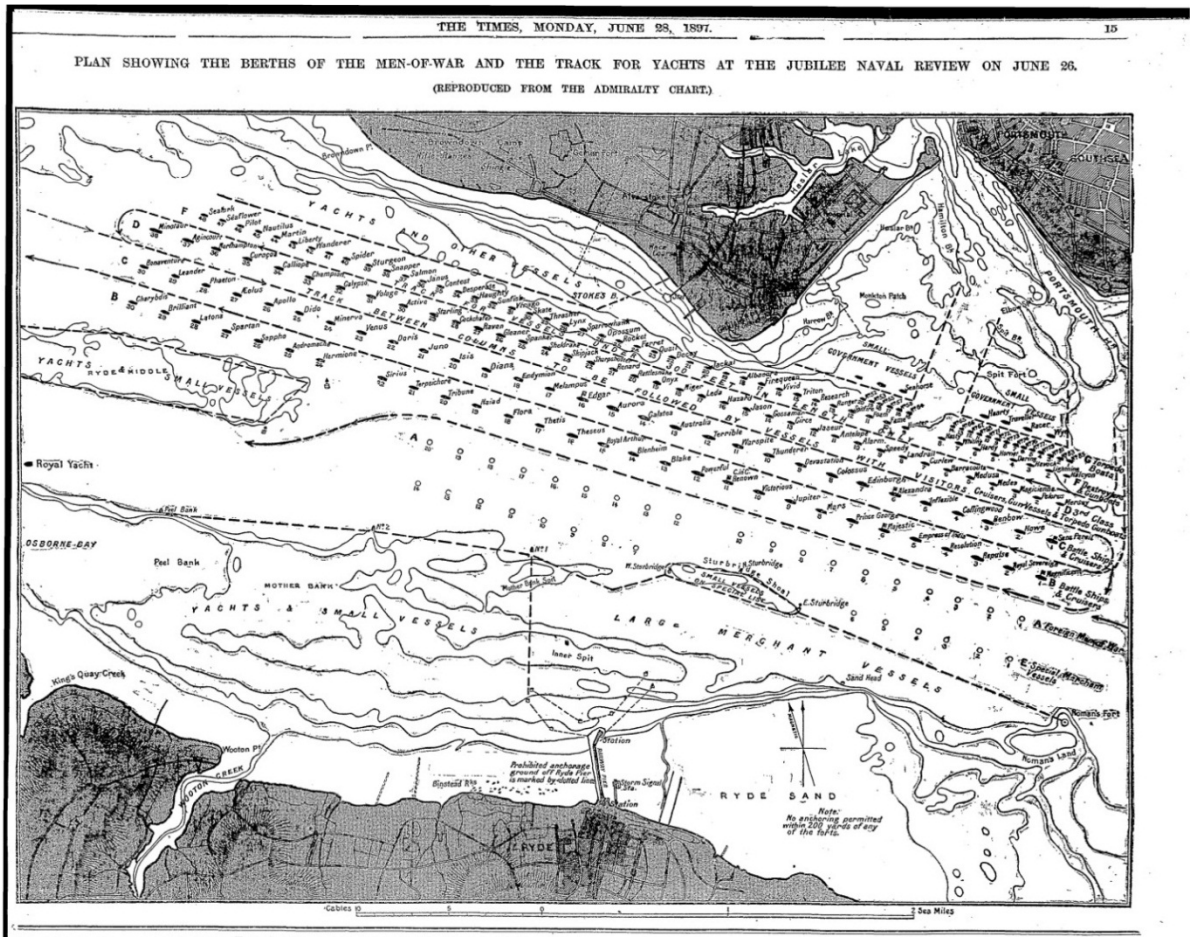

Fig. 3.1. *Plan Showing the Berths of the Men-of-War and the Track for Yachts at the Jubilee Naval Review on June 26*, *The Times*, 1897.[71]

to one naval historian, this program resulted in not only a massively upgraded navy but a new national defense policy:

> For the first time government officials laid out a standard against which their efforts, and those of future governments, could be judged. In the process they also created a compressed, shorthand means of measuring sea power that eventually figured prominently in all naval debates and disputes in the run-up to the First World War.[72]

This measuring of naval power according to a permanent policy became the so-called "Two-

[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d, ser. Vol. 333 (1889), 1171.; Friedberg, *The Weary Titan,* 147.

Power Standard."[73] The justification for the cost of such a standard relied upon the idea that no other country dared challenge British naval supremacy if the Royal Navy maintained strength greater than its next two largest rivals. Britain acted to position that strength strategically around the world. This owed to both the far-flung nature of the Empire's colonial possessions and the vast ocean tracts dominated by British-controlled shipping. A map showing the trade routes of the British Empire in the year 1886 demonstrates the extent of the commercial reach of the Empire (Fig. 3.2). In the map, British shipping lanes are depicted spider webbing across the globe, connecting distant outposts of the British Empire to key trading cities. At the foot of the map rests images of the various "native" peoples in service to the Empire, and many of their homelands are reduced to serving as nothing more than outposts for the commercial arms of the vast British imperial economy.

Whereas all roads once led to Rome, in the British Empire all shipping lanes eventually led back to the Mother Country. In order to secure these commercial interests, the British based their navy in deep-water ports located throughout the various regions operating under British influence. As one historian pointed out: "By her possession of an enormous colonial empire, Britain enjoyed the strategical benefits of the most important collection of naval bases throughout the world: 'Five strategic keys lock up the globe!', gloated Admiral Fisher, and they (Dover, Gibraltar, the Cape, Alexandria, Singapore) were all in British hands."[74] From these

[73] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d, ser. Vol. 333 (1889), 1171. The First Lord of the Admiralty, George Hamilton, outlined the principles of both the shipbuilding program and the long-term policy consequences of this program in the House of Commons on March 7, 1889. In his speech he claimed: "[I]t requires no very deep student of history to know that there are certain sections of opinion and of influence in foreign countries which are unfriendly to this country, owing to jealousy of our prosperity and envy of our great colonial expansion … I have endeavoured during the past year to study the speeches of those who in previous years have held my position and that of Prime Minister, so as to ascertain what was the paramount idea underlying their utterances when they spoke of the standard of strength on which our naval establishment should be maintained. I think I am correct in saying that the leading idea has been that our establishment should be on such a scale that it should at least be equal to the naval strength of any two other countries."

[74] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (New York: Humanity Books, 1976), 205-206.

regional security hubs, the Royal Navy effectively ruled the waves.

By the late nineteenth century, the Royal Navy rotated roughly ten first-line battleships to the Mediterranean Fleet, three to the Far East, and individual battleships to the Cape and American squadron, all supplemented by numerous other battle-worthy ships of varying capability spread across the globe.[75] Additionally, the Royal Navy operated a Channel Fleet based at Gibraltar which comprised some eight first-line battle ships as well as a Reserve Fleet of some eleven second-class battleships which patrolled the North Sea.[76] As the *Times* noted, none

Fig. 3.2 J.C.R. Colomb, *Imperial Federation Map of the World Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886*, 1886, The Boston Public Library.[77]

[75]Ibid., 206.
[76] Ibid.
[77] For more information, see: http://maps.bpl.org/id/m8682

of the global navy assets required reassignment for the Diamond Jubilee Naval Review.[78]

In order to maintain these extensive commitments and operate according to the Two-Power Standard, British naval expenditure remained on an upward trajectory throughout the late-Victorian era. From 1885 to 1896, naval expenditures soared from roughly 13% of the entire national budget to 19%.[79] These increases in costs mirrored the growth in size of the surface fleet, which effectively doubled in terms of tonnage from 1880 to 1900 (see Fig. 3.3). With

Warship Tonnage of the Great Powers, 1880-1914					
	1880	1890	1900	1910	1914
Britain	650,000	679,000	1,065,000	2,174,000	2,714,000
France	271,000	319,000	499,000	725,000	900,000
Russia	200,000	180,000	383,000	401,000	679,000
USA	169,000	240,000	333,000	824,000	985,000
Italy	100,000	242,000	245,000	327,000	498,000
Germany	88,000	190,000	285,000	964,000	1,305,000
Austria-Hungary	60,000	66,000	87,000	210,000	372,000
Japan	15,000	41,000	187,000	496,000	700,000

Fig. 3.3 Warship Tonnage of the Great Powers, 1880-1914[80]

these investments, the British maintained the ability to influence global affairs through naval deterrence.[81] Lingering doubts, however, remained firmly implanted in the British bureaucratic psyche about various military shortcomings previously exposed during the Crimean War.[82] Allaying these concerns provided yet another reason for Whitehall to spend liberally on far-reaching military capabilities. Yet such investments exacerbated the paradox of heavy spending

[78] "Reflections on the Naval Review," *The Times,* June 28, 1897.
[79] William Ashworth, "Economic Aspects of Late Victorian Naval Administration." *The Economic History Review* 22, no. 3 (December 1969), 491. By 1913, the percentage of annual naval spending had soared to 24% of all British government expenditures.
[80] Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 203.
[81] S.W. Roskill, *The Strategy of Sea Power: Its Development and Application. Based on the Lees-Knowles lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge, 1961* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1962), 96-98.
[82] Ashworth, "Economic Aspects of Late Victorian Naval Administration," 494.

designed to secure a less-profitable empire.[83] Also, the deterrent logic of the Two-Power Standard and the strategic placement of British naval forces around the globe did not stop other nations, especially the Germans, from launching their own shipbuilding programs. So began a costly, and ultimately deadly, arms race in spite of all the far-reaching naval policies the British put in place.

The defiant choice to face-down the rising German threat had its coming out party at the Diamond Jubilee Naval Review. The message sent by the Admiralty was unmistakable: anyone wishing to challenge the British Empire had to go through the most powerful fleet assembled in human history. Implicit in the message, a dare: "good luck!" Such defiance, however, came with tremendous costs that extended beyond the financial. The rising militancy ended the "Pax Britannica" for all time; the peace and stability of the British era increasingly gave way to the spectre of confrontation. Fittingly, the last major event of the Diamond Jubilee ended on a triumphantly discordant note: the endless rows of battleships all lined up in symbolic, ominous defiance towards the nation led by the Queen's grandson. Thus the Jubilee decade ended not in the grand triumph of Victorian ideals but in their failure.

What started as a happy, golden family reunion in 1887 gave way to an imperial proclamation of feuding defiance in 1897. The planners of the Diamond Jubilee intended it as a defining spectacle of the Victorian Century. It did not, however, celebrate any of the true virtues of the era as the Great Exhibition of 1851 managed to do.[84] By making a triumphalist declaration of military might, the British effectively abandoned those ideals which made the rise

[83] Lambert, *Planning Armageddon*, 25. Lambert correctly asserts that "By 1900, British Naval expenditures were spiraling out of control and the cost of maintaining Britain's global naval supremacy was approaching the outer limits of what the state could afford."

[84] The Great Exhibition, of course, managed to highlight the incredible advances of industry and the spirit of equipoise which defined the era. It failed to recognize the extent to which the progress and harmony of the era had been built on the backs of the working poor and the people subjected to imperialism.

of the Victorian world order possible. The establishment of the British Empire provided, for good or ill, a dominating force in world affairs. At its best, it provided a period of political stability, economic expansion, religious conviction, and moral order. At its worst, it excluded minorities from the political process, built economic expansion on the backs of the working poor and non-whites, failed to respect the beliefs and values of other cultures, and enforced draconian moral restrictions on societies everywhere. Nevertheless, the mid-Victorian era, for all its faults, managed to usher in a period of unusual peace and prosperity around much of the world. The late Victorians saw challenges to these ideals. Rather than rise to those challenges by following the path of cooperative peace and economic inclusion that brought about the high-idealism on display in the Great Exhibition, the late Victorians abandoned those principles and confronted rising nations as emergent threats.

Whether or not British policymakers had any choice but to react in an aggressive manner in the face of German militancy remains a hotly debated point of contention among historians. Regardless, the divorce of nations happened, and the international differences on display between the Golden Jubilee and the Diamond Jubilee provide historians with landmark events to trace the break. What came next did not arrive in the form of glorious remembrances of past accomplishments. The coming convocations of empire centered on the dedication of war memorials and cemeteries. They would be funerals of tragedy, not triumphs of peace and prosperity. For Great Britain, the slow demise of empire had begun.

Chapter Four:

After the Flood:
Public War Memorials and Postwar Memory in Modern Britain

Writing in *Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh articulated a problem that many of his readers in postwar Britain undoubtedly wondered: "where can we hide in fair weather, we orphans of the storm?"[1] From 1914 to 1918, and again from 1939 to 1945, Britons endured the horrors of total war. The interwar and postwar years did little to lessen the tragedies reaped by the twin whirlwinds of conflict. Soldiers returned with shellshock; an entire generation fell in the bloody trenches; the "Blitz" reduced parts of London to rubble; the imperial economy deteriorated; austerity caused localized economic strain for many households. These myriad problems lingered throughout the years of shaky peace which preceded and followed the two conflicts. The wars also irreversibly damaged the arrangement of a global empire nurtured and maintained by Great Britain for over a century. The eventual emergence of the United States and Soviet Russia as new global superpowers assured the end of British imperial ambition. In sum, the cumulative effects of the World Wars acted not so much as a turning point in British history, but as a shatter point. Reflecting the demise of British global authority, Britons no longer rallied, as they had done so many times before, to celebrate the pomp and circumstance associated with imperial power.

Throughout the years of Britain's imperial ascent, major national spectacles retained a largely affirmative air about them. The Great Exhibition of 1851 signaled the twin rise of industrial modernity in Britain and British leadership around the globe, while the Jubilees of Victoria affirmed British commitment towards remaining the hegemonic masters of international affairs. With these events, British government officials basked in their ability to inspire mass

[1] Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memoirs of Captain Charles Ryder* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1945), 299.

celebrations which encompassed Britons and British subjects from all walks of life. Furthermore, Whitehall mandarins succeeded in using imperial spectacles to promote various propaganda ends, both at home and abroad. Propaganda successes associated with these events allowed British citizens to see them as comforting measures of security and progress, while competitor nations correctly interpreted national celebrations as displays of British industrial and military might. These precedents, however, poorly suited the postwar realities that came about after 1918 and 1945. After all, what was left to celebrate? Instead, Britons forged a new kind of public response to the tragedy of the wars: old models of government-led national celebrations of British imperial glory gave way to communities of mourners commemorating the tragedies of war in solemn occasions, both on national and local levels.

Interwar and postwar commemoration events more carefully reflected the new mood of their public participants. This transition did not come about as a result of any preemptory anticipation by the government; rather, thanks to public repossession of key elements of commemoration events, often most clearly visible in small towns.[2] Spontaneous public responses during national events also reflected the clear shift from attendees as celebrants to mourners. For example, during the national commemorations following the end of the First World War, those who came to pay their respects began unexpectedly to lay wreaths and mementos at the base of a temporary memorial erected in Whitehall.[3] In response to the unexpected outpouring of grief that took place at this temporary monument, the government commissioned a permanent replacement.[4] The significance of this example, and others like it,

[2] K.S. Inglis, "The Homecoming: The War Memorial Movement in Cambridge, England," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 4 (1992), 587. Inglis argues that the shift from national memorialization to commemorations in local communities for the mourning of war losses came out of gradual necessity as army reforms began emphasizing regional connections, more volunteers joined the service, and as rigid class barriers between soldiers and their officers slowly began to lift.
[3] Allan Greenberg, "Lutyens's Cenotaph," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 48, no.1 (1989), 8-9.
[4] "The Whitehall Cenotaph," *The Times*, July 31, 1919.

offers a clear juxtaposition of how spectacles of empire came to function in the postwar environment versus their previous incarnations. While propagandistic notions of service and duty remained core to official efforts at commemoration, these values did not necessarily conflict with the fact that where spectacles once transmitted to the public messages of imperial validation, postwar gatherings now inverted the model. The new national mood born out of the horrors of global conflict still respected concepts of national pride, but it held almost no place for blatant imperial nostalgia. Instead, public reaction during occasions of interwar and postwar war commemorations reflected new sets of values and priorities, with the national opinion increasingly interested in replacing the old imperial war footing with renewed efforts at peace, reconstruction, and social security. Symbolizing this shift, the national commemorations surrounding the Cenotaph and Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in London, as well as the local events which dedicated war memorials in towns all across Great Britain, indicated the new kind of solemn public mourning for war casualties, but also a poignant, symbolic closing to the bygone days of actively celebrating imperial glories no longer relevant to the new postwar reality.

The First World War utterly demolished any remaining vestiges of the Victorian world's *Pax Britannica,* as nearly an entire generation of young British men experienced the protracted slaughter on the Western Front.[5] Once there, No Man's Land consumed them. One British military chaplain, Rev. C. Lomax, C.F., offered a typical firsthand account of the Western Front experience:

> Last time over the bags was rather terrible. The few who managed to pull themselves out of the waist deep mud had to stand on the top & pull others who were stuck out of the

[5] J.M. Winter, "Britain's 'Lost Generation' of the First World War," *Population Studies* 31, no. 3 (1977), 450. Winter points out that "roughly 58 percent of all Scotsmen, Welshmen, and Englishmen aged 15-49 in 1911 served in the war." He adds that while Irish participation was not as widespread, some 15 percent of the Irish population also served.

> trenches. Imagine doing that with machine guns hard at work, to say nothing of snipers. One man I know of was drowned in the mud. Another was only extricated by eight men. Naturally no supports or rations could come up, & after gaining their objective in some cases, in others being thrown down at once they had to retire. I have had to make this trench too wide.[6]

Up and down the Front, the experience Lomax described remained remarkably consistent. One historian writing about the Flanders Campaign referred the Western Front as a graveyard where "each shell-hole with blood on its water usually meant another corpse entombed below."[7] Each time the boys went "over the top," they flung themselves onto muddy flats stung with barbed wire. The ones that survived the machine guns and the exploding shells sometimes contended with the fog of poison gas. Those who improbably made it to the other side impaled themselves on the steel of sharpened bayonets. This destructive process repeated over and over for four long, bloody years. According to one statistical analysis, one in eight soldiers were killed, one in four were wounded, and some forty percent of those "at risk" to experience combat suffered casualties.[8] Entire strategic campaigns effectively turned into large scale exercises in meat grinding as the exposed flesh of the foot soldier met the industrial human shredder that was modern, post-industrialization warfare. Ezra Pound summed the situation up succinctly: "Died some, pro patria, non dulce non et decor."[9] At least the earthworms flourished.

The torments that met the soldiers in the trenches did not remain solely in No Man's Land. The front sucked dry supplies and forced soldiers into absurd living conditions away from the trenches. Even French soldiers fighting on their home soil got little relief from the war strain. One French officer recounted the struggle of living and serving through the war:

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[6] Lomax to Sternberg, The Frontlines, France, 7 September 1916. Made available through the National Archives: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/transcripts/military_conflict/lomax_letter_sternberg.htm

[7] Leon Wolffe, *In Flanders Fields: The 1917 Campaign* (London: Penguin Books, 1958), 271.

[8] Winter, "Britain's 'Lost Generation,'" 450.

[9] Ezra Pound, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," (1920). From: http://writing.upenn.edu/library/Pound_Ezra_Hugh_Selwyn_Mauberly.html

> One of our huts [away from the front lines], the one occupied by the second half platoon, had collapsed … The rains had gradually eroded the soil of the small slope … Under a heap of tangled beams, branches, and clods of mud, the wounded groaned and cried for help.… It was already too late to save all our comrades.… My good friend F. was among the dead.… In the afternoon we buried the pathetic victims of this absurd accident. I realized that they too, in their fashion, had fallen in the field of honor. Still, I would have felt less grief if they had succumbed to the enemy.[10]

In Britain, meanwhile, the home front also saw the strain, and those that survived dealt with the aftermath of injuries, both physical and mental. War wounds came in many gruesome forms: amputated limbs, blindness, burns, lung damage, and disfigurements. In short, many survivors suffered from the entirely predictable damage done to the human body by bullets, shrapnel, barbed wire, and poison gas. Others returned in poor health thanks to the generally unsanitary conditions of the trenches, the poor facilities available at field hospitals, and the spread of diseases among the men. Everything from a massive influenza outbreak to venereal disease hit the ranks.[11] In addition to these common afflictions of the body, many troops carried home with them lingering afflictions of the mind. Shell-shock, now more commonly understood as an extreme form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, remained a silent debilitation for some war survivors for the rest of their lives.[12] These conditions strained reintegration for many of those coming home to near breaking points.

Virginia Woolf famously raised public awareness of the troubles facing returning serviceman in *Mrs. Dalloway*. One of the novels primary characters, Septimus Warren Smith,

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[10] Marc Bloch, *Memoirs of War, 1914-1915*, trans. Carole Fink (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 149-150.
[11] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 20. In addition to soldiers suffering from flu outbreaks, Kent cites that as many as 250,000 Britons in total died during the infamous outbreaks from 1917-1919. Overall, some 30 million died worldwide. Venereal disease, meanwhile, remained a problem even after homecoming according to Kent's research.
[12] Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 249. Pick declares shellshock a major crisis of the postwar world: "The idea that the shellshocked were all hereditary degenerates or that their condition could be put down to the commotional effects of exploding shells on the central nervous system proved increasingly unsustainable. Yet shellshock could not be explained away as malingering. It blurred the distinctions between neurosis and insanity – and it was a crisis on a massive scale. According to one account in 1916, shellshock cases constituted up to 40 per cent of the casualties from heavy fighting zones; more alarmingly still, officers seemed especially prone to it."

comes home from the Western Front suffering from shell shock. Woolf describes his journey as one of patriotic hope obliterated by war: "[Septimus] went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square."[13] In this sense, the character of Septimus Warren Smith mirrored the real-to-life memories of many in Britain who grew up celebrating a heavily romanticized conceptualization of a Royal and Merry Olde England. Robert Graves, one of the scholarly and literary titans of his era, later reflected in his autobiography that his two earliest childhood memories came from watching Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee procession in the streets of Cambridge and discovering his family's Shakespeare collection.[14] Graves' own romanticization of this forgotten Britain later succumbed to the strain of postwar disillusionment. Woolf's character of Septimus, the pre-war embodiment of the glories of Britain past, so similar in design to Graves and countless others in real life, came home transformed into a man: "aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which makes complete strangers apprehensive too. The world had raised its whip; where will it descend."[15] To Woolf, Septimus embodied a new class of everyman populating postwar Britain: the living victims of a lovely war gone wrong. Whereas the war dead held a special place in the national memory as patriots who died *pro patria*, First World War survivors simply did not fit the traditional narrative of returning conquerors. Instead, the returning troops all too often were stigmatized as the insane survivors of an insane conflict, with many of them being treated as such by medical authorities.[16] Using Woolf's Septimus as a

[13] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2005), 14.
[14] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (New York: Anchor Books, 1957), 1.
[15] Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway,* 84.
[16] Joanna Bourke, "Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of 'Shell-Shocked' Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-39," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 1 (2000), 63. Bourke points out the British medical authorities sometimes reacted to cases of shell shock by sending victims to insane asylums.

literary metaphor for the postwar reality of survival, one scholar explains: "In war, Septimus Smith became a military automaton; in peace, he must be secluded as a lunatic."[17] The long-standing narrative of empire, the idea that "England expects that every man will do his duty," was undermined by the return of so many irreparably damaged survivors.[18] The survivors became living reminders of horrors the nation could not forget.

Another kind of survivor populated Britain after the conflicts ended: the widows and widowers of war. These survivors found company with those mothers and fathers who lost children to the battlefield, as well as those who lost friends and other loved ones. Perhaps no one expressed the perpetual grief of such losses better than Vera Brittain, a volunteer nurse who lost two close friends, her fiancé, and her brother to the trenches.[19] Writing to her brother Edward shortly after her fiancé lost his life, Brittain lamented:

> In my mind I have lived through his death so many times that now it has really happened it seems scarcely any different from the many other occasions in which the only difference was that it was not an actual fact. In fact I don't believe even now that I have felt such an utter desperation of renouncement as I did the first time he went to the front. I think my subconscious must have told me then that I should not have him for long, in spite of my apparent belief, originated I suppose by my wish, that I should.…[20]

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[17] Donna Reed, "Merging Voices: Mrs. Dalloway and No Place on Earth," *Comparative Literature* 47, no. 2 (1995), 119.

[18] Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson.* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 514.

[19] Brittain, Vera, and Roland Leighton, Edward Brittain, Victor Richardson, Geoffrey Thurlow. *Letters From a Lost Generation: The First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends: Roland Leighton, Edward Brittain, Victor Richardson, Geoffrey Thurlow*, eds. Alan Bishop and Mark Bostridge (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 1.

[20] Vera Brittain to Edward Brittain, Jan 10, 1916, 209-210.; Alan Bishop and Mark Bostridge, "Introduction," *Letters from a Lost Generation: The First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends: Roland Leighton, Edward Brittain, Victor Richardson, Geoffrey Thurlow,* eds. Alan Bishop and Mark Bostridge (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 1. Vera Brittain's letters remain significant today because of their vivid depictions of wartime, as well as their emotional resonance, but also because in the words of the editors of Brittain's collected letters: "Few collections of First World War letters span the duration of the conflict, or present both sides of the correspondence. Fewer still contain both male and female perspectives. Furthermore, the broader picture which these letters provide allows us to see and understand the war from a variety of points of view: that of the young officer in the trenches, of the volunteer nurse in military hospitals as home and abroad, and here and there, too, are glimpses of what life was like for the civilian population on the home front.… Perhaps best of all, the letters convey the uncertainty, confusion, and almost unbearable suspense of wartime."

Such comments reflect the uncertainty of war at its worst. These expressions, however, also signal the unbearable quality of loss, that ineffable yet inevitable sense that war obliterates not just corporeal existence but the possibilities associated with living in future times. The returning sufferers of the conflicts, the widows and widowers, bereft friends and relatives, neighbors, and co-workers all became a collective of uncoffined survivors.[21] These survivors dealt not just with death but with an end to shared experiences—past, present, and potentially of the future—which were particular to those who had died. Against this horrifying new backdrop of living with the consequences of total war, the British nation began the painful process of coming to grips with a new national memory closely associated with absence and loss.

The new collective memory that came to the fore in the postwar environment also contended with the coming of what Robert Graves, that key chronicler of the age, termed the "Two Britains."[22] According to Graves, "the two Britains were: the Fighting Forces, meaning literally the soldiers and sailors who had fought, as opposed to garrison and line-of-communication troops, and the Rest, including the Government."[23] Graves' contention expanded beyond the simple distinctions of war survivorship. To Graves, the Two Britains suffered a fundamental breakdown in trust and understanding, with the most of the blame residing with the "Rest":

> In the end, the disasters of war taught them [the Fighting Forces] a gradual disgust for the 'muddle-through' politicians who spoke in the name of Britain; bitter anger against the General Staff, who from safe billets behind the Line condemned hundreds of thousands of men to useless butchery; and a contempt, mixed with envy, for all fit males of military age, even technicians in key-industries, who had escaped their share of front-line service.[24]

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[21] Thomas Hardy, *Selected Poems*, ed. Robert Mezey (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 15-16. I owe the term "uncoffined" to Thomas Hardy for his use of the term in the excellent war poem, "Drummer Hodge".
[22] Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 4.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

Such pronouncements described a soured mood between the servants of the Empire and the masters of war. The firsthand experience of war meant that its weary participants no longer valued the vainglorious praise ascribed by the "Rest" to the system of imperial warfare, especially while the old war masters persisted in their hold on the levers of governmental power and worked tirelessly to maintain class-rigid cultural authority. The imperial pomp and pageantry so often a source of national celebration in British history held no place in the collective imagination of those who had lived in the mud, nor did the endless political gamesmanship presented by the Rest as a series of propaganda guises with the intent to lionize the victorious dead not as fallen individuals but as self-sacrificing servants of the state. Before he lost his own life, Vera Brittain's fiancé, Roland Leighton, had written to her in an attempt to explain the new wartime reality from the perspective of the "Fighting Forces":

> Let him who thinks War is a glorious golden thing, who loves to roll forth stirring words of exhortation, invoking Honour and Praise and Valour and Love of Country with as thoughtless and fervid a faith as inspired the priests of Baal to call on their own slumbering deity, let him look at a little pile of sodden grey rags that cover half a skull and a shin bone and what might have been Its ribs, or at this skeleton lying on its side, resting half crouching as it fell, supported on one arm, perfect but that it is headless, and with the tattered clothing still draped around it; and let him realize how grand & glorious a thing it is to have distilled all Youth and Joy and Life into a foetid heap of hideous putrescence. Who is there who has known & seen who can say that Victory is worth the death of even one of these?[25]

[25] Roland Leighton to Vera Brittain, Spetember 11, 1915, in Brittain, *Letters*, 165.; Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (New York: Collier Books, 1990), 112-113. Hynes discusses this excerpt from Roland Leighton's letter to Vera Brittain in terms of both its rhetorical force and Brittain's trouble understanding Leighton's absolute rejection of war's glory: "Here are two languages and two realities—one made of abstract values, the other of shattered objects—mutually exclusive, mutually contradictory.… [F]or Leighton, and for many soldiers like him, there were two kinds of truth about war—but only one was true. It is depressing to see how little Vera Brittain understood what her lover was telling her.… It isn't that she was stupid, or bloodthirsty or more irrationally patriotic than her fellow-English, but simply that she still thought in the terms that English society employed to think about the war, even as she suffered personal losses, and nursed the wounded as a VAD." Hynes critique seems only partially fair. While he goes on to draw attention to Brittain's tendency to praise combat deaths as acts of national heroism, he neglects in the same passages to mention that later in life she becomes much more critical of the war experience. Nevertheless, the fact that it takes a series of terrible personal losses for Brittain to break free from the traditional British conceptions of war as an entirely heroic endeavor remains a telling example of how deeply entrenched British social attitudes, especially amongst the educated and the wealthy, remained

Thus with the new attitude of disillusioned service prevalent amongst the ranks of the "Fighting Forces," any efforts to commemorate the war experience necessarily took on a dual purpose: the praising of service to the nation—a traditional requirement of the old guard—without insulting the terrible sense of loss and betrayal felt by so many different kinds of survivors. Yet even as Graves' representatives of the Two Britains, along with other war survivors, struggled to find an equitable balance along these lines, the postwar commemoration process, by virtue of public participation, ultimately lessened the burden of survivorship while simultaneously enshrining a new set of loss-driven war memories into British history. Moreover, this enshrinement served to signal the start of post-imperial British history.

In many ways, the process of establishing a new post-imperial national memory in the aftermath of the First World War came about as the result of communities and organizations all across Britain constructing war memorials. The Imperial War Museum estimates that some 100,000 war memorials exist in the United Kingdom today, with the cumulative total representing conflicts throughout history.[26] The Imperial War Museum defines war memorials thus: "We consider a war memorial to be any tangible object which has been erected or dedicated to commemorate those killed as a result of war, conflict or peacekeeping; who served in war or conflict; or who died whilst engaged in military service."[27] This post-hoc definition undoubtedly reflects the sheer number of war memorials in existence in addition to the fact that many memorials feature individual designs complimented by stand-alone features. With such a broad meaning, it became clear in the postwar aftermath that war memorials did not stand simply to

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throughout the duration of the war. Only as the devastating postwar reality of loss began to sink in did attitudes start to shift in any substantial fashion in Britain.

[26] For more information on the Imperial War Museum, including its resources, see: http://www.ukniwm.org.uk/

[27] The Imperial War Museum's complete definition of "War Memorials" is located here: http://www.ukniwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.102

mourn the dead; rather, their broader purpose also included memorializing all those who served. In this way, the historical tradition of propagandizing national service as a form of noble patriotic sacrifice remained a viable part of the new postwar reality. As one historian comments: "[war memorials] are monuments of mourning, not of triumph: all of them, even those of the victors, depict the [First World War] as a tragedy, rather than—as is often the case with the Second World War—a triumphant crusade. They emphasize sacrifice rather than achievement."[28] Yet these propagandizing efforts, as surely any monument or gathering which served the dual function of memorial and patriotic beacon represented, often underwent a kind of public reappropriation from any original intent by the "Rest" to focus on war's glory or national sacrifice.

The public need for reframing the traditional conceptualizations of the war became evident in a number of ways. An exhibition in the summer of 1919 at the Victoria and Albert Museum on war memorials demonstrated the ill-fitting characteristics of many traditional models of war against contemporary developments.[29] The exhibition reflected on the nature of memorials throughout history; however, its ultimate relevancy likely served to do little other than to reassure those uncritical persons comforted by the familiar security of tradition, while demonstrating to many others the utter uselessness of tradition in the face of a conflict as devastating as the First World War.[30] As one historian put it: "a roll of Honour suitable for a public school; a memorial window for Gresham's School in Norfolk; another window, 'The Sacrifice of Motherhood', designed for a mothers' war memorial; endless St Georges and soldier-saints and enameled angels—how could one relate those images to the dead at Bourlon

[28] Michael Howard, "The First World War Reconsidered," *The Great War and the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker, Mary Habeck (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 16.
[29] Hynes, *The First World War and English Culture,* 272-273.
[30] Ibid.

Wood and Sedd-el-Bahr?"[31] Considering the myriad forms of grieving and survivorship present in postwar Britain, no single national monument, or even other traditional memorials, sufficed to satisfy postwar commemoration, and those monuments that did focus national attention often reflected a new understated simplicity in their form and structure. In particular, the Whitehall Cenotaph, and its unique association with the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, best exemplified the public desire for a new kind of sensitivity for national war commemoration.

The Cenotaph remains to this day a permanent relic of a solemn victory parade held on July 19, 1919 in Central London to celebrate the end of war. The *Times of London* explained the event as a "triumph … not to be compared with any of the great military triumphs of history."[32] The *Times* continued:

> In the midst of life we are in death—the words had a new meaning for us as we watched the living victors march by—and our rejoicing would have been like the laughter of fools if we had not remembered in the midst of it those who have died so that we may rejoice.[33]

Considering the somber backdrop for the occasion, the victory parade only resembled the previous military processions through the streets of London in terms of its basic ceremonial aspects: soldiers marched, bands played, and the troops received a Royal Salute.[34] Instead, the focal point of the entire event unexpectedly became a temporary structure in the form of a Cenotaph in Whitehall (Fig. 4.1). Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the original Cenotaph

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[31] Ibid.; "War Memorials Exhibition: Victoria and Albert Museum," *The Cheltenham Looker-On*, July 26, 1919. Supporting Hynes' point, the *Cheltenham Looker-On* reported that particularly noteworthy artifacts available at the exhibition included a plaster model of a cartouche and a mural tablet "tempered by scholarship and executed with restraint."

[32] "Peace Day. A March of Victory. Foch the Central Figure. Meaning of the Triumph. The Glorious Dead," *The Times*, July 21, 1919.

[33] Ibid.

[34] "At the Cenotaph. The Salute to the Dead," *The Times*, July 21, 1919.

Fig 4.1. *The Cenotaph in Whitehall*, London, 1920.[35]

Monument, literally representing an empty tomb, was made of wood and plaster.[36] The government intended for the parade itself, and the staging area for the Royal Salute, to receive the majority of attention from the crowds on the day of the parade.[37] As the event unfolded, however, Lutyens' Cenotaph quickly captured the public's attention. As reported in Dundee's *Evening Telegraph*: "The saluting at this memorial and the paying of reverent tribute by the crowds thrilled the vast crowds of spectators, and Londoners and visitors have taken to heart the lesson of this temporary monument."[38] Within the first hour of the Victory Parade, people began waiting in long lines to pile wreaths at the base of the Cenotaph in anticipation of some 15,000 troops marching past to give the salute later in the day.[39] The newspaper of record acknowledged the gravitation of the viewing public towards the Cenotaph: "The new Cenotaph

[35] The Imperial War Museum maintains records for this picture: http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205067424
[36] Greenberg, "Lutyens's Cenotaph," 8-9.
[37] Ibid.
[38] "War Memorials," *The Evening Telegraph*, July 22, 1919.
[39] Greenberg, "Lutyens's Cenotaph," 9.

erected in Whitehall to the memory of "the glorious dead" was the centre of what was perhaps the principal, as it was certainly the most moving, portion of Saturday's triumphal procession."[40] The *Evening Telegraph* confirmed this sentiment:

> The popular feeling seems to be that London's permanent memorial should be simple and accessible, and that it should be a shrine round which poor and rich should meet to pay tribute "to the glorious dead." The simple pillar at Whitehall for the time at least has dissipated ideas of costly and ornate erections, which would become mere show places or be kept closed to the many.[41]

The mass appeal of the Cenotaph meant that unlike previous major national ceremonies, the choreography of a national convocation succumbed to an unpredictable public response. While government planners for the Great Exhibition openly sought mass public attendance, and cheering crowds gave added enthusiasm to the military glamour of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the unexpected public fixation with the Cenotaph signaled a popular yearning for a different kind of convocation experience for Britons.

The public approval of the temporary Cenotaph structure continued after the parade, with many people writing to the government, including Lutyens himself, in the hopes that the monument might become a Whitehall fixture.[42] Under pressure, the Cabinet decided to bow to the wishes of the public, approving plans for a permanent stone replica to appear in essentially the same fashion and location as the temporary Cenotaph had on the day of the parade.[43] The government wisely took into consideration Lutyens' input on the project going forward, deferring to his judgment on several occasions, with the result showing a great deal of similarity

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[40] "At the Cenotaph. The Salute to the Dead," *The Times,* July 21, 1919.
[41] "War Memorials," *The Evening Telegraph*, July 22, 1919.
[42] "The Whitehall Cenotaph. Permanent Memorial on the Present Site," *The Times,* July 31, 1919.
[43] Ibid.; Minister of Transport to Cabinet, "The Cenotaph in Whitehall: Memorandum for the Cabinet by the Minister of Transport," Dec. 8, 1919, NA, CAB 634:6. For more information: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7734741. Even after public response convinced the government to take action and make the Cenotaph a permanent monument, some high profile government ministers resisted the impulse. For example, the Minister of Transport, citing a recommendation from the Traffic Advisory Committee, recommended that the permanent Cenotaph monument be reconstructed not in Whitehall but in Parliament Square. Such logistical considerations, however, ultimately gave way to public sentiment.

between the temporary Cenotaph design and its permanent replacement.[44] While a good deal of newspaper attention focused on the appeal of the Cenotaph resting with the straightforward and largely simple features present on the monument, including the inscribed words "The Glorious Dead," the defining characteristic of the temporary monument remained its symbolic depiction of an empty tomb. Moreover, while public response to the monument certainly respected its patriotic inscription, it seems clear that the symbolism of an empty tomb captured the collective sense of loss associated with the First World War better than any of the other organized aspects of the victory parade. This fact represented a sea change in public attitude from the scenes witnessed on the streets during Victoria's Jubilees. The stark contrast between the militaristic fervor that greeted the grand imperial celebrations of 1887 and 1897, during which Britain demonstrated its presumption of continuing dominance, and the somber coalescing around a simple monument to the dead sons and daughters lost in the vain competition between empires exemplifies the difference between pre-war and post-war British reality. What was left to celebrate about after such devastating, even hollow, victories? Nevertheless, features of the 1919 victory parade ostensibly demonstrated more straightforward and predictable representations of patriotism: troops on parade, the King taking the salute, fireworks in the evening.[45] The show must go on.

The visual impact of an empty tomb presented a more complicated narrative as the focal point for a postwar celebration. Lutyens and government officials eventually embraced the symbolic incongruity. Recognizing that the monument appealed to new postwar public memories overwhelmingly associated with loss better than the pomp and circumstance of a

[44] Edward Lutyens to the Cabinet, "Letter from Sir Edwin L. Lutyens R.A., to the First Commissioner of Works," July 1, 1920, NA, CAB 24:109. For the complete letter, see: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7736097. In this letter, Lutyens defends his plans down to very specific details. Ultimately, the final design of the permanent monument closely reflects his (winning) arguments.
[45] Hynes, *The First World War and English Culture,* 279.

lovely parade, the somber rededication ceremony of the permanent Cenotaph monument on Armistice Day (November 11) the following year better reflected the dual symbolism of a monument dedicated to both glory and loss. After all, elected government officials seldom resist shifting public opinion on popular causes. Acutely sensitive to public pressure, government officials reluctantly began to consider the rededication ceremony of the Cenotaph as a vehicle for satisfying the unanticipated desire for a new kind of people's war memorial.

Once it became clear that a permanent monument would help to satisfy the public response an unveiling by the King of the permanent memorial seemed inevitable; however, an unexpected push by the Dean of Westminster Abbey complicated matters for government planners of the Cenotaph project. The Dean proposed the exhumation of the body of an unknown soldier from the battlefields in France, the honorable return of that body to Britain, and the subsequent burial of the unknown soldier in Westminster Abbey as a way of permanently memorializing the First World War in the Abbey.[46] Government ministers objected that the Dean's plans faced two crucial challenges: "It's too late" (i.e. not enough time to plan the memorial) and "that it is sensational."[47] The same officials overcame these objections by combining the Dean of Westminster's plan with the preexisting plans for the Cenotaph unveiling and by acknowledging that "any appeal to national sentiment is subject to this charge [sensationalism]."[48] Even more shrewdly, the Cabinet decided that combining the Cenotaph unveiling with the burial of the unknown "warrior"—the term decided on by the Cabinet so as to not favor any one service branch of the military over the other—held the following additional benefits:

[46] "Memorandum: "Dean of Westminster's Suggestion," October 15, 1920, NA, CAB, 23:22. For the entire memorandum, see: "Memorandum: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7652602
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

> The advantages would be that it would generally be acceptable to the people; that it would do honour to the great class of fighting men; that it would furnish a Memorial to them in Westminster Abbey, without signaling out for such distinction any one known man. At present Westminster Abbey has no memorial of the Great War.[49]

Thus, the government found a way to comfortably propagandize their response to public pressure surrounding the Cenotaph with a ceremony designed to appeal to the new national mood for memorialization while simultaneously reinforcing the preexisting narrative of patriotic sacrifice in the name of the state.[50] Yet this partial patriotic reclamation of the public sphere away from the mourning public remained an act of acquiescence by government officials to new public demands; the 1920 Armistice Day events stayed centrally focused on remembering the costs of imperial conflict, not on justifying them.

Before the funeral of the Unknown Warrior, the coffin bearing the anonymous soldier's remains first paused along the parade route to the Abbey for the unveiling of the permanent Cenotaph monument.[51] In the middle of Whitehall stood the new monument, an empty tomb symbolically ready to hold the bodies of those that had fallen on foreign lands, side by side with a coffin holding an unidentified British soldier who had come home for burial among the revered. In this ceremony, the anonymous merited the postwar national focus, not an otherwise identifiable person whose deeds of heroic valor reserved their own marble plinth. The King, an honor guard of one hundred recipients of the Victoria Cross, and countless mourners lining the streets saluted the scene together.[52] Afterwards, the mourners stayed behind, waiting in Whitehall for coffins to bring home their own forgotten sons, while the leaders of the nation

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[49] Ibid.
[50] "An Empire's Tribute: Unknown Warrior Buried at Westminster Abbey," *Hull Daily Mail*, November 11, 1920. The appeal to the national mood proved so effective that when a group in the "Worker's Dreadnaught" (a Communist publishing house) supposedly violated the 11:00 am silence that fell across the city of London as a part of the Armistice Day tribute, a "party of angry men and women raided the premises and inflicted rapid revenge on persons stated to be responsible." Somber though the national mood may have been, nationalism still held its place in the national imagination.
[51] "Armistice Day, 1920. The Burial of the Unknown Warrior," *The Times*, November 12, 1920.
[52] Ibid.

went off to the Abbey to salvage some semblance of heroic honor from a largely dishonorable war.

The gravestone of the Unknown Warrior describes the soldier as simply "A British Warrior Unknown By Name Or Rank Brought From France (Fig 4.2)."[53] The effort to bring an unknown soldier to Westminster Abbey for burial among the kings ostensibly served to make

Fig. 4.2. *The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior*, Westminster Abbey, London, U.K., 1920.[54]

BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY
OF A BRITISH WARRIOR
UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK
BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG
THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND
AND BURIED HERE ON ARMISTICE DAY
11 NOV: 1920, IN THE PRESENCE OF
HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V
HIS MINISTERS OF STATE
THE CHIEFS OF HIS FORCES
AND A VAST CONCOURSE OF THE NATION

THUS ARE COMMEMORATED THE MANY
MULTITUDES WHO DURING THE GREAT
WAR OF 1914-1918 GAVE THE MOST THAT
MAN CAN GIVE LIFE ITSELF
FOR GOD
FOR KING AND COUNTRY

[53] For details on the gravestone, see: http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/unknown-warrior
[54] Ibid.

equal the sacrifice of all the sons of Britain. As the *Times* reported: "The unknown were those who died far out, holding some desperate outpost against hopeless odds … somewhere where no comrades or stretcher-bearers could reach them nor burial parties do their work."[55] The return of one of those bodies afforded the opportunity to sing "Abide with Me" and say prayers for one of those unknown losses.[56] More cynically, one cultural historian suggests that "one inhibition on the truth … was the British tendency towards heroic grandiosity about all their wars.… It is significant that what the Americans call "The Unknown Soldier" the British elevate to "The Unknown Warrior."[57] Such elevation, however, belies the fact that no single funeral, even one as brilliantly contrived as a piece of justificatory propaganda as the funeral for the Unknown Warrior, could mask the vast devastation of the conflict that preceded it. The anonymity associated with the "Unknown Warrior" remained a concession to the needs of mourners; otherwise, any old war hero would have sufficed. The elevation of an ordinary soldier to a place of such rare national honor mattered symbolically on multiple levels, especially insofar as it further reflected a new weariness for the kinds of "heroic grandiosity" responsible for the

[55] "The Unknown Warrior. What We Know of Him. His Achievements in the War. The Empire's Pride," *The Times*, November 11, 1920.
[56] *The Funeral Service of A British Warrior on the Second Anniversary of the Signing of the Armistice, November 11, 1920* (Order of Service). For an electronic copy of the service, see: http://static.westminster-abbey.org/assets/pdf_file/0007/38059/Unknown-Warrior-service-paper.pdf
[57] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 175. Fussell links the concept of the "unknown" soldier to the idea that "the literary instinct of the troops showed itself also in the ad hoc epitaphs which they would scrawl on boards and erect over bodies, or parts of them, exposed by shellfire and clumsily reburied. One, instinct with paradox, anticipates the formal epitaph later written for the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey: In loving memory of an *Unknown* British soldier."

millions left dead on the battlefield.[58] The ceremony allowed for the nation to mourn together for fallen, ordinary soldiers, not to celebrate the empty causes of imperial warfare. Certainly, patriotic language infused the ritual, but the structure of the ceremony, so different than in antecedent events such as the Jubilees of Victoria, reflected a fundamental shift in British public attitude towards the project of defending the Empire. If the unveiling of a permanent Cenotaph and the burial of the Unknown Warrior signified a turning away from the old triumphalism of public convocations and towards a new kind of remembrance for the past, the replication of these grand national spectacles on a smaller level in towns all across Britain reinforced the transition.

In nearly every town and village across Britain, communities set aside public space for war memorials.[59] The pervasive nature of the postwar memorialization movement reflected the truly national shift in attitude regarding remembrance that the London memorial ceremonies displayed. Each local memorial effort came about as the result of community actors doing the sort of work that all development projects require: securing space, raising funds, garnering political support, forging consensus on a design. In short, communities worked together in order to participate in the shared experience of postwar remembrance, though each community necessarily differed in approach according to the particular needs and aspirations of locals.[60] A good example of this community effort comes out of the Cambridge war memorial movement. The Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire encouraged the mayor of Cambridge to form a

[58] Ibid. "Heroic grandiosity" is Fussell's phrase.
[59] A database search of the British Library's online newspaper archive reveals thousands of distinct articles containing the phrase "war memorial" for the year 1919. Not only did many communities participate in the war memorial process, local and national newspapers chronicled every facet of the rush to erect these memorials all across the country.
[60] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 100. Nicely summarizing the difficulties in assigning a public space to uniquely designed memorials in such a way that honors the necessary timelessness of cultural memory, Mosse contends that "the remembrance of war clashed with modernity." Consequently, each community had to make choices in terms of the design and implementation of memorials to satisfy their own particular understanding of how war shaped their own space and time.

committee with representatives from the broader county as well as the Isle of Ely.[61] The establishment of a cooperative effort at the start of the planning process undoubtedly encouraged the kind of lateral, or "bottom-up," public input initially absent from the "top-down" commemoration efforts planned in London by high-ranking government officials. Reflective of this spirit of wide involvement, the University at Cambridge later became involved in the planning process.[62] Even disputes over the particular type of war memorial to construct were eventually resolved to reflect a genuinely inclusive approach; the County of Cambridgeshire agreed to build several different types monuments in order to commemorate war dead, survivors, and ultimate victory.[63] Of course, such resolutions did not come about without significant debate, and the Cambridgeshire planners took several years to navigate local disputes of process before finally realizing their plans; nevertheless, the Cambridge war memorial movement reflects both the commonplace nature of public cooperation and pressure to make memorials a reality.

Once completed, local communities often celebrated the dedication of new war memorials in a spirit of both satisfaction and deep solemnity. In Polesworth, a village in Warwickshire, the dedication of the community war memorial on April 22, 1921 merited an appearance by the Earl Ferrers, an influential Tory peer.[64] The local newspaper, the *Tamworth Herald*, recorded the scene:

> Earl Ferrers asked, did it seem odd to that just a common layman should be asked to unveil that memorial? He did not think it did. It was just for common laymen that those

[61] Inglis, "The War Memorial Movement in Cambridge, England," 587.
[62] Ibid., 588-590. Inglis states that part of the reason for ever-increasing participation from across a community of some 200,000 persons came about as a result of genuine public interest in making a war memorial happen, so much so that individual donors prepared to act on their own if no organized county or city led effort did not move quickly.
[63] "The Duke of York at Cambridge. County War Memorial Unveiled," *The Times,* July 4, 1922.; The main war memorial in Cambridge, the one to attract the most attention, "takes the form of a soldier in full war kit returning home victorious. In his hand he holds a shrapnel helmet and a rose, and on his pack is a strapped German helmet. The expression on his face, to quote the sculptor (Dr. Tait McKenzie), is alert, happy, and slightly quizzical."; K.S. Inglis, "The War Memorial Movement in Cambridge, England,"590.
[64] "Polesworth War Memorial," *The Tamworth Herald*, April 23, 1921.

> memorials existed. The men who died did not need the memorial. They went out not thinking of themselves … It was the common laymen who needed the memorial.[65]

Ferrers' recognition of the event's true audience, those community participants who worked to establish the memorial, mirrors the attitudinal shift revealed by the Armistice Day commemorations in London the preceding year. Also reflecting the London model of mourning underpinned with elements of patriotism, the Polesworth war memorial featured a plaque bearing the following inscription:

To the Glory of Christ Crucified
and to the Memory of Men
who made the Great Sacrifice
in the World War
1914-1919.
These nobly played their part,
They heard the call,
For God, for King, and Country.
They gave their all.[66]

Such language linked Polesworth's collective mourning experience to the broader war effort while simultaneously achieving a balance between remembrance and patriotism. In this sense, Polesworth achieved in one memorial what Cambridge required more than one memorial to define: a multifaceted response to the different kinds of mourning and remembrance concerns present in postwar public life.

Indeed, satisfying competing public needs remained the necessary goal of the postwar memorial movement throughout Britain. The actualization of memorial projects satisfied multiple objectives: they symbolized the victorious outcome of the conflict; they allowed survivors to come together in order to construct a new collective memory of the war experience for the living; they employed nationalistic language to dignify the memorialization of the war dead. In London, Cambridge, and Polesworth—a large metropolis, a county seat, a small

[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

town—the tripartite conditions of survivorship, memorialization, and triumph remained continuously present in the commemoration process. Memorial movements, therefore, demonstrated these fundamental changes in postwar British life. From state occasions to quiet local gatherings, the collective response to war's end transformed the public sphere. As a result of that transformation, popular opinion shifted away from wartime as a cause of national celebration in aid of broader imperial goals and towards war as result of overreach and failure. The glittering gold of the Jubilee celebrations became a distant memory; the cold, grey marble slabs dedicated to the hollow victory better colored the postwar public mood. Regret at the courses of action which led to the Great War gave way to much anti-war sentiment in the interwar years, which in turn gave way to the infamous policies of appeasement towards the Nazi's as a means of avoiding a second great conflict. War came again regardless.

The titanic struggle of the Second World War, Britain's "finest hour," returned some of the old triumphalist feelings to the fore of public sentiment. Whereas the First World War embraced senseless and vain slaughter in the name of imperial glory, the Second World War saw Britain facing down the more legitimate threat of unbridled tyranny.[67] Certainly popular conceptions of the war effort shifted to reflect overjoyed pride at the overcoming of an enemy as threatening as Nazi Germany. From Churchill's claim that "never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few" about the airmen of the Royal Air Force who fought so gallantly during the Blitz to the jubilant crowds that took to the streets of London on V-E Day, Britons more clearly expressed the role of victor in the aftermath of the Second World War than

[67] I recognize the potentially controversial stance in declaring one war more valid than another, especially considering the dubious validity of warfare in general, but it seems clear that the threat of Hitler was severe enough towards many democracies that the collective efforts to overcome Nazi aggression remain understandable and probably justifiable.

they had done following the First World War.[68] Yet just as with the aftermath of the First World War, memoirs and recollections of the unvarnished wartime experience began to reveal a conflict that simply did not match up to public pride in the war's outcome. In the words of one historian, these war memoirs "generate a subtle, historically conscious irony by juxtaposing traditional intellectual or artistic images of transcendence against an unflinching, fully mature registration of wartime barbarism."[69] The truth about the barbarity of total war, however, hardly needed legitimization through publication; the everyday empirical unavoidability of bomb damage, human displacement, economic devastation, and loss remained a new constant in postwar life for many years after the cessation of hostilities.[70] Additionally, the deep freeze of cold war and the threat of nuclear annihilation between the West and the Soviet Union settled heavily over the heads of Britons eager to rebuild their lives. Most troubling of all, the wartime draining of British resources and the subsequent waning of global political influence resulted in the eventual dissolution of the British Empire. Perhaps because of these bleak future prospects, the war memorial effort following the Second World War continued to reflect many of the same expressions of remembrance as established in the aftermath of the First World War. Armistice Day commemorations carried on throughout Britain the same as ever, now accommodating war losses for two World Wars. The preexisting war memorials sometimes got new plaques or inscriptions listing deaths; although, sometimes communities built memorials dedicated specifically to those who died in the Second World War, including those who had died on the

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[68] Winston Churchill, "Speech to the House of Commons, August 20, 1940," *Churchill Speaks 1897-1963: Collected Speeches in Peace and War*, ed. Robert Rhodes James, M.P. (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1980), 727.

[69] Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 292. Fussell argues that American war memoirs produce a much rawer reflection of the war experience that "seems to argue absolute credibility."

[70] For a comprehensive examination of the devastation throughout Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, see Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

home front.[71] Churchill and some of the other captains of the war effort eventually got their statues in London.[72] Mostly, however, new construction projects aimed to rebuild war damaged houses and buildings, not erect a whole new infrastructure of war memorials. After all, the war memorials of the First World War were all less than thirty years old, and the primary national enemy remained unchanged between the two conflicts.

Instead of endless elaborate additions to the already extensive network of physical war memorials scattered across Britain, a more diverse form of collective cultural commemoration that had its origins in the interwar years gained many notable additions following the end of the Second World War. This diverse form of cultural commemoration, called "anti-monuments" by one historian, came about as "an alternative version of [war's] meaning."[73] This alternative version of meaning included:

> [A]ll the other forms in which judgments and conclusions about war could be expressed: paintings, poems, novels, histories, plays, music. These were works that rendered the war without the value-bearing abstractions, without the glory, and without the large-scale grandeur. Often they were conscious, aggressive rejections of the monument-making principles; they turned away from celebration, in search of war's reality.[74]

Adding to the existing contributions of "anti-monument" voices from the First World War came a collection of post-colonial writers, filmmakers willing to depict postwar life in Britain in unsparing terms, new playwrights who explored both absurd and hard-edged realist perspectives present in postwar society, painters that embraced confrontational and antiwar forms of art, and a new generation of musicians who ushered in an era of protest music against elements of the old imperial norms. Taken collectively, these "anti-monument" voices laid the foundations of a new

[71] The Imperial War museum's catalogue of British war memorials specifically distinguishes between war memorials and civilian war memorials for the Second World War. For more information, see: http://www.ukniwm.org.uk/server/show/nav.002
[72] "Churchill statue site agreement," *The Times,* March 10, 1970.; "Resolute and defiant as ever, Churchill's statue is unveiled," *The Times*, November 2, 1973.
[73] Hynes, *The First World War and English Culture,* 283.
[74] Ibid.

post-imperial (counter) culture that Britain continues to contend with and respond to in the present day, with much of their work stretching on decades after the end of the wars and yet still responding to the imperial, war-torn past.[75] Further, they represent the redefining of the British public sphere away from the self-assuredness of the Victorian and Edwardian eras and towards a less certain conceptualization of modern Britishness. Victorious in war but drained and bereft of empire, Britons needed to forge an entirely new national identity in the aftermath of decades of conflict.

At the end of each of the two World Wars, Britons across the nation endured the harsh reality of wartime loss. From small towns to big cities, war memorial movements served to create new experiences of remembrance. Whether Britons adopted monuments or anti-monuments as their memorials depended on the type of loss experienced by individuals and by communities. Collectively, Britons commemorated survival, memorialized loved ones, and reservedly celebrated hard-won victories. Unlike the national spectacles of the imperial past, the popular experience of national remembrance contained genuine elements of spontaneity and the "ground-up" exertion of public will. Such exertion of public influence did not undermine all of the traditional practices of memorialization and commemoration. Rather, the will of the people to create a new kind of war memory caused the gentle reshaping of national public ceremonies to better reflect on concepts of duty and honor in an age of unimaginable suffering and absence. In local communities, public will imposed an even more prominent influence over the types of plans for memorials and commemoration. For some individuals, the option to engage various

[75] As a specific example, and one dear to the author, the seminal and incredibly popular rock album *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) by the Pink Floyd makes several references to the First World War in particular ("and the general sat, and the lines on the map moved from side to side"), and the band often featured First World War footage in its public performances of songs from *Dark Side of the Moon*, especially during the song, "Brain Damage." To say that the references to the conflict were critical seems an understatement. That one of the most commercially successful music releases of all time grapples with the aftereffects of a conflict that ended 55 years earlier is a testament to the ongoing influence of the First World War upon the popular imagination well into the postmodern era.

"anti-monument" movements remained a possibility. Either way, the postwar environment invited mass participation in a public sphere reshaped by conflict. Remembrance was a shared act.

Out of all the forms of collective remembrance, the most popular symbol became the poppy.[76] As one commentator observed of the little paper poppies sold each year in Britain on November 11 to benefit the British Legion:

> [They] can be conceived as emblems at once of oblivion and remembrance … These little paper simulacra came from pastoral elegy (Milton's Arcadian valleys "purple all the ground with vernal flowers"), pass through Victorian male sentimental poetry, flesh themselves out in the actual blossoms of Flanders, and come back to be worn in the buttonholes on Remembrance Day.[77]

So it came to pass that a fragile flower symbolizing both death and renewal and worn on the coats of war's survivors replaced all the other symbols of imperial glory so often adorned and paraded through the streets during the halcyon days of imperial celebration. All that glittered in the streets was not golden anymore. Any glittering in the postwar streets of Britain came from the glistening tears of those who came to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, or to pay their respects at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, or to remember an entire generation of lost students at the Cambridge War Memorial, or to pray in remembrance at the small stone cross erected in the town of Polesworth. By constructing and consecrating these public spaces and many others like them, Britons built a new postwar memory for the nation.

In the troubling years that followed the end of the World Wars, Britain slowly began to rebuild their nation and their lives. The wars, however, permanently changed the course of British involvement with the rest of the world. As the British began to grapple with these

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[76] Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 111.

[77] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 248. Fussell points out that in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, the poppy became a distinctly homoerotic symbol. With this contextual background, it becomes possible to realize that fraternal bonds forged between servicemen exercised deep passion—a point that writers, Fussell suggests, were surely aware of when they adopted the poppy as a symbol for war remembrance.

changes and struggled to define a new role for the nation in the postwar world, unique challenges and opportunities presented themselves to a weary public growing ever more accustomed to embracing the memory of war and simultaneously seeking respite from it. The constricting pain of economic and household austerity dragged on for years. Yet with the ascension of Elizabeth II, hopes arose that a national rebirth from the ashes of conflict had finally happened and with it the ushering in of a new Elizabethan Age. Such dreams, made temporarily manifest by the spectacular Coronation of 1953, soon gave way to the harsh reality of crisis in the Suez and the continuing devolution of Britain's empire. At home, social and economic conflict emerged along with battles over the role of the welfare state. All the while, the Cold War polarized ideas and ideologies.

The postwar situation faded cultural memory from the Victorian era. Long gone were the glories of the Great Exhibition, that triumph of imperial progress. Meanwhile, the postwar perspective brought into new relief the excited crowds of people who had lined the streets to witness Victoria make her way to not one but two Jubilees of imperial self-congratulation and national reassurance. To the postwar historical onlooker, those celebrants surely began to resemble not so much the jubilant late Victorians confident in their security and state as they did the lambs lining up for the slaughter. Indeed, it is in the painful evolution of public spectacles from the Crystal Palace to the Jubilees of Victoria to the Cenotaph that Britain's long, slow retreat from its former role as global hegemon appears most vividly. In forthcoming events, including the fairytale Coronation of Elizabeth II and the modern day gatherings designed to celebrate the new millennium and the 2012 Olympic Games, the slow arc of British decline continues. Yet the consecration of the war memorials and the Cenotaph in particular remain the key transitional public moments which symbolized the loss of the Victorian world order and the

gloomy establishment of modern Britain. Fittingly, therefore, it is in the inevitable gloom and grey of every November 11th morning, the nation's Remembrance Day, that Britons collectively pin their poppies, bow their heads, and reflect for two long, silent minutes on all that was lost forever.

Chapter Five

A Queen Is Crowned:
The Fairytale Coronation of Elizabeth II and the False Promise of Conservative Redemption[1]

Unlike public spectacles staged to reflect contemporary affairs, coronations in Great Britain represent a virtually unbroken chain of hereditary succession spanning nearly a thousand years. As such, the habits and peculiarities of the coronation ceremony itself reference many medieval customs: anointing, oath taking, proclaiming. These historical allusions, however, do not present a merely retrograde exploration of British values; rather, coronations exist as spectacles of continuity and renewal, specifically as transmitted through the embodiment of temporal power within the personage of a sovereign. A coronation spectacle publicly invests each sovereign with their authority. Yet these spectacles only occur following the death or abdication of the preceding sovereign. Coronations, therefore, literally come to symbolize the periodic renewal of the public body through the crowing of the new head of state: "The King is dead. Long live the Queen!" Occasionally, the line of royal continuity witnesses eras of great transformation—the Elizabethan or Victorian eras—and these times enter into public imagination as golden ages of British history. Other reigns witness more fraught periods in British history; these remain less-celebrated eras. Regardless, the conservative view of British history, and of the British Royal Family, is nothing if not imbued with a carefully cultivated historical romanticism; it holds that each royal succession offers up the possibility for a new era of cautious progress that builds upon the timeless institutions and principles of the British state. So it was in 1952 when King George VI, who led the British Empire through the Second World War, died at the relatively young age of 56.

In the years following the Second World War, including during Elizabeth's coronation

[1] Taken from the title of the Official Coronation Film of Elizabeth II.

year of 1953, Britain struggled to recover from the totality of the conflict. For the second time in the first half of the twentieth century, Britain found itself regrouping from a devastating war. Not only did Britain once again undergo a period of public commemoration and memorialization for lost lives similar to the period of deep mourning that followed the First World War—though with less self-doubt about the purpose of the war than the previous generation experienced—many parts of the country required physical rebuilding. London in particular remained a bombed-out city slowly recovering from German aerial attacks, which started in earnest in1940 and continued off and on throughout the war. While the partial obliteration of London presented a major obstacle for postwar Britain to overcome, the state of the broader British economy seemed even worse. Bankrupted by the war effort, Britain formally began dissolving the British Empire, most significantly by granting Indian independence in 1947.[2] At home, the government continued a carefully planned national economic system, featuring expansive austerity programs, as first established to support the war effort.[3] As a result of these lingering hardships of war, the decade following the Second World War saw Britain experiencing a period of unavoidable national reconstruction set against weakened economic capacity and diminishing global

[2] John Kent, *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War 1944-49* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), 132-133. Kent points out that in the aftermath of war, and taking into consideration the extraordinary costs associated with maintaining a large wartime military force and overseas commitments, "the decisions taken in early 1947 were a milestone in terms of Britain's future economic and military strategy linked to the presence in the Middle East of British forces and the preservation of great power status." He goes on: "It has often been suggested that in the face of the constraints produced by the economic crisis of 1947 Britain began to cut its imperial coat according to its post-war cloth.… [T]he decision to adopt a Middle Eastern based defense strategy and not to make radical defense cuts were more indicative of the attitude of the Labour government to its future development. Such attitudes of holding on whatever the short-term cost were reinforced by events in Egypt."; David Childs, *Britain since 1945: A Political History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 43-46. Childs does an admirable job of pointing out that Indian independence actually stemmed from several decades of political movement, both in India and in Britain, towards independence. As such, the shift away from India and towards the resource rich Middle East, and the Suez shipping zone, makes strategic sense given Britain's diminished postwar economic and military capacity, especially in comparison to the United States and the Soviet Union and their postwar rise.

[3] Francis Williams, *Twilight of Empire: Memoirs of Prime Minister Clement Attlee as set down by Francis Williams* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 88. Atlee, Prime Minister from 1945-1951, and leader of the Labour Party was quoted as saying: "There was a lot of post-war problems to clear up of course, but I thought that we must push ahead. Fundamental nationalisation had got to go ahead because it fell in with the planning, the essential planning of the country."; Judt, *Postwar*, 68-69.

influence. Amidst the gloom, however, two major spectacles directly associated in the popular imagination with principles of revitalization came about by virtual happenstance: the marriage of Princess Elizabeth, the then heir to the throne, in 1947, and the even more significant coronation of Elizabeth as Queen in 1953.

Several institutions of power stood to gain from shaping the public discourse surrounding both the popular romance with the young Elizabeth and the solemn tributes to her wartime father.[4] These institutions ranged from the Monarchy itself to the Church of England to the Conservative Party. By stoking the fires of popular imagination surrounding the major royal events of 1947-1953, these establishment institutions provided a powerful narrative counterexample to the harsh realities of the postwar scene. Further, royal affairs brought about by the normal course of family life ended up serving as timely, exploitable propaganda exercises for not just the postwar British recovery, but for the hope of a genuine return to the conservative principles of the establishment. The postwar environment had threatened a radical structural realignment in British institutions. Immediately following the conclusion of the Second World War, the voters gave power to the Labour Party on a platform of broadly socialist ideas. Meanwhile, wartime planning efforts transformed into postwar reconstruction models as all across the public sector services underwent nationalization.[5] To the establishment, the prospects of a new Elizabethan era in which Britain completed the task of postwar reconstruction along

[4] While his work helps to shape the entirety of my arguments, here specific credit falls to the extensive commentary provided by Michel Foucault on the subject of socio-politico institutions and their habit (need?) for shaping public discourse. In particular, I must credit Foucault's provocative post-structural "author function" inquiries, which he neatly summarizes, via Samuel Beckett, with the rhetorical question "what matter who's speaking?" For a detailed exploration of the topic see: Michel Foucault, "What Is An Author?" in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 321-334. For an even more extensive review of Foucault's thinking on subjects akin to the matter of authorship, see: Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).

[5] David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), 19-59. For a detailed exploration of the origins of British planning and nationalization, see Kynaston's excellent chapter on "Broad Vistas and All That".

more traditional economic lines while reasserting itself on the world scene undoubtedly offered a compelling discursive narrative to counter the popular desire for socio-political structural change. Contrary to hopes and expectations, however, the crowning of a new Queen did not usher in a new "Elizabethan Age."

Ultimately, the public spectacle of the Coronation of Elizabeth II represented the last gasp of imperial celebration before the sun finally set on the British Empire. The coronation's performativity as an event geared towards transmitting to the public—including for the first time via live television—a vision of contemporary national renewal as romanticized through the historic institution of monarchy. The spectacle, meticulously organized by the Conservative government, also sought to reestablish largely Victorian ideals of faith, duty, country, and empire at the core of the renewal project. For a time, the spectacle succeeded: the "New Elizabethans" were born. Yet any new golden age of British postwar rebirth never grew into anything more than the fairytale myth played out with perfect military precision on Coronation Day, June 2, 1953. Within a few short years the coronation illusion of postwar imperial restoration shattered, leaving Britain, for the rest of Elizabeth II's long and continuing reign, to struggle with how to move beyond the centuries-old metanarrative of imperial destiny that dominated its national character.

In the eight years between the end of the Second World War and Elizabeth II's coronation, Britain underwent a period of remarkable change. Indeed, the immediate postwar situation in Britain likely began with the structural transformation of Britain to a wartime footing starting in the late-1930s.[6] As early as May, 1940 the government passed the Emergency Powers

[6] Judt, *Postwar*, 68-69. Judt succinctly summarizes the influence of wartime planning on British life, as well as explaining how wartime planning gave way to postwar planning: "[I]t was the war that introduced and domesticated the hitherto rather abstract notion of governmental 'planning.' Indeed in Britain it was the war above all that placed the government at the heart of economic life.… Fascism and war were thus the bridge linking heterodox, marginal

Bill through Parliament over the course of one day of debate, thus assuring that the government held "complete power of control over persons and property for the prosecution of the war."[7] Major newspapers around the country allowed the words of Clement Attlee, the then Deputy Leader of the Coalition Government, to make the government's case, printing key passages from his address to the House of Commons introducing the Bill: "The Government are convinced that now is the time that we must mobilize to the full the whole resources of the country. We must throw all our weight into this struggle. Every private interest must give way to the urgent needs of the community."[8] From there it followed that various war and supply councils took direct control over wartime economic planning.

The measures exercised by the government represented a sweeping, and genuinely desperate, choice to put the war effort before all other considerations. That the Emergency Powers Bill met so little opposition, either public or political, demonstrated both the direness of the situation and the national will to meet a common purpose: survival in the face of total war. The effect of these broad measures likely had an unintended effect. Out of seeming wartime necessity, the public-at-large began to accept the role of government-led central planning as a part of daily life. It did not take long for policymakers to recognize the impact of this shift towards national planning. Indeed, as emergency planning measures took hold, attention amongst some policymakers shifted at an early stage of the war to considering the question of structural reconstruction once the conflict ended. The publication of the landmark Beveridge Report in 1942 ambitiously attempted to tackle the "five giant evils of want, disease, ignorance,

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and often controversial notions of economic planning with mainstream post-war economic policy … What planning was really about was faith in the state. In many countries this reflected a well-founded awareness, enhanced by the experience of war, that in the absence of any other agency of regulation or distribution, only the state now stood between the individual and destitution."

[7] "New Emergency Powers Act," *The Times*, May 23, 1940.

[8] "State Control of Resources. Defense Act Passed in a Day. Mr. Attlee's Explanations in the House," *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, May 23, 1940.

squalor, and idleness" by establishing, in the words of one historian, "a comprehensive post-war system of social security, in effect laying the foundations for the 'classic' welfare state."[9] Eventually the Beveridge Report, along with other like-minded policy proposals, evolved into mainstream thinking on postwar planning. Unsurprisingly, the Labour Party ran an ambitious national campaign in 1945 based in large part on national planning as a palliative for a country badly in need of reconstruction.

With Labour's victory in the 1945 election, Clement Attlee's party began implementing myriad structural reforms along broad lines. Labour's plans, however, reflected a doubling down on wartime planning; many of Labour's election manifesto promises harkened back to pre-war realities.[10] The postwar scene looked much different from an economic standpoint: exports some 30% lower than prewar levels, overseas debt balances, budget deficits, an import-export imbalance, high military expenditures overseas, massive numbers of military personnel still on the payroll, and an economy totally geared towards the war effort.[11] Nevertheless, Labour's election came with a clear mandate for planning, a fact not lost on the new Prime Minister, who proclaimed: "It will enable us to implement the policy of the Socialist Party. It is a very remarkable and gratifying result which shows that the electorate will respond to a clear and definite policy based on principles and on the application of principles to the needs of the present day."[12] As one Attlee biographer noted, Attlee forged ahead with Labour's socialist plans by "[keeping] the government moving consistently and simultaneously in several major areas: social services expansion, economic planning and restructuring, colonial development (and selective

[9] Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51*, 21. Kynaston points out that the Beveridge Report, properly titled the "Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services," became an unexpected best seller, with some 630,000 copies of the report, mostly an abridged version, selling to the public at large.
[10] Jerry Brookshire, *Clement Attlee* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 76.
[11] Ibid.
[12] "Remarkable Result—Mr. Attlee," *The Dundee Evening Telegraph*, "July 26, 1945. Attlee was quoted by the press following the results which showed Labour with a clear governing majority.

decolonisation), foreign policy redirection, and global strategic reappraisals."[13] Looking back on his premiership, Attlee said: "It wasn't just nationalisation for nationalisation's sake but the policy in which we believed: that fundamental things—central banking, transport, fuel and power—must be taken over by the nation as a basis on which the rest of the re-organisation of the country would depend."[14] Yet with Labour enjoying only six years in charge of the government before the Conservatives returned to power, it seems clear that public trust in government planning as a means to national reconstruction had its limits. Regardless, the public mandate given to Labour in the 1945 elections signaled a fundamental shift towards a lasting welfare state as a means of securing broad social security in postwar Britain.[15] With that shift came a further upsetting of the old imperial systems which had effectively governed British life since at least the Victorian era.

In the end, Labour's six years of power from 1945-1951 proved neither fully decisive, as Britain did not emerge as a permanent socialist nation, nor a failure. A host of reforms took hold, and a great deal of planned nationalization occurred. Yet the very crisis which swept Labour to power, the urgent need to rebuild while simultaneously providing fundamental social security to civilians, began to drag on the fortunes of Labour's efforts.[16] With each successive year of continuing austerity and financial crisis, British voters grew steadily wearier of planning

[13] Brookshire, *Clement Attlee*, 76.
[14] Williams, *Memoirs of Prime Minister Clement Atlee*, 88.
[15] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography* (New York: Plume, 2002), 805-806. As Lord Jenkins points out, polling data consistently demonstrated stronger national support for Labour going back several years prior to the election. In Jenkins' view: "The fact was that there had been a settled view throughout most of the war and extending across a wide swathe of the British public, occupationally and geographically, that they did not wish to go back to the conditions of the 1930s, and that they saw the Conservative party, with or without Churchill at its head, standing essentially for this."
[16] J.D. Tomlinson, "The Iron Quadrilateral: Political Obstacles to Economic Reform under the Attlee Government," *Journal of British Studies* 34, no. 1 (1995), 91. Tomlinson's article argues that several political considerations prevented Labour from fully implementing its economic policy objectives. While Tomlinson focuses on politics internal to the Labour Party, it seems worthwhile to consider the dual implications of both internal and external political forces producing drag on Labour's economic agenda. For a review of the external contemporary politics facing Labour, see: Samuel J. Eldersveld, "British Polls and the 1950 Election," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1951).

as a kind of panacea to solve the problems of the difficult postwar environment.[17] The promised reorganization of Britain to include a new safety net for all in the form of the welfare state had begun, but ordinary Britons continued to feel the pinch of wartime pain. Not unexpectedly, this produced a reduced majority for Labour in the 1950 elections.[18] Within a year, the Conservatives found a path back to power. Nevertheless, the Conservative victory in the general election of 1951 did not signal a massive repudiation of the 1945 election mandate won by Labour. Rather, the 1951 election produced, at least on the surface, a surprisingly minimalized transition along ideological lines.

The Conservative return to power did not come about as a result of promises for immediate retrenchment from the welfare state. Instead, Conservatives largely acquiesced to the idea of a mixed economy moving forward.[19] Conservative acceptance of a mixed economy, however, did not mean the Tories suddenly embraced a fully socialist economic model for Britain. Nor did it mean that Conservatives worried any less about the "menace" of the rising power of the Soviet Union.[20] Nor did it mean that Conservatives appreciated Labour's lack of sentimentality towards the Empire. To highlight the differences, Conservatives inclined themselves towards accepting many of the policies that Labour's election in 1945 put in place,

[17] M.A. Fitzsimons, "The British Elections," *The Review of Politics* 14, no. 1 (January 1952), 107-108. Various finance issues plagued Labour in power, and nationalization proved insufficient to provide true security amidst financial crises in 1947 and 1949.

[18] Eldersveld, "British Polls and the 1950 Election," 130-132. Eldersveld surveyed British polling data in the aftermath of the election before concluding that the election produced no discernable mandate for either party, yet refocused British attention to primarily domestic affairs such as employment, housing, and the like. When compared to the election results of 1945, the survey of public opinion clearly signals a "cooling off" on the Labour Party, without a full embrace of the Conservatives as an obvious alternate. Needless to say, the election results of 1951, in which the Conservatives returned to power, signals the continuing, if almost politely gradual erosion of support for Labour's outright mandate.

[19] David Childs, *Britain since 1945: A Political History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 39.

[20] In all fairness, Labour foreign policy did not differ dramatically from the Conservatives on the matter of the Soviets. Labour's foreign minister, Ernest Bevin, played a key role in forming NATO as a bulwark against any potential Soviet expansionism in Western Europe.

while simultaneously drawing the line on any further expansion of those policies.[21] In particular, the Tories refused to support nationalizing the British steel industry.[22] Conservatives, in other words, showed pragmatic political adroitness in realizing that public will demanded social security in a time of reconstruction, but crucially the Conservatives refused to shed their overarching ideological commitments going forward. Starting with providing political protection to the privatized steel industry, Conservatives set about defending a workable status quo, while focusing on restoring British national pride and global standing. At least this position effectively became the party platform for the general elections of 1950 and 1951.[23] Yet, according to the analysis of political scientists at the time, the 1950 and 1951 General Elections did not produce a clear mandate for a return to either High Toryism or even the new political pragmatism associated with tolerating Labour's reforms; instead, the polling and survey opinions from the elections showed that: "If there was a mandate emerging from the election it was one based on housing, full employment, and cost of living, and only with reference to the second of these is a clear-cut opinion discernable. It appears that the illusory 'mandate' insofar as public opinion survey data are concerned, must be stated in general and qualified terms."[24] It follows that the Conservatives needed to establish public support if not for their political project—presumably an election victory signaled such support—but for a return to broader conservative ideology. Such an opportunity to begin re-shaping public opinion in their favor came about by circumstance with the death of King George VI, just mere months after the Conservatives returned to power. The romance of a royal succession, after all, fires the conservative

[21] Childs, *Britain Since 1945*, 39.
[22] Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51*, 317. Kynaston notes, in particular, Churchill's fierce opposition during Commons debate on the matter.
[23] Ibid., 379. The Conservative manifesto, *This is the Road*, outlined a generally supportive view of the welfare state, though with limits. The press approved.
[24] Eldersveld, "British Polls and the 1950 Election," 132.

imagination.

By the time an electorally triumphant Churchill came to Buckingham Palace on October 26, 1951, the King's health was failing.[25] Churchill knew that the King, who continued to recover from a major operation to remove his left lung, suffered declining health because of lung cancer.[26] In his address to the nation after the King's subsequent death on February 6, 1952, Churchill acknowledged this fact: "During these last months the King walked with death, as if death were a companion, an acquaintance, whom he recognized and did not fear.… [T]he newspapers and photographs of modern times have made vast numbers of his subjects able to watch with emotion the last months of his pilgrimage. We all saw him approach his journey's end."[27] Churchill and the King had enjoyed a wartime bond that while strained at times grew strong in common purpose by the war's conclusion.[28] Perhaps ironically, the evolution of Churchill's bond with George VI mirrored the public's gradual acceptance of a stuttering King who had come to them as the result of abdication.

It did not take long for Churchill's deeply-held Victorian sentimentalism to reveal itself as he considered the implications of the King's death upon the nation:

> There is no doubt that of all the institutions which have grown up among us over the centuries, or sprung up into being in our lifetime, the constitutional monarchy is the most

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[25] Robert Rhodes James, *A Spirit Undaunted: The Political Role of George VI* (London: Abacus Books, 1998), 333. Sir Robert points out that owing to his declining health, King George proved too weak to consult with Churchill over Cabinet membership when Churchill resumed the premiership.

[26] Ibid. 'Tommy' Lascelles, George VI's Private Secretary, had written to Churchill to inform him of the true reason for the operation on the King. For his part, none of the doctors ever told the King that he had cancer. Curiously, not cancer but a blood clot ultimately killed the King. Nevertheless, the King's death did not come on suddenly—his health declined steadily after the war's conclusion.

[27] Winston Churchill, "King George VI: February 7, 1952, Broadcast, London," *Churchill Speaks*, 951-952.

[28] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill*, 860. As Lord Jenkins puts it, "after a brief sticky start the wartime relations of Sovereign and Prime Minister had been close and sustaining, combining to an exceptional degree mutual respect and an easy equality of relationship."; James, *A Spirit Undaunted*, 338. Sir Robert further supports Lord Jenkins' claims, stating (of the relationship between George VI and Churchill): "It was serious, and often grim, but although Churchill was a punctilious admirer of the institution of monarchy he was also a puckish one. He rated the monarchy very highly; but he also rated himself very highly. This could have caused resentment, as it had in the cases of Edward VII and George V, but did not with George VI."

> deeply founded and dearly cherished by the whole association of our peoples. In the present generation it has acquired a meaning incomparably more powerful than anyone had ever dreamed possible in former times. The Crown has become the mysterious link—indeed, I may say, the magic link—which united our loosely bound but strongly interwoven Commonwealth of nations, States and races.[29]

Churchill's appeal to sentimentality seems, at first blush, the ramblings of a well-meaning but slightly dotty old man. Yet his tribute to the "magic" of the monarchy, especially as it stands as an institution, reveals that the sentiment runs deeper than mere affection and senility. Monarchy, especially in the deeply metaphorical sense that Churchill ascribes to it, powerfully symbolizes a link between the present and the past.[30] As Churchill's radio eulogy for the King continued, he made this historical connection explicit:

> Now I must leave the treasures of the past and turn to the future. Famous have been the reigns of our Queens. Some of the greatest periods in our history have unfolded under their scepters. Now that we have the Second Queen Elizabeth, also ascending to the Throne in her twenty-sixth year, our thoughts are carried back nearly 400 years to the magnificent figure who presided over, and in many ways embodied and inspired, the grandeur and genius of the Elizabethan Age … I, whose youth was passed in the august, unchallenged and tranquil glories of the Victorian Era, may well feel a thrill in invoking, once more, the prayer and the Anthem, "God Save the Queen!"[31]

Churchill's florid romanticization of the Crown's transition from George VI to Elizabeth II signaled the restoration of the past to the present, in this case the potential for a rebirth of the golden age of Elizabeth. Thus, Churchill's heartfelt speech indicated the powerful dual purpose associated with a Succession: simultaneous rebirth and restoration. It also indicated the pending political gift sent from the heavens: a coronation.

Public fascination for the coronation ran high almost from the start. Unsurprisingly, early

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[29] Winston Churchill, "King George VI: February 7, 1952, Broadcast, London," *Churchill Speaks*, 952.
[30] Robert Lacey, *Majesty: Elizabeth II and the House of Windsor* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 162-163. Lacey argues a similar point in describing the sociological effect that a coronation as a self-contained event seems to produce on the public at large, referencing a study which called the event "a great act of national communion."
[31] Winston Churchill, "King George VI: February 7, 1952, Broadcast, London," *Churchill Speaks*, 953.

interest in the spectacle came not just from patriotic Britons but from businesses eager to make a profit off of the event. A mere two months after George VI's funeral, a local company in Dundee took out an advertisement in the *Dundee Courier* to encourage potential patrons to order television receivers for their homes so that people might watch the celebrations.[32] The advertisement claimed the following: "We have been warned of a reduction in supplies due to the steel shortage. If you want to be sure of possessing a TV Receiver for this particular occasion, we advise you to join our Coronation Viewing Circle. Book yourself a front seat at your own fireside."[33] Such clever entrepreneurship demonstrated the extent to which the coronation generated not just fascination but financial commitment on the part of ordinary Britons wanting to serve as more than passive observers. Austerity budgets, after all, did not leave much room for household technology luxuries. Nonetheless, demonstrable demand by the public to participate as witnesses dovetailed nicely with the availability of new technologies. Where feasible, businesses eagerly stepped in to help satisfy that demand. Thus, representatives of every class of British society, from political leaders to the business class to ordinary workers, sought out roles as witnessing participants in the coronation.

The *Dundee Courier* advertisement also signaled the growing power of mass media as the means of satiating the widespread public investment in the proceedings. Between television and radio, many households suddenly gained potential access to real-time engagement with a royal spectacle in a way hitherto unexplored (Fig. 5.1).[34] So while life and death circumstances brought about the coronation, the circumstances surrounding the timing, the rise in cross-class

[32] "Radio and Television" (advertisement), *Dundee Courier*, April 28, 1952.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Memorandum from the Prime Minister to the Cabinet, "Television at the Coronation: Memorandum by the Prime Minister," October 27, 1952, NA, CAB 129:56. See also: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7656843

Fig. 5.1, *The BBC's Filming of the Coronation Procession,* June 2, 1953.[35]

participation possibilities, and widespread audio-visual access to the event all aligned perfectly to motivate national power interests to stage a truly memorable occasion.

On the surface, a major public spectacle serves, with much overt pomp and ceremony, to fulfill a specific public need (i.e. a coronation reaffirms the viability of the existing structure of the British constitutional monarchy). In practice, however, public spectacles widely influence, though sometimes with great subtlety, many disparate facets of society, economics, culture, and so on.[36] Additionally, many different public and private institutions also stand to benefit, or in some cases lose, from the staging of such large scale events (e.g. businesses, political parties). In the specific case of the 1953 coronation, the continuing emergence of one such institution, mass media, cut across class boundaries to bring the coronation, and thus the implicit propagandistic message of the coronation, into ordinary people's homes. The act of bringing the coronation into

[35] For more information, see: http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/proginfo/2013/23/coronation.html
[36] Careful historical review, as an aspect of what Foucault broadly termed "archeology," associated with public spectacles effectively reveals not just the incentives for power interests to engage with the public in grand events, but also a number of hidden incentives-turned-influences at play.

the homes of ordinary Britons ultimately enhanced the participatory complicity of the public towards accepting the messaging associated with the event, as all good propaganda must. Further to the point, various commercial institutions (e.g. commercial broadcasters, retailers) stood to gain from making such mass media transmissions readily available throughout the British Isles. The transmission of the coronation thus could be seen as a series of pervasive communication "ripples" continuing along the timeframe surrounding the planning of the event, the event itself, and the aftermath of the event. Mass media communications did not represent the only kinds of wide-scale influences upon the public which emanated from the coronation; some of the effects emerging from grand spectacles remain hidden.

In the case of Elizabeth II's coronation, transmissions rippling outward from the spectacle simultaneously carried both a direct affirmation of the British monarchy and a more obscured, complex root message which reaffirmed the benefits to maintaining the continuity of longstanding British socio-politico structures. The scenario played out thusly:

- George VI died.
- The state organized the ceremonial accession of the new monarch, Elizabeth II.
- Public interest grew for the coming coronation.
- The public sought to participate as spectators of the coronation.
- Public and private sector means of participation were provided to the public (i.e. media).
- The event itself featured widespread observation and participation through the media.
- Mass observation and participation reaffirmed the public's active support for the monarchy.
- By affirming support for the institution of monarchy, the public effectively pledged to continue supporting the hierarchical nature of existing British socio-politico structures.

Of course, the final successive step for how it all played out remains the most important, especially in light of the postwar public shift away from many of the traditional imperial values and ideas associated with the Victorian Era and towards a modern welfare state. Yet, the root message of the coronation—not the crowning of a new Queen, but rather the affirmation of

existing socio-politico structures—remained indirectly obscured from observers. The pomp and circumstance of the event, the "fairytale" qualities of the crowning that enraptured the public, ceremonially validated not just the monarchy but the fact that monarchy represented the aristocratic pinnacle of a deeply entrenched, rigidly class-bound Britain.

By participating in coronation fever, either in the streets or by watching on television at home, the British public acted as unwitting participants in reinforcing the very structures they had seen fit to begin reforming in the postwar aftermath.[37] This argument centers upon a largely Foucauldian construct: the idea that power structures ultimately produce a kind of willing self-confinement on the part of individuals. In this case, the confinement in question reflected a certain halt to the postwar expansion of a planned "welfare" state. So in an era in which shifting values sway public affection away from the historical reality of the way things were to the idealistic promise of way things ought to be in society, the coronation becomes an event of outsized importance. The influence of the coronation's core and highly propagandistic message on the broader discourse served both to enhance and undermine competing political ideologies, just as it affirmed certain values over others, and, perhaps most significantly, evoked historical continuity in an age of global political discontinuity. Once again, however, these influences presented themselves as partially obscured in the visible ceremonial components of the coronation. Only with the benefit of post-hoc "archeological" investigation can we begin to see how the coronation influenced the broader discourse of the era.

Put another way, the public's "reading" of the coronation spectacle—or really of any massive public spectacle—precipitated a kind of deeper sociological interpretation of the event

[37] For more information on the subject of imprisonments, both of the self and of society, see Foucault, *The Birth of the Prison*.

that served to reinforce the historically ingrained cultural values on display.[38] More concretely, at least in regards to the politics of the event, the coronation actualized a unique public display of both institutional and structural conservation at a moment when conservative power interests needed reinforcement, especially in light of the growing public mood for socialist policymaking. This is not to say that the coronation alone brought about specific counter-revolutionary effects; rather, it simply affirms that the coronation reflected and reinforced the conservative reaction by various British power interests to halt the advance of a new postwar socio-politico structure in the form of the welfare state. Of course those primarily aristocratic institutions which stood to gain the most from halting the postwar changes tasked themselves with the direct responsibility for bringing the coronation to life: the Church of England, the Royal Household, and the Conservative government.

For both the Church of England and the House of Windsor, the institutional benefits of a large and successful coronation ceremony seem transparently obvious. For the Royal Family, a coronation meant the literal renewal of the seemingly timeless institution of a hereditary monarchy. For the Church of England, a coronation symbolized the fundamental importance of

[38] Clifford Geertz, "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 448-449. Here I argue that the fundamental nature of public spectacles begs for a massive interpretation, or a massive "reading," of the events on display. This does not seem to me a new possibility. Clifford Geertz makes clear the historical tradition of interpretatively "reading" those facets of culture and society which extend beyond the purely material (or individual): "an extension of the notion of a text beyond written material, and even beyond verbal, is, though metaphorical, not, of course, all that novel. The *interpretatio naturae* tradition of the middle ages, which, culminating in Spinoza, attempted to read nature as Scripture, the Nietszchean effort to treat value systems as glosses on the will to power, (or the Marxian one to treat them as glosses on property relations), and the Freudian replacement of the enigmatic text of the manifest dream with the plain one of the latent, all offer precedents, if not equally recommendable ones. But the idea remains theoretically underdeveloped; and the more profound corollary, so far as anthropology is concerned, that cultural forms can be treated as texts, as imaginative works built out of social materials, has yet to be systematically exploited." I accept Geertz's premise that cultural forms, including "imaginative works built out of social materials," applies to British spectacles as well as it does to any other cultural forms. Additionally, while public spectacles primarily operate as extensions of various structural bodies—politics, culture, society—public observation of these events necessitates some form of interpretive process at play while the spectacles unfold. While some form of interpretation undoubtedly occurs for each individual observer, the propaganda ends almost always associated with spectacles indicate the pervasive extent to which spectacles attempt to provide a preferred interpretation, or narrative, to the public. When, in turn, a public reading-response accepts the preferred narrative of the spectacle, massive interpretation can even become circularly reinforcing.

the church as an institution to the state. Moreover, in the face of the twentieth century's gradually rising tide of modernity and secularism, both the Royals and the church stood to gain from the public relations boon of a coronation spectacle acting to encourage public sympathy for the ancient principles and values associated with each institution. Finally, the scope and scale of a grand performance event like a coronation served to generate, including within the institutions themselves, an aura of excitement that might otherwise get lost in banal competency of day-to-day operations. In other words, if a coronation did nothing else it caused the public-at-large to pay more attention to the Monarchy and to the Church of England as working participants in the affairs of state.

On the other hand, the role of the Conservative government in staging the coronation proved more complex for reasons somewhat beyond its control. Unlike many of the successful Royal events of the recent past (e.g. the Great Exhibition, Victoria's Jubilees), coronations allowed for far less tailoring to the specific circumstances associated with the times in which they occurred. While this did little to lessen either Churchill or the Conservative's commitment to the project—even a cursory review of Cabinet papers shows that the coronation occupied substantial discussion time at the highest levels of the government—they remained somewhat constrained by the traditional protocol associated with the event. Over 900 years of ceremonial precedent simply did not give way very easily to contemporary public relations expediency. George VI's 1937 coronation provided the most relevant template for the staging of Elizabeth's crowning.[39] In a published *Coronation Commentary* on the 1937 event, the explanation of the carefully considered arrangements for the ceremony referenced extensive historical precedents:

It is a rite that in its fundamentals you cannot change much. It is very rarely

[39] Lacey, *Majesty: Elizabeth II and the House of Windsor*, 153. With macabre fortuitousness, the planners of the coronation got to practice a kind of dress rehearsal for the coronation as a result of the death and State Funeral of George V's Consort, Queen Mary.

> performed: forty times or so these thousand years. We the English have never much wanted to change it.
> Wise adaptations to political fact and development there have been; and and changes of stress. Crown, in place of Orb or Sceptre, has come to be considered the chief token of regal power. The placing of it upon the king's head has, instead of the divine anointing, come to be considered—by the layman, the majority—the principal part of the solemnity, and as far back as the Middle ages gave its name to the whole series of ceremonies of which it is but a part.[40]

So while the government held little sway over the ceremonial ritual in the Abbey, it did influence all of the peripheral events associated with the coronation. The totality of the event, after all, included more than just a self-contained religious service taking place in Westminster Abbey. Additionally, Churchill's government managed the crucial tasks of providing financial and logistical support, and questions of access. The Conservatives used their influence along these lines to provide greater public access to the coronation and to enhance the scope and scale of coronation activities beyond the service itself.

The various Cabinet papers show that in the months immediately following George VI's death, government ministers addressed questions pertaining to the size of the coronation. [41] In the first direct set of recommendations about the scale of events, the Cabinet committee tasked with reviewing the situation indicated that they operated "on the assumption that Her Majesty's Coronation would be on broadly the same scale (as George VI's coronation)." [42] Further, the committee noted that cost differential from 1937 to 1953 seemed likely to at least double from some one million pounds to two million pounds if the government decided to also pay for new dress military uniforms for the participating troops and to fund military service reviews to mark

[40] Geoffrey Dennis, *Coronation Commentary* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1937), 219.
[41] Cabinet Meeting Minutes, "43rd Conclusions," April 16, 1952, NA, CAB 128:24. See also: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7663497. In the meeting, the Prime Minister encouraged the appointment of Cabinet committee to advise on the scope and scale of the coronation. The committee included such heavy hitters as: the Lord Privy Seal, the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Minister of Works.
[42] Cabinet Memorandum, "Scale of the Coronation Celebrations," June 17, 1952, NA, CAB 129:52. See also: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7656679

the occasion.[43] Eager not to deviate from the 1937 baseline in any substantial way, such additions were almost inevitably tacked on, and cost estimate potentials grew to "well over" two and a half million pounds by the end of 1952.[44] While the various minutes and memoranda of Cabinet meetings suggest ministers, including Churchill, sometimes paid lip service to austerity constraints, political will backing a very large spectacle remained consistent throughout the planning phase.[45] Meanwhile, Churchill's nearly unbridled enthusiasm for the grandness of the occasion, evident from the start, at times reduced him to a caricature status that more closely resembled a modern wedding planner than a British Prime Minister. At one point, he argued in a Cabinet meeting that any Peer in possession of a carriage ought to receive permission to drive them to the Abbey on Coronation Day.[46] For Churchill, it seemed, the more the merrier. With so few expenses spared, and with high ranking government ministers taking nearly every opportunity afforded to them to scrutinize the planning, attention quickly turned to questions of public access and participation.

With mass media taking a prominent role in providing the public at large access to real-time viewing of the proceedings, the government initially felt obliged to control the extent of that access. After all, conservatives, while eager in the instance of Elizabeth II's coronation to stage a large spectacle, traditionally tend to take a dim view towards altering the operations of monarchy.[47] Disputes, therefore, over the proper role of television in the coronation proved

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Cabinet Memorandum, "Scale of the Coronation Celebrations," November 7, 1952, NA, CAB 129:56.
[45] Cabinet Meeting Minutes, "61st Conclusions," June 19, 1952, NA, CAB 128:25. See also: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7663514. As a specific example of one of the nods towards fiscal constraint, the Cabinet declared at their June 19, 1952 meeting that the cost of coronation service reviews appeared prohibitive. Ultimately the Naval and RAF reviews went ahead. Also at this Cabinet meeting, Churchill expressed concern that uniform costs associated with the coronation might grow into additional requests by the army.
[46] Cabinet Meeting Minutes, "96th Conclusions," November 13, 1952, NA, CAB 128:25.
[47] For a valuable exploration on the subject of conservative protectiveness over the inviolate nature of monarchies, see: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Thomas Mahoney (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1955).

complicated and controversial.[48] Different members of the establishment, ever wary of the encroachment of modernity, nearly missed out on the new, incredible public relations opportunity by stubbornly resisting the use of television cameras to film the most crucial moments of the service in Westminster Abbey.[49] Eventually, Churchill pushed back, but only after holding informal discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Royal Household, claiming "public disappointment" should the event not receive full television coverage.[50] In choosing to take a stand on the issue, Churchill very likely maintained the widespread public interest in the event he so hoped to see a success. Whether or not Churchill understood the technology in question mattered little; he remained, until the very end, a political opportunist eager to serve both the public and his own interests. Churchill and others in positions of authority ultimately remembered, though perhaps a little slowly, this fact when it came to the matter of television. The Government also showed similar savvy when it came to questions over access along the processional route. Aware that television cameras would show the processional route more clearly than ever before, the Cabinet instructed that the majority of decoration funds go along the main route.[51] Ministers also planned a lengthy procession through London in order to allow many Londoners an in-person viewing experience (Fig. 5. 2). All total, Elizabeth II's coronation

[48] Cabinet Meeting Minutes, "67th Conclusions," July 10, 1952, NA, CAB 128:25. See Also: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7663520

[49] Ibid. Presumably Churchill backed the initial cabinet decision to exclude television; he chaired the meeting which confirmed the decision to bar cameras from parts of the Abbey. Someone in the Cabinet meeting, however, proved savvy enough to recognize the possibility of a political firestorm over the decision. The Cabinet minutes include the following note of caution: "It was thought, however, that there might be wide demand for television of the ceremony, and that political pressure in favour of this might be brought to bear on the Government."

[50] Memorandum from the Prime Minister to the Cabinet, "Television at the Coronation: Memorandum by the Prime Minister," October 27, 1952, NA, CAB 129:56. The fact that Churchill consulted with both the Royal Household and the Archbishop of Canterbury reinforces the point that the government, the church, and the Royal Household worked in harmony over the proceedings, even if they at times had disputes over the details of the event.

[51] Cabinet Meeting Minutes, "61st Conclusions," June 19, 1952, NA, CAB 128:25

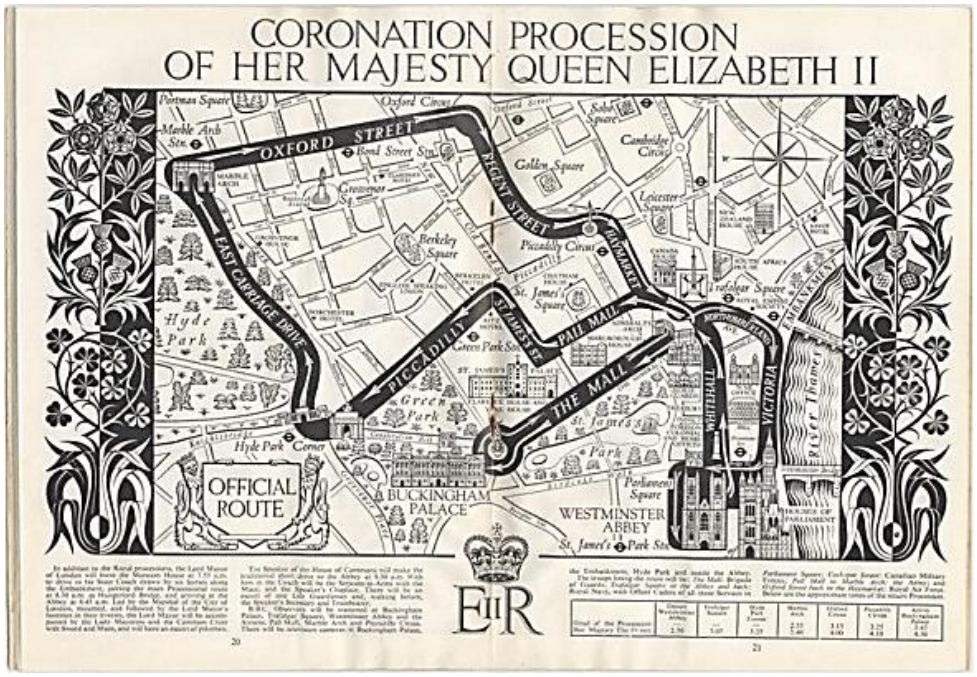

Fig.5.2. *Official Souvenir Program for the Coronation of Elizabeth II*, June 2, 1953[52]

included over a year's worth of meticulous planning. The major establishment forces responsible for bringing the coronation went to great lengths to defy austerity budgets, and also to work carefully around certain ceremonial traditions, so as to make the event a massively successful affair. The planning culminated with an entire day's worth of grand celebration—complete with all of the old imperial trimmings—strategically spread throughout London.

With many thousands lining the streets, and millions more tuning in on television and radio around the world, Coronation Day began as almost all important British royal ceremonials start: with a massive procession. While most royal occasions enjoy a certain precise and well-funded performativity, the rarity of a coronation meant that the staged performance mattered all the more.[53] For the journey to Westminster Abbey to celebrate the coronation service, some five

[52] Map source: http://www.awm.gov.au/blog/2009/03/11/the-coronation-contingent-of-1953/

[53] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1959), 28. As Goffman points out in his section on "Belief in the Part One is Playing," when "(the performer) can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality. When his audience is also convinced in this way about the show he puts on—and this seems to be the typical case—then for

distinct processions assembled, with each accompanied by an extensive military escort. These five processions included colonial rulers, prime ministers, princes and princesses, the Queen Mother, and finally the State Procession of the Queen.[54] The Queen's procession alone might have impressed no less a character than Louis XIV in its somewhat preposterous length. It consisted of four divisions of the Sovereign's escort formed by the Life Guards, four massed bands, two detachments of Foot Guards, the King's Troop of the Royal Horse Artillery, aides-de-camp of the military services, chaplains of the military services, the combined staffs of service, flag officers of the Home Command, the Marshalls of the Royal Air Force, the Admirals of the Fleet, the Chiefs of Staff of the United Kingdom, escorts of officers from colonial and Commonwealth nations, the Colonels-in-Chief of the Royal regiments, the personal aides-de-camp to the Queen, and, of course, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in the Golden State Coach, which was drawn by eight massive Windsor Grey horses.[55] As the grand procession made its way to Westminster Abbey for the coronation service, they passed under the lavish street decorations insisted upon by both private businesses and the government in active defiance of the postwar gloom.[56] The scale of the procession, the attention to detail, and the precision with which it all came together finally revealed, in spectacular fashion, the efforts of the planners

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the moment at least, only the sociologist or the socially disgruntled will have any doubts about the 'realness' of what is presented."

[54] "Order of the Processions," *The Times of London,* June 2, 1952.

[55] Ibid. It seems unlikely that future coronations will attempt to match the scale of the 1953 effort. To start, Britain no longer exerts active, or in some cases even vestigial, imperial influence. Nor does Britain maintain a military structure anywhere close to the size it funded in 1953. Therefore, many of the positions filled in Elizabeth's coronation no longer exist. Finally, though somewhat less predictably, the current Heir Apparent traditionally enjoys less public favor than Elizabeth did at the time of her Accession. In keeping with the theme of this chapter, however, we should proceed cautiously in speculating too loudly on the specifics of scope and scale associated with the next coronation. For one, various political and socio-economic factors may weigh on events and tempt interested parties into increasing the size of the event. Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that Britain still maintains the sort of infrastructure necessary to mount a coronation to match the 1953 effort.

[56] Cabinet Meeting Minutes, "95th Conclusions," November 11, 1952, NA, CAB 128:25. See also: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D766354. After some debate, the Cabinet finally agreed upon the sum of £160,000 for street decorations, including £10,000 for decorations off the designated coronation parade route.

coming to fruition. Once the procession arrived at the Abbey, the politicians and other dignitaries could finally content themselves, at least for a few hours, with allowing God to play His part in the proceedings, too.

The start of the coronation ceremony set in motion another set of processions, this time with religious solemnity, through Westminster Abbey to begin the ancient, complex rite. Taken from the text of *Psalm 122,* the hymn "I Was Glad" played as the Queen entered:

I was glad when they said unto me:
We will go into the house of the Lord.
Our feet shall stand in thy gates:
O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built as a city:
that is at unity in itself.
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
they shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls:
and plenteousness within thy palaces.[57]

As with much of the symbolism associated with the occasion, the hymn represented more than just another musical or liturgical element; in fact, the choice of "I Was Glad" connected the sacred and the temporal through historical allusion, with the holy city of Jerusalem reconstituted as modern day London. Such symbolic representationalism indicates the idea that, in the words of one famous anthropologist, "subjectivity does not properly exist until it is thus organized, (and) art forms generate and regenerate the very subjectivity they pretend to display."[58] Thus even in musical consecration, temporal politics intruded. As the anthem ended, cries rang out of "*Vivat, vivat Regina Elizabetha!*"[59] As with the language of "I Was Glad," the acclamation of the people validated the timelessness of the occasion through the symbolic usage of the ancient

[57] Westminster Abbey maintains records of the music and liturgy. See: http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/royals/coronations/elizabeth-ii
[58] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 451.
[59] "The Queen Takes Possession of Her Kingdom: Hail to the Crown by Freedom Shaped," *The Times,* June 3, 1953.

language of medieval rite. Such self-aware symbolic acts as these made clear that through the continuity of renewal implicit in the coronation service not only would Elizabeth take formal possession of her kingdom, but also that the British nation would, once again, share in the possession of historical destiny that the divinely-granted royal embodiment revealed. "Long Live the Queen!," but also "Long Live Great Britain!"

As the hours-long ceremony unfolded, some seventeen distinct elements of the service played out, including the oath, the anointing, the homages, and, of course, the crowning.[60] The act of crowning undoubtedly evoked the emotional high point of the entire coronation, and the heavily anticipated act of placing the crown upon the Sovereign's head summoned not only direct historical links to the past, but mythical connotations as well. Indeed, it seems clear that the entire structure of the service leading up to the crowning intended to demonstrate a kind of religious, symbolic rebirth in real world practice.[61] Before the crowning itself, the act of anointing the head of the Sovereign with holy oils served to reify the divine connection between the Royal personage and their unique authority.[62] As a potent symbol of authority, the crown itself further solidified this link by making visible the Sovereign's divinely-granted temporal power in glittering fashion. Put another way, the crown acts as the material instantiation of the conflux between the sacred and the profane, and the moment of crowning signals the climax of

[60] For more information on the Order of Service, see: http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/royals/coronations/elizabeth-ii. The distinct elements of the service include the following: I. The Preparation II. The Entrance into the Church III. The Recognition IV. The Oath V. The Presenting of the Holy Bible VI. The Beginning of the Communion Service VII. The Anointing VIII. The Presenting of the Spurs and Sword, and the Oblation of the Sword IX. The Investing with the Armills, the Stole Royal and the Robe Royal; and the Delivery of the Orb X. The Investiture *per annulum, et per sceptrum et baculum* XI. The Putting on of the Crown XII. The Benediction XIII. The Enthroning XIV. The Homage XV. The Communion XVI. *Te Deum Laudamus* XVII. The Recess.

[61] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion,* Trans. Willard R. Trask (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1957), 30. Eliade further elucidates this concept by stating: "It is not difficult to see why the religious moment implies the cosmogonic moment. The sacred reveals absolute reality and at the same time makes orientation possible; hence it *founds the world* in the sense that it fixes the limits and establishes the order of the world."

[62] Lacey, *Majesty: Elizabeth II and the House of Windsor*, 160. Elizabeth herself seemed to think along these lines, repeatedly evoking religious prayers in public and in private in the run up to the coronation.

the coronation's mythical-historical narrative. At the climactic moment of Elizabeth's crowning, the assembled peers and peeresses of all shouted "God Save the Queen!" while guns simultaneously fired from The Tower of London.[63]

Once the lengthy service concluded, the newly crowned Queen left the Abbey to ride through the streets to greet her people, this time in a procession even grander than what bore her to the crowning. With the sacred solemnity left behind at the Abbey, the rest of the day took on the form of one giant, gilded street party. Coronation Day ended with repeated appearances by the Royal Family on the balcony of Buckingham Palace and a royal *urbi et orbi* media broadcast.[64] On the whole, it all amounted to a lavish, costly, glittering, powerful, and utterly unavoidable celebration of the British establishment. As one biographer of Elizabeth II put it: "In [the] street parties and church services people could recapture the wartime sense of community lost in the years of austerity … [The coronation] left a warm glow in its aftermath."[65] Churchill was triumphant. Broadcasting to the nation, he declared:

> Let it not be thought that the age of chivalry belongs to the past. Here, at the summit of our world-wide community, is the lady whom we respect because she is our Queen and whom we love because she is herself. Gracious and noble are words familiar to us all in courtly phrasing. To-night they have a new ring in them, because we know they are true about the gleaming figure whom Providence has brought to us and brought to us in times where the present is hard and the future is veiled.[66]

By these lights, the coronation thus redeemed the conservative vision for Britain.

Amidst the sentimentality, however, a deeper truth appeared. To Churchill, indeed to all those who wished to conserve the past glories of the Britain they once knew, the young Elizabeth, "the gleaming figure whom Providence has brought to us," symbolized not just the sort of continuity with those values that a coronation reaffirms, but a figure providing certainty

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[63] "The Coronation Service," *The Times*, June 1, 1953.
[64] "Broadcast by the Queen," *The Times,* June 3, 1953.
[65] Lacey, *Majesty: Elizabeth II and the House of Windsor*, 156.
[66] "Prime Minister's Tribute," *The Times*, June 3, 1953.

"when the present is hard" and "the future is veiled." Churchill's idea of Britain, not the Britain of wearily-embraced austerity and socialism, but the Britain of empire and equipoise, once again had a new life. Out of these hopes, and with a fool's rush of post-coronation romantic naïveté, the New Elizabethans arrived. The euphoria of the early summer modern triumph with all of its evocative images of divinely-inherited grandeur, with its liturgy and music, with its crowns and coronets, with its gilded coaches and grand processions, with its power and glory gilded the lily. Whereas in the past, the true magic of royal ceremonial occasions either derived from the empire or from the need to defiantly proclaim the empire in the face of adversaries, the Britain of 1953 had only the fairytale myth to fall back upon at the end of the day. Westminster glittered on coronation day, but London remained a bombed out, blackened place. The British Empire fared no better. One by one, nations left to form a "Commonwealth" that had very little in common and even less wealth to show for it. The nation's finances remained perched on the edge of ruin, and countless households shared in a similar fate.[67] Even the indefatigable Churchill, so active during the war years, tottered into living antiquity. Yet, amidst these stark realities, the New Elizabethans sprang forth as living embodiments of the hopefulness inspired by the coronation spectacle. They were to be a new generation of postwar Britons, born into a country eager and ready to reclaim its past glory. Within three years, however, this false promise was consigned to the graveyard of history.

The Suez Crisis of 1956, in which Egyptian nationalists seized the Suez Canal and effectively undermined Britain's military and economic role in the Middle East, served to

[67] Robert Blake, *The Decline of Power: 1915-1964* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 345-346. Blake points out that by 1952 some of the economic conditions had seemingly started to change for the better in Britain. Rationing slowly began to taper off, new material goods came into the country, and overall economic growth continued, albeit sluggishly. Some even felt a sense of financial hope. Yet, Blake also calls this illusory, for much of the supposed growth concealed deeper structural weaknesses in the economy.

completely destabilize the narrative of a resurgent Britain.[68] The fact that Britain's effective control over the Suez became a source of strategic weakness caused trouble both at home and abroad. Most crucially, Britain's attempt to restore order to the situation resulted in absolute national humiliation and served to obliterate any post-coronation metanarrative of Britain reborn anew. For the true "crisis" aspect of the Suez Crisis stemmed from Britain's response to the situation as much as it did to the fact that Britain "lost" the Suez in the first place. Acting in concert with the French, the British hoped to restore the Suez to if not direct British control than at least some sort of favorable international oversight.[69] The Americans, however, remained reluctant to engage in any war games that smacked of colonialism; and when Britain and France acted with military action on their own, President Eisenhower refused to back the operation.[70] Whereas some in the government saw Suez as a chance to reestablish British imperial control over the Middle East, and thus over one of the vital economic lifelines long associated with the British Empire, the lack of American backing for the project sealed its fate in the new postwar environment.[71] Without America, Britain no longer held enough international clout or power to manage wide-ranging international actions. So if the coronation had represented a symbolic desire by the conservative British establishment to retain structural continuity with the authority

[68] Scholarship on the Suez Crisis is both complex and conflicted; a fierce debate rages among scholars over the extent to which Suez upset British global standing. Some scholars argue that its effects on British standing proved severe. Others suggest that Britain's global role remained surprisingly strong in spite of the apparent damage imposed by the crisis. This paper does not seek to wade into these debates. Rather, I seek to merely point out that whatever effects Suez had on Britain's geopolitical standing going forward, it remained a national humiliation. That fact alone serves to fundamentally undercut the narrative established in the post-coronation afterglow of a new Elizabethan era. In other words, Suez changed the discourse surrounding Britons' perceived national self-interests. This fact remains true even if Suez did not fundamentally undermine Britain's role in global affairs. For an overview of some of the continuing debates, see: Anthony Adamthwaite, "Suez Revisited," *International Affairs* 64, no. 3 (Summer, 1988); G.C. Peden, "Suez and Britain's Decline as a World Power," *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 4 (2012).

[69] Blake, *The Decline of Power*, 368-369.

[70] Judt, *Postwar*, 296-297.; Blake, *The Decline of Power*, 376-377. When the United States refused to support British and French military action, the Pound Sterling collapsed in trading. Economic pressure, as much as American political pressure, forced an early withdrawal by the British.

[71] Leon Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 48.

of the past, the Suez action indicated an effort to put that past authority on trial. Staging a flawless royal spectacle proved safer. Anthony Eden, Churchill's successor, resigned in disgrace as a result of the crisis.[72] Moreover, while the Conservative Party managed to remain in power in spite of the misadventure, the lessons of the debacle seemed clear: Britain no longer mattered on the global stage as it once did. While the gradual decline of influence had been decades in the making, the Suez Crisis crystalized a new, stark psychological humiliation associated with having no choice but to finally own up to irreversible imperial decline.

A thousand days after the coronation promised continuity with a glorious past, the dreaded "veiled future" Churchill worried over arrived in earnest. Perhaps the overwhelming public "buy in" to the coronation's promise of structural continuity with the past motivated in British power interests a false sense of security in the years that followed? This seems like a realistic possibility. Regardless, the misadventure in Egypt highlighted the continuing dissolution of the Empire, the stubborn structural weaknesses repressing the economy, the dawning of a terrifying new atomic age which placed the United Kingdom between two new superpowers, and the slow rebuilding from two devastating wars. The reality of decline finally caught up to Britain. Consequently, it now seems clear that Elizabeth II's coronation shared certain inescapable parallels with the 1897 Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. While the 1897 Jubilee came to represent an Empire under strain, so too did the 1953 Coronation. In another similarity, both events served to signal the illusion of imperial destiny and continuity. The 1897 Jubilee reassured the public that the Empire would go on; the 1953 Coronation reassured the public that imperial Britain would make a comeback. In both cases, these reassurances proved false. The Empire did not continue in perpetuity, and while the British nation endures, it only does so as a country that continues to ebb global clout and influence with seemingly each passing

[72] Judt, *Postwar*, 298.

year. In light of this contemporary reality, the grand convocations that continue to dot the landscape of British history no longer retain many of the same defining values that once underpinned their existence. Contemporary spectacles now serve to address an evolving existential problem: defining what it means to be British in a post-imperial world.

Chapter Six

From An Empty Tent to a "Five-Ring Opening Circus": A Survey of Post-Imperial British Convocations in Contemporary British History[1]

Dating to the Great Exhibition of 1851, major public convocations in Britain appealed to a set of broadly Victorian ideals such as security, continuity, progress, and, above all else, empire. These organized appeals to *Pax Britannica* values served to reward the imperial state, as well as some of its major stakeholders, with popular support. Indeed, the broad formula for imperial spectacles remained largely unaltered, with each major event presenting its own commentary upon the matters of the day, so long as Britain maintained a viable global empire. Quixotically, however, this same Victorian era formula carried over into postwar and post-imperial British history. Major British national celebrations included Royal ceremonials such as the decidedly anachronistic Investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1969, a coronation throwback in the form of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, and the blockbuster production of the Royal Wedding of Charles and Diana in 1981. Yet outside of the Royal Family as a national institution, the British had few occasions to celebrate on the scale of the imperial gatherings of the past. The British Empire had begun its transition into a Commonwealth, a largely symbolic affiliation between Britain and its former colonies, following the Second World War. Moreover, Britain's postwar standing in global affairs remained overshadowed by the United States and the Soviet Union as the Cold War unfolded. On the domestic front, British politics turned to debates over the role of the welfare state and Britain's role within Europe; in effect, the political gaze shifted inward. Put simply, the second half of the twentieth century marked a time of shifting national identity for Britain. Spectacles of "Britishness," at least outside of the Royal

[1] Taken from Sarah Lyall, "A Five-Ring Opening Circus, Weirdly and Unabashedly British," *The New York Times*, July 27, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/28/sports/olympics/in-olympic-opening-ceremony-britain-asserts-its-eccentric-identity.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&hp

ceremonials, remained few and far between.

The close of the twentieth century saw the fallout from the Thatcher-led reforms of the welfare state and subsequent bitter socio-economic class divisions, the Royal Family suffer the humiliation of scandal and divorce, and the centrist politics of Tony Blair's "New Labour" party sweep to victory in the 1997 General Election. Each of these developments signaled the continuing domestication of British affairs. Perhaps nothing, however, symbolized the inward-looking search for national identity like the public reaction to the death of Diana, the Princess of Wales.[2] Diana's unique ability to transcend fashion while simultaneously maintaining her common touch with the public made her a wildly popular figure, even as the Royal Family sought to expel her from the "Firm" after her marriage with Prince Charles, the heir-apparent, failed. When Diana died in a car crash in Paris in the summer of 1997, the public mood, already soured on the Royal Family after the bitter breakup between Charles and Diana, grew increasingly hostile. Diana's funeral attracted global attention, with large numbers of Britons using the occasion to celebrate Diana's trendsetting values over the tradition-bound, some argued moribund, Royal Family. For the first time since the abdication crisis of 1936, the Royal Family endured a substantially negative shift in public fortune.

The popular rupture with the Royal Family did not represent the only major shift in public attitudes. With Labour's ascent into power came a commitment to certain principles of

[2] C.W. Watson, "□Born a Lady, Became a Princess, Died a Saint': The Reaction to the Death of Diana, Princess of Wales," *Anthropology Today* 13, no. 6 (December, 1997), 4. Watson scolds fellow anthropologists for not paying enough attention to modern royal ritual, making the supremely valid point that "Durkheim was the first to accept that in examining the motivations of individuals participating in collective rituals it was unlikely that one would find uniform emotion which was common to all, but he argued that the very act of participating in a collective ritual created a sense of communion which encouraged a common belief in shared values." I believe that Watson's point, and by extension Durkheim's as well, holds valid when Diana's death is examined retrospectively.

devolution politics.[3] Various longstanding cornerstones of the British state—e.g. the Act of Union, the House of Lords—became subject to an election manifesto that promised reform or devolved power back to local authorities.[4] In effect, the inward shift away from global affairs and towards popular structural reforms on the national level began in earnest with the twin upheavals of 1997: Labour's transformative election cycle and the public backlash against the Royal Family following Diana's death. This shift, however, raised certain questions about the nature of British identity: what might the "new" Britain represent? The question brooked uncertainty. For better or worse, Britons knew their place as masters in the realms domestic and international affairs dating from the Victorians through Churchill. One needs look no further than the major British spectacles of empire going back to the Great Exhibition of 1851, and in some instances even before that, to see examples of self-assured Britishness on public display. For contemporary Britain, however, spectacles held during the 1997-2012 period, especially those during 2000 and 2012, indicated a shifting environment towards a more postmodern mindset.

The millennium celebrations for the year 2000, highlighted by an ongoing exhibition staged in the specially built Millennium Dome in London, intended to usher in a new era of optimism and progress for a so-called "Cool Britannia." In the words of Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Dome presented "a triumph of confidence over cynicism, boldness over blandness, excellence over mediocrity."[5] Bringing this aspirational but amorphous vision to life involved Dome visitors going through commercially-sponsored attractions (called "zones") which

[3] *The BBC*, "The devolution debate this century," 1997, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/politics97/devolution/scotland/briefing/c20scot.shtml
[4] For general background on Labour's election history and platforms, including the rise of New Labour, see: https://www.labour.org.uk/historyofthelabourparty3
[5] "Blair hails 'incredible' dome," *The Guardian*, December 14, 1999, http://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/dec/14/millennium.uk

presented a theme relating to time and the human experience, as well as, in the words of one government planner, giving guests the opportunity to "reflect and take stock of ourselves: who we are, what we do, and where we live."[6] Such promises aside, it remained unclear through much of the planning process what sponsors actually intended to display in the Dome.[7] In spite of confusion over the project's identity, the Dome opened to the public on January 1, 2000 at a cost of over £600 million.[8] Serving as a kind of historical successor to exhibitions of yore, the Millennium Dome failed to live up to its roots. Put bluntly, the project flopped.[9] The Dome project lost money, suffered low attendance, and was derelict of occupancy after a year. One newspaper declared that a trip to the Dome was "like rubbernecking at the scene of a car crash."[10] Hardly the cornerstone project of a new era! The Dome debacle ultimately meant that Britons continued to wait on a showcase event to publicly emblemize the ongoing process of coming to grips with the new reality of their diminished, post-imperial standing.

Whereas the events of 2000 represented a resounding failure in terms of capturing the public imagination and reflecting a new Britain, the events of 2012—specifically the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Summer Olympics—proved a resounding success. They served to strike a balance between newer postmodern and post-imperial sensibilities and the traditional

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[6] Philippa Carling and Antony Seely, "The Millennium Dome," *House of Commons Research Paper* 98/32, Business and Transport Section, House of Commons Library, March 12, 1998.

[7] Ibid. This background paper compiled for Members of Parliament on the Dome project devotes several pages to Members' concerns about the lack of clarity in terms of the actual attractions within the Dome once it opened to the public.

[8] For a detailed breakdown on costs associated with the Dome project, see: "The Millennium Dome: Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, Executive Summary," National Audit Office, November 9, 2000, https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-millennium-dome/

[9] While the British media almost universally savaged the Dome project, I intend to highlight those left-leaning media institutions, especially *The Guardian* and *The Independent* newspapers, which generally held more support and sympathy for the Blair project than right-leaning media institutions. The criticism from such left-leaning media outlets, therefore, suggests both cross-spectrum disillusionment with the Dome project as well as the extent of the Dome's failure to advance New Labour ideals.

[10] "Last days of the dome," *The Guardian*, December 28, 2000, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/dec/29/dome.guardianleaders

elements of the British spectacle as a reflection of British values and traditions. The Diamond Jubilee, itself an extension of an ongoing rehabilitation effort by the House of Windsor after the death of Diana, affirmed the vitality of a remodeled Royal Family with glowing press reviews and widespread public participation at its events. Mirroring the Royal Family's return to prominence, the eyes of the world turned to London to see how post-imperial Britain would handle the global spotlight as host of the Summer Olympic Games in London. In light of the colossal failure of the millennium celebrations, it remained an open question as to whether or not Britons held a clear enough sense of their own national identity to plan an event about contemporary meaning and identity in British life, let alone whether they knew how to share any such reflection with the world. Yet Britain passed the test, conveying through the Olympic Opening Ceremonies what one international commentator called "a nation secure in its own post-empire identity, whatever that actually is.… [N]either a nostalgic sweep through the past nor a bold vision of a brave new future. Rather … a sometimes slightly insane portrait of a country that has changed almost beyond measure since the last time it hosted the Games, in the grim postwar summer of 1948."[11] The Olympics, therefore, acted as a kind of focusing agent, proving not just to the world but to Britons themselves that the nation had finally come to grips with its legacy of Empire and its new future as an internationally diminished, and perhaps even unremarkable, nation state. In this sense, the events of 2012 renewed and updated the British spectacle as a familiar reflection of both Britain's historical identity and of contemporary British life.

Ultimately, the major public events of 1997-2012 allowed Britain the opportunity, painfully at first, more comfortably over time, to reveal its new post-imperial identity to the wider world, and also to Britons themselves. Whereas the millennium celebrations displayed a

[11] Lyall, *The New York Times*, "A Five-Ring Opening Ceremony," July 27, 2012.

nation still uncertain in its postmodern, inward-looking gaze, the events of 2012 revealed a country finally embracing a new kind of post-imperial Britishness. The events of 2012 also presented a nation that remained willing, even eager, to continue to showcase itself by sharing its beliefs, values, and culture through the formula of the grand spectacle. Thus, even as the metanarrative of contemporary British history slowly evolves away from empire, the pomp and ceremony so long a part of public British life remains a constant, even expected, ongoing aspect of national identity.

Heading into the 1997 General Election, the Labour Party, relegated to the wilderness during the Thatcher years, rebranded itself as a viable alternative to Conservative rule with a one-word pledge: "new." Prior to the General Election, the Labour Party released a manifesto entitled: "New Labour, New Life for Britain." [12] The manifesto represented a move to the center; it included centrist pledges on education, crime, health, jobs, and economic stability.[13] The move to the center, however, did not just represent a shift in rhetoric or political positioning; New Labour deliberately backed away from the party's socialist roots.[14] While New Labour's centrism did not offer up a dramatic break with the Thatcher era's turn to the right, it did present a noticeably different tone for the political arena. Whereas Thatcherism gave to Britain the tough-love policies of an "Iron Lady," Blair's New Labour project, infused with all the boyish,

[12] For a history of the Labour Party's electoral results, see: https://www.labour.org.uk/historyofthelabourparty3
[13] Ibid.
[14] John Gray, "Blair's Project in Retrospect," *International Affairs* 80, no. 1 (January, 2004), 39. Gray points out that Blair's party ostensibly agreed to "advance a post-Thatcherite model of British modernization—and in doing so dish the Tories." In other words, Blair hoped that by accepting key elements of Thatcher's aggressive free-market economic program—the best parts—he would then be able to move past the economic debates the Labour Party had lost for nearly two decades, all the while offering up a new kind of politically palatable "social cohesion," to use Gray's phrase, that Thatcher's brutal policymaking had stripped from British life. While the 1996 New Labour manifesto did indeed offer such a model, Gray quite astutely contends that "in fact, under Blair's leadership, New Labour has turned out to be not much a successor to Thatcherism as a continuation of it.… Blair's government has renewed the Thatcherite project of reshaping autonomous social institutions as bureaucratic replicas of business enterprises."

smiling enthusiasm that Tony could muster, promised to soften the hard edges of reform.[15] New Labour coasted to a huge political victory on election night with a Commons majority of over 150 seats and with voters clearly embracing Blair's vision as a needed change and a breath of fresh air.[16] As the left-leaning *Guardian* editorialized the next day: "Things can only get better."[17]

The New Labour program connected with voters in a way that few other Labour campaigns managed. As the *Independent* pointed out after the election results became apparent, "the Conservatives [had] held office for 59 of the 79 years since the modern party system emerged in 1918."[18] In the face of such historical headwinds, the 1997 election certainly offered up a transformative model for effective political communication. The New Labour rebranding also came at a time when other "new" forces dominated the *zeitgeist*; namely, the emergence of the internet and the pending calendar transition to a new millennium. Yet even as these developing events took hold of the popular and political imagination, an incident widely viewed as an international tragedy struck: the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. The resulting public response to Diana's death served to reshape further national sentiment about government. It also triggered a popular reevaluation of the ongoing public interest associated with maintaining a

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[15] Anthony Bevins, "Election '97: Blair's Britain is Born," *The Independent,* May 2, 1997, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/election-97-blairs-britain-is-born-1259145.html. From the *Independent's* article on the election results: "With his 44th birthday next Tuesday, Mr Blair will become the youngest prime minister for more than 100 years. He has promised to "make Britain better" and to deliver a 10-point package of reforms on central issues of voter concern like health, education, crime, and jobs. He has also said that he wants to offer the country a "new" politics, devoid of the old ideological battles, for the new millennium. The Labour campaign manager, Peter Mandelson, told BBC1: 'It was the transformation, the rebirth of the Labour Party over the last two or three years that finally clinched it for people.'"

[16] Anthony Bevins, "election '97: Blair Sweeps to Victory," *The Independent*, May 2, 1997, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/election-97-blair-sweeps-to-victory-1259144.html

[17] Michael White, "Things can only get better," *The Guardian*, May 2, 1997, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/feb/19/featuresreviews.guardianreview12.; The *Telegraph* on the other hand, with an unbroken record of supporting the Tories in every election cycle dating back to 1945, resolutely believed things would get worse under Blair and Labour. For a complete breakdown on newspaper support in British General Elections, see: Katy Stoddard, "Newspaper support in UK general elections," *The Guardian*, May 4, 2010, http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/may/04/general-election-newspaper-support.

[18] Bevins, "election '97: Blair Sweeps to Victory," May 2, 1997.

constitutional monarchy.

Few figures in contemporary British history proved more popular, or more controversial, than Diana, Princess of Wales. A towering media figure, Diana became one of the world's most recognizable figures after her marriage to Prince Charles, the future King of Great Britain. She combined a new sense of fashion and media savvy with a series of populist outreach campaigns. Diana's persona also came to represent a generational rupture within the institution of monarchy itself; she displayed little of the characteristic Windsor reserve in public, and her open demeanor sometimes stood in sharp contrast with that of both her husband and the Queen. When Charles and Diana separated, an all-out public relations war erupted between the two parties with allegations of adultery airing on primetime British television.[19] Yet in spite of the war between the Windsors, Diana iconic image did not dissipate. To a large extent, she wrested away from the Royal Family the public face of monarchy, presenting to the British people an alternative model for how the ancient institution might behave. Her unexpected death after a car chase with paparazzi in Paris on August 30, 1997 stunned the world. Moreover, it shook British national confidence in a profound way. As one writer noted: "The public life of Diana Spencer was bound at two ends by spectacle: her marriage and her funeral."[20] The funeral spectacle became an occasion of unusually high public drama for Britain.

Histrionics is a characteristic seldom associated with the British people. Largely thanks to the symbolic resolve embodied by famous Britons such as Elizabeth I, the Lord Admiral Horatio Nelson, and Sir Winston Churchill, popular conceptions of British national identity often

[19] For a complete transcript of the BBC television interview in which Princess Diana famously declared "Well, there were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded," see the BBC's archived database: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/politics97/diana/panorama.html

[20] Marguerite Helmers, "Media, Discourse, and the Public Sphere: Electronic Memorials to Diana, Princess of Wales," *College English* 63, no. 4 (March, 2001), 437.

remain tied to exemplars of defiance and noble fortitude during challenging times. The stern morality of the Victorians, synonymous with the British Empire at its height, also undergirded the perception of Britons as an emotionally reserved people. Yet upon hearing the news of Princess Diana's death, millions of Britons entered into a period of very public grieving. [21] While the Blair government moved quickly to respond to the massive outpouring of grief by famously declaring Diana "the People's Princess," the Royal Family, perhaps indifferent after the years of infighting with Diana, attempted to remain above the public response even as they themselves became the subject of widespread criticism.[22]

Refusing to return to London from the Queen's estate at Balmoral in Scotland to lead the national mourning, the Royals justified their absence from public life at the time as needed space for family grieving.[23] The press, catching the mood of the public, savaged the Royals, including the Queen personally (Fig. 6.1). Finally, the Queen relented to the public pressure and returned to London to lead the national grieving. Addressing the nation on the eve of Diana's funeral, the Queen declared: "I hope that tomorrow we can all, wherever we are, join in expressing our grief at Diana's loss, and gratitude for her all-too-short life. It is a chance to show to the whole world

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[21] Jonathan Freedland, "A moment of madness?," *The Guardian,* August 13, 2007, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/aug/13/britishidentity.monarchy. As the tenth anniversary of Diana's death approached, the *Guardian* ran a retrospective editorial about the occasion which recalled the scene with some embarrassment: "It has become an embarrassing memory, like a mawkish, self-pitying teenage entry in a diary. We cringe to think of it. It is our collective moment of madness, a week when somehow we lost our grip. A decade on, we look back and wonder what came over us."

[22] Michael Streeter, "The Queen Bows to Her Subjects," *The Independent*, September 5, 1997, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/the-queen-bows-to-her-subjects-1237450.html; *The Sun*, Headline: "Where Is Our Queen? Where Is Her Flag?," September 4, 1997.

[23] Warren Hoge, "Responding to Britain's Sorrow, Queen Will Address the Nation," *The New York Times,* September 5, 1997, http://www.nytimes.com/1997/09/05/world/responding-to-britain-s-sorrow-queen-will-address-the-nation.html. Several days after the death of Diana, the Royal Family's refusal to publicly grieve generated international commentary. *The New York Times* ran the statement released by the press spokesman, Geoffrey Crawford, on behalf of the Royal Family justifying their absence from public grieving: "The royal family have been hurt by suggestions that they are indifferent to the country's sorrow at the tragic death of the Princess of Wales … The Princess was a much loved national figure, but she was also a mother whose sons miss her deeply," the Palace statement continued. "Prince William and Prince Harry themselves want to be with their father and grandparents at this time in the quiet haven of Balmoral. As their grandmother, the Queen is helping the Princes to come to terms with their loss."

the British nation united in grief and respect."[24] In spite of the Queen finally bowing to public pressure and showing some emotionality, the Royal Family themselves became an

Fig. 6.1. *Tabloid Headlines from September 4, 1997*.[25]

unflattering part of the retrospective narrative on Diana as a result of their slow response to public sentiment.[26] More significantly, the public criticism of the Royal Family revealed that the Windsors had failed to realize that Diana's brand of populist leadership-by-example resonated strongly in the late-1990s public sphere.

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[24] "The Queen's Message," Buckingham Palace, London, September 5, 1997, http://www.royal.gov.uk/HistoryoftheMonarchy/TheHouseofWindsorfrom1952/DianaPrincessofWales/TheQueensmessage.aspx

[25] Dan Balz, "Queen Orders Flag at Half-Staff at Palace," *The Washington Post*, September 5, 1997, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/diana/stories/london0905.htm

[26] Glyn Davies to Kristen Cicio, "Update from London/Bradtke," Clinton Presidential Records, NSC Emails, September 4, 1997, http://www.clintonlibrary.gov/assets/storage/ResearchDigitalLibrary/formerlywithheld/batch2/2006-1854-S.pdf; Peter Foster, "Hillary Clinton warned over 'nasty' palace politics at Diana funeral: New documents from the Clinton presidency bring back memories of the Spice Girls, Cool Britannia and the travails of the Royal Family after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 14, 2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/us-politics/10699553/Hillary-Clinton-warned-over-nasty-palace-politics-at-Diana-funeral.html. The public political situation over the Royal Family's role in the public mourning over Diana also extended, apparently, to bitter internal political fighting. Then First Lady of the United States, Hillary Clinton, received warnings to avoid public comments when she attended Diana's funeral in order to stay out of "nasty" internal British political disputes.

The backlash against the Royal Family reflected a certain institutional sclerosis that had come to define the aloof Windsors, but it also came about as a reflection that the Windsors no longer embodied memory and meaning in Britain in the way that they once had. Looking back on the events surrounding Diana's death ten years after the fact, the *Guardian* declared:

> As only a great public occasion can, the Diana event let us see what Britain now looked like.… Many of the political themes that would dominate for the next decade could draw upon that week for their legitimacy. Whether it was a more relaxed attitude to gay rights, attempts to make Britain more ethnically inclusive or an assumption that the age of deference was over, much was predicated on what had been witnessed after Diana's death. And the politics did not end there. For one thing, Tony Blair added to the electoral mandate he had gained on May 1 a kind of emotional mandate, forging a bond with the nation that Sunday morning when he correctly intuited the public reaction to the death of the princess—a connection that kept him riding high until the Iraq war [2003].[27]

In other words, the sort of social anthropology on display during the Diana event revealed the extent to which the iconic Diana reflected the changing social realities of the "new" Britain.

Through ritualistically examining the person of Diana via her death and funeral, Britons discovered something core to their own collective values and identity. The emotional reaction to Diana's death, the overwhelming outpouring of grief, suggests that this common identification did not begin as a retrospective; rather, Diana had generated an inward-looking popular reflection for many years. Diana's death served to make what she embodied into a broader, even more powerful iconography. As one social anthropologist put it:

> Diana, however, belongs to a very different category; she is very much real and authentic precisely because she is perceived as not being created by the media or the public, whose attention she antecedes and whom she transcends, in that her status derived from her claims to royalty, which was divinely bestowed at her marriage and which conferred on her all the relevant representational and reflective symbolic privileges.[28]

Of course, her populist attitudes and seemingly authentic behavior after her marriage also

[27] Freedland, "A moment of madness?," *The Guardian,* August 13, 2007.
[28] Watson, "'Born a Lady, Became a Princess, Died a Saint,'" 5.

mattered a great deal. Diana cultivated her popularity, but it was genuinely bestowed upon her by popular acclaim in response to her widely-perceived authenticity as a person. As such, Blair's comment that Diana was "the People's Princess" seems accurate, and with her death the values that she embodied and that Britons shared transferred away from the Royal Family and became entangled in the broader socio-political move towards a more introspective, post-modern "new" Britain. The events of 1997, therefore, signaled that an era of change was beginning in earnest. By historical circumstance, the coming of New Britain coincided with the dawning of a new millennium.

Those invested in seeing through the vision for a New Britain embraced, almost by political necessity, the pending calendar arrival of a new millennium as an occasion for celebrating the solidification of the post-imperial, post-modern era. After all, the passage from one millennium to the next represents one of the most powerful symbolic transitions possible from one era to another. For politicians, such an opportunity begged for a carefully choreographed public celebration and spectacle; the potential political rewards for successfully staging such an occasion proved too great to ignore. The Blair government was no exception to the rule. With the Tories badly damaged by the recent election, and with the House of Windsor still reeling from the backlash over Diana's death, it fell to New Labour to not only make the arrangements for ushering in the new millennium, but to establish a lasting popular vision for the occasion. Further, the millennium celebrations suggested an opportunity for Britons to connect with a set of new ideals and institutions that optimistically represented a more inclusive future. Yet the emergence of New Labour and the events surrounding Diana's death suggested the makings of a soft public evolution, not a bloody revolution towards public institutions, national

values, and cultural identity.[29] The Tories were banished by the voters, not vanquished; the Queen rebuked by her subjects, not beheaded. Moreover, New Labour's centrist vision for a New Britain veered well from the beaten path when it came to British ceremonial precedents, especially since so many grand British spectacles in the past referenced imperial triumph. Perhaps inevitably, therefore, the millennium celebrations, underpinned as they were by just as many naïve hopes as realistic sociological reflections, turned into a national convocation without genuine expression or meaning.

At the center of Britain's millennium celebrations stood the Millennium Dome (Fig. 6.2), a nascent project undertaken by the Conservative government that New Labour inherited with its election victory.[30] According to an extensive research report on the Dome presented to Members of the House of Commons:

> The Millennium Dome is the centrepiece of the exhibition to be held in Greenwich in the year 2000 celebrating the millennium. The project is expected to cost £758 million in total, of which £399 million will be provided by a grant from the Millennium Commission - one of the five distributors of the proceeds from the National Lottery. In June 1997 the Labour Government reaffirmed its support for the Greenwich Exhibition, and Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio, was given overall responsibility for the project. Twelve million people are expected to visit the exhibition during its lifetime (31 December 1999 to 31 December 2000).[31]

Though it represented the "centerpiece" of the millennium celebrations, the thematic purpose of the Dome itself proved more challenging to ascertain. News reports emerged after the Dome struggles became public which suggested that New Labour had trouble finding consensus for the

[29] Freedland, "A moment of madness?," *The Guardian,* August 13, 2007.
[30] Gaby Hinsliff, Vanessa Thorpe, and Burhan Wazir, "The laughing stock of the Millennium," *The Guardian,* "May 27, 2000, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/may/28/dome.burhanwazir
[31] Carling and Seely, "The Millennium Dome," *House of Commons Research Paper* 98/32, March 12, 1998.

Fig. 6.2 *The Millennium Dome*[32]

purpose of the project.[33] Some ministers supported turning the Dome into a smaller event while others supported a more educational program.[34] Whether the debates signaled a carefully considered internal dialogue over the Dome's programming or, more likely, an indecisive power struggle over the pressing need to actualize a pre-existing, economically significant project remains a subject of tedious political debate more so than a matter for urgent historical investigation. Rather, the final decision to present the project as a staged reflection of the Blairite version of a new Britain seems the more significant aspect of the Dome project. Tony

[32] Image located at: http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/01925/dome_1925235i.jpg
[33] Hinsliff, Thorpe, and Wazir, "The laughing stock of the Millennium," *The Guardian,* May 27, 2000. Reports such as this scathing *Guardian* indictment gave nearly blow-by-blow rundowns on the backbiting in government after it became apparent that the Dome represented a colossal failure. Witness the following excerpt: "At the birth of the Dome, the then Chancellor, Ken Clarke, was privately sceptical, happy to wish his old ally Michael Heseltine's scheme well - as long as Treasury money was not involved. His reservations were then shared by shadow chancellor Gordon Brown who argued at a series of tense pre-election meetings in the party's Millbank headquarters that the Dome's budget was unconvincing and its themes too vague. He favoured a series of new super-libraries or museums instead, while shadow culture minister Chris Smith wanted something smaller, less elaborate and more educational. Even Lord Falconer now concedes that the original business plan on which profitability was pinned was 'flawed' and 'over-optimistic'. Conventional wisdom paints Mr Prescott as the fairy godfather who persuaded a wavering Tony Blair to adopt the Dome shortly after the 1997 election, thundering at the Prime Minister: 'If we can't make this work, we're not much of a Government.'" It seems clear that the *Guardian* had little difficulty obtaining off the record interviews with ministers eager to point fingers at others rather than take the blame for themselves over the lack of vision for the overall project.
[34] Ibid.

Blair, speaking at the Dome prior to its opening, displayed utter confidence in the government's vision for the project: "It will last for generations to come. It will not be torn down, it will be a lasting asset for the country."[35] Blair promised more than he delivered.

A few years after his disgraced resignation as the main "creative director" of the Millennium Dome project, Stephen Bayley, armed with more than a few axes to grind, pointed at the design of the "Tent" and the Blairite vision for the project as the beginning of the Dome's downfall:

> [I]t was not an intelligent design, even if it was an impressive structure. It produced a space so vast it hobbled the imagination of those charged with filling it. Choose your own tabloid imagery: the Eiffel Tower, laid on its side, would sit comfortably in the Tent. There are the 18,000 customary double-decker buses. Or 12 football pitches … [B]ut New Labour abhorred a vacuum so it was filled with patronising rubbish. And when that was cleared away, it was left in pitiable desuetude.… Tony Blair said the Tent would be on the first page of his second manifesto, one of many claims later economised. Instead it became an embarrassment, more an annoying pustule than an imperious duomo.[36]

Bayley's "patronizing rubbish," the thematic content of the Dome, consisted of a central staging area for a show to introduce the Dome experience, and various "zones" for patrons to explore afterwards (Fig 6.3).[37] The Dome's zones, each featuring several sponsored attractions, centered around three major themes: "Who We Are," "What We Do," and "Where We Live."[38] For example, in the "Who We Are" zone, ninety-foot sculptures "reverberated" to a heartbeat pulse at 120 beats per minute.[39] Another exhibition in the "Explore Area" of the same "Who We Are" zone allowed visitors, somewhat strangely, to manipulate digitally an image of Margaret

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[35] "Blair hails 'incredible' dome," *The Guardian*, December 14, 1999.
[36] "A decade on… the Dome finally works," *The Observer*, June 23, 2007, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jun/24/dome.architecture
[37] Carling and Seely, "The Millennium Dome," *House of Commons Research Paper* 98/32, March 12, 1998, 47.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Nicholas Watt, "Blair goes to bask in Dome's futurist glories," *The Guardian*, December 14, 1999, http://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/dec/15/millennium.uk1.

Thatcher's face.[40] As a Dome spokesperson explained: "People can shape Mrs Thatcher's face as they like. They can make her look like a modern beauty or they can give her a pre-Raphaelite look."[41] Dome visitors had the opportunity to redraw, quite literally, the face of the recent political past. Indeed, the use of such symbolic displays loosely arranged around an amorphous thematic structure provided a form of definition for the Dome experience. That definition, in turn, seemed to reveal a largely diffuse, post-national take on answering the broader questions

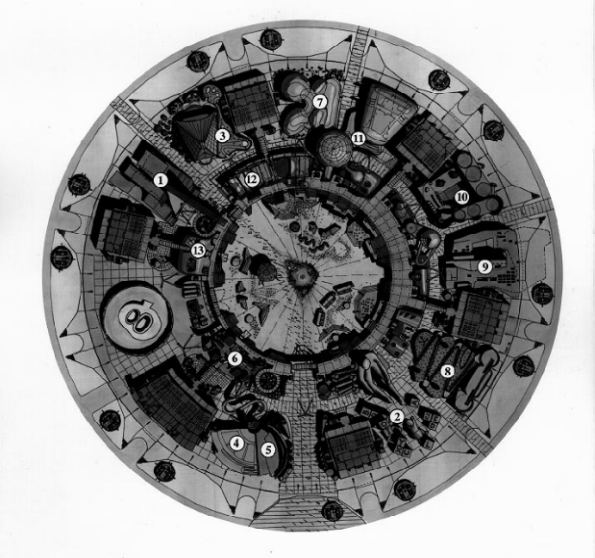

Fig. 6.3 *Interior "Zones" of the Millennium Dome: "The Millennium Experience"*[42]

posed by the zone themes. Nevertheless, the instantiation of the project demonstrated the timeless problem of putting theory to practice.

Further symbolizing the failure of the Dome project to match its idealism with experience, the nondescript, commercially-sponsored zones inside the Dome proved troublesome

[40] "Blair hails 'incredible' dome," *The Guardian*, December 14, 1999.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Carling and Seely, "The Millennium Dome," *House of Commons Research Paper* 98/32, March 12, 1998, 49.

to stage. As Jennifer Page related after her dismissal as the Chief Executive of the Dome's "New Millennium Experience":

> We had very quickly to earn respect from our stakeholders, while struggling with the fact that we could not satisfy all their requirements. The sponsor representatives and the millennium commission staff and the politicians and civil servants made up a wider circle of essential participants. At times, the different business cultures could get in the way … We struggled to balance the overall coherence of the dome while each area and sponsor kept their individuality and got value for money. We obviously did not satisfy everyone all the time. Increasingly, sponsors began to act together to exert pressure on the company.[43]

In light of such competing governmental and commercial interests, the Dome emerged as a peculiar hybrid between theme park, interactive museum, and mall. Whereas the Millennium Commission had once declared the Dome "will be London's answer to the Eiffel Tower," the artistic director of the Salzburg Festival sniffed, "A triumph of insignificance. Las Vegas does this sort of thing much better."[44] The British press, meanwhile, offered up perhaps the most scathing and apt comparison of them all: "Not so much the millennium's Crystal Palace, more a post-modern hedgehog."[45] Indeed, the Blairite postmodernity of the Dome, both in terms of its aesthetics and content, provided some genuine hindrances to its overall performativity; however, it remains a paradoxical fact that such elements of postmodernity simultaneously and authentically reflected the broader socio-political shift away from Britain's imperial past.

Despite the critical backlash, the design and content the Millennium Dome defined its era in similar ways to how the Great Exhibition of 1851, the most famous of all British exhibitions, defined the mid-Victorians. The Great Exhibition featured the "Works of Industry of All Nations," which befitted Britain's industrial and imperial rise in the nineteenth century. Further,

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[43] Jennifer Page, "My crown of thorns," *The Guardian,* May 4, 2000, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/may/04/dome.millennium1

[44] "A decade on… the Dome finally works," *The Observer*, June 23, 2007, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jun/24/dome.architecture

[45] Ibid.

the Exhibition's Crystal Palace, with its steel and glass, effectively symbolized the emergence of the new industrialization. The Millennium Dome, while unpopular by comparison, [46] also typified the *zeitgeist* of 1990s Britain: it actualized a deliberately anodyne and highly commercialized rumination on the diversity of life, meaning, and belief in modern Britain. Yet even with the sanitized commercialism of the Blairite turn towards the political and social center, such attempts to transform the public sphere inevitably bring about hermeneutics of discontinuity with the past. Even the Dome's grand opening, which took place on Millennium Eve, signaled the awkwardness inherent in attempting to publicly reconcile the legacy of past exhibitionism in Britain with the new trends. Shortly after midnight, Tony Blair linked hands with the Queen and together they attempted to sing "Auld Lang Syne" to bring in the New Year (Fig. 6.4). The

Fig. 6.4. *Prince Philip, the Queen and the Blairs singing Auld Lang Syne at the [Dome's] opening*[47]

pictures of the occasion broadcast not just the generational divide between the Monarch and her subjects, but also the rupture between those representing the tradition-bound institutions of the

[46] The Millennium Dome avoided at least one great failing of the Great Exhibition. The Dome project did not deliberately lord British superiority over "Oriental" peoples and cultures.
[47] Richard Brooks, "Queen and 'ashen-faced' Blair in Millennium Dome bomb alert," *The Times*, http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/article370841.ece. Photograph attributed to Peter Nicholls.

state and Blair's "Cool Britannia" project. Ironically, the Queen's confusion over the first Blairite spectacle of the new millennium, while typical of the House of Windsor's overall remove from popular culture up to that point, proved indicative of the public's reaction to the Dome as well.

Almost immediately, attendance at the Dome failed to meet expectations. Official government estimates suggested that some twelve million visitors would come to the Dome, but roughly half that number actually visited.[48] The lack of attendance nearly caused the entire project to go bankrupt.[49] According to the National Audit Office report on the Dome, "as is well known, the Company has experienced severe financial difficulties during the year of operation … Sponsorship income has been received more slowly than the Company had expected."[50] Large cash infusions from the government followed to keep the project afloat, but the trajectory of the Dome's failure became painfully clear just a few months into its existence.[51] Tony Blair, facing the reality of the situation, accepted responsibility for the Dome's failure:

> It's not been the runaway success we had hoped but neither has it been the disaster that's been portrayed in some parts of the media. What I'm saying is that probably, if I had known then what I know now about governments trying to run a visitor attraction, it was too ambitious. These things do take time to settle down but there's something else to put on the other side of the balance sheet.[52]

For the New Labour, the Dome's failure represented necessitated a rebranding. Whereas the Dome once symbolized "a triumph of confidence over cynicism, boldness over blandness,

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[48] "Dome 'shambles' criticized by audit office," *The Guardian*, November 9, 2000, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/nov/09/dome

[49] Lucy Tobin, "Millennium Dome: The white elephant that learnt to fly," *The Independent*, September 20, 2012, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/millennium-dome-the-white-elephant-that-learnt-to-fly-8157301.html

[50] "The Millennium Dome: Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, Executive Summary," National Audit Office, U.K., November 9, 2000, https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-millennium-dome/

[51] Ibid. From the National Audit Office report on the Dome: "In the face of the severe shortfall in the Company's revenue, during the year 2000 the Millennium Commission has approved four further grants totaling £179 million."

[52] George Jones, "Blair not sorry for Dome flop," *The Telegraph*, September 25, 2000, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1356677/Blair-not-sorry-for-Dome-flop.html

excellence over mediocrity," it now stood as a "visitor attraction."[53] While moves to rebrand political failures normally suggest politics as usual, Blair's excuses for the shortcomings of the Dome project hold a grain of truth. Spectacles of empire appeal to a concentrated form of nationalism and patriotism. The post-imperial Millennium Dome appealed to a diffuse set of evolving values. At the time of the Great Exhibition, the British socio-political gaze looked outward to an ever-expanding empire. When that same socio-political gaze turned inward, it beheld the rapid change of the Industrial Revolution. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, major spectacles of Britishness continued this formula of engaging external affairs and assessing matters of internal strength and security. By contrast, the new Millennium scene featured little to no external focus, while the increasingly inward-looking gaze of British politics reflected the post-imperial diversification of British culture, society, and values. This postmodern turn did not occur overnight. While the twin events of 1997—the rise of New Labour and the death of Diana—brought to the fore the beginnings of a broader sociological shift in Britain away from the old imperial models, there was no rapid, massive societal revolution under way by 2000. Perhaps because of this gradual sociological coming to terms with the post-imperial world, Britons simply did not know enough about who they were anymore to stage a spectacle of Britishness. As one opinion columnist put it to a bewildered readership: "Miles of verbiage and armies of consultants, up to the very millennial moment, addressed the question of content and purpose, but none was able to improve on [one government official's] best shot: 'It's going to be quite wonderful but don't ask me how'. They still can't. Made manifest before our eyes, the dome declared its irretrievable emptiness."[54]

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[53] "Blair hails 'incredible' dome," *The Guardian*, December 14, 1999.
[54] Hugo Young, "The folly built by our leaders that makes fools of us all," *The Guardian*, May 23, 2000, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/may/23/dome.comment1. The government minister in question was Michael

To some extent, the Dome's great failure suggests that the preexisting metamessage of the British ceremonial, the expression of a national identity based upon imperial ambition and triumph, had finally succumbed to the historical realities of the twentieth century. Seeing as though Britain no longer maintained an empire, the continuing celebration of one no longer sufficed. The Dome, with its Blairite vision for the future of Britain, attempted to refocus the national discourse towards both the health and happiness of the individual and the benefits of a more diverse, pluralistic, and welcoming society. While this reorientation made sense on a number of levels, it failed to take into account the ways in which the more conservative approach to staging grand national convocations—the appeals to patriotism, militarism, industry, commerce, jingoism, British exceptionalism, and so forth—had become enshrined in the discourse. The Millennium Dome never succeeded as a worthy successor to the legacy of the Great Exhibition in large part because it did not attempt to build upon certain key features of the Great Exhibition. Nor did the Dome attempt to build upon the legacy of imperial convocations established in the aftermath of the Great Exhibition's success. Indeed, only the upheavals caused by the World Wars, and reflected in the postwar memorial movements, interrupted the idea of the grand national convocation as something permanently triumphalist. The polite naval gazing inherent to the Dome project, while presented with only the best of (political) intentions, simply did not tell a story which appealed to glory. Combined with utter mismanagement on a day-to-day basis, this failure of narrative led to a collapse of support for the entire project. In all likelihood, some counterfactual notion likely exists that the collapse of the Dome project could have brought about the collapse of the national spectacle as an institution of Britishness. Such a collapse did not, however, occur. In fact, in the years following the Dome debacle, the national

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Heseltine, one of the early Conservative proponents of the Dome. His comments now echo as an early warning about the entire Dome project, from Tory inception to New Labour ownership.

spectacle as an institution of Britishness gained new life through the rejuvenation of the Royal Family in the public eye, and also by means of a more subtle approach to the ways in which the contemporary postmodern and post-imperial environment reflect upon the recent past.

Restoring the British popular ceremonial to the center of the national imagination, for better or worse, required moving beyond the "irretrievable emptiness" of the Millennium Dome, not to mention the sometimes hollow postmodern sentiments of New Labour. Two grand national convocations fulfilled this task: the popular reconciliation between the House of Windsor and the British people and the return of the Olympic Games to London. While critics of the British Monarchy hold plenty of ammunition—they often claim that the House of Windsor sponges off the taxpayer, providing little but perpetuating a great deal of class division—the Royal Family, more so than any other institution, remains at the heart of the British ceremonial tradition. The "king's two bodies," to use a famous phrase, provides a human face to the affairs of state within the public sphere.[55] The rupture between the House of Windsor and ordinary Britons in the aftermath of Diana's death, as well as the emerging contrasts between the Windsor's tradition-minded performativity and new postmodern sensibilities that took hold in the wake of 1997, effectively exiled the Monarchy from successfully embodying its performative role in popular life. Slowly but surely, however, the public relations rehabilitation of the Windsors began. After a series of events slowly started to return the Windsors to their traditional place at the heart of national ceremonies, namely the heartfelt tributes to the Queen Mother upon her passing and the successful celebrations for the Queen's Golden Jubilee (both in 2002), the Windsors found a coda to the Diana saga when her eldest son, Prince William, married a commoner, Kate Middleton, in another blockbuster Royal Wedding. William and Kate's 2011

[55] See: Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

marriage seemed to symbolically renew Diana's legacy of bringing a more down-to-earth approach to monarchy. Meanwhile, the Queen was fast becoming a beloved grandmotherly figure to the nation in her advancing years, which placed both her and her family in a very favorable position as the state prepared to honor her sixty years of national service.[56]

Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee, only the second in history after Victoria's in 1897, naturally took on a very different tone than the deliberately militant late-Victorian affair. Yet while the emphasis and the scale of Elizabeth's Jubilee did not match Victoria's, the public response to Elizabeth's celebrations easily matched the emotional support lent to Victoria. Even amongst some critical Republicans, recognition of the Queen's sixty years of service seemed to verify Elizabeth's unique status:

> In her duties, what she represents is not herself (because she has kept that to herself), but the state. She is the symbol of her country because she is the symbol of nothing else, and certainly not any personal hobby horses. This may seem to be damning her with faint praise, but her insistent self-effacement in public is her greatest quality. It is hard, even for a proto-republican, not to feel admiration, and even, in some absurd way, pride at a job done so well for so long. As genetic accidents go, Elizabeth II has been for Britain about as happy a one as the lottery of history is ever likely to allow. Can we be that lucky again?[57]

While winning over such begrudging critical voices represented a major triumph for the Queen, the genuine intention behind any massive public spectacle surely remains to involve not the critics but the masses. On this account, Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee represented the culmination of public acclaim for not only her life's work but for the last leg of the triumphant return for the Windsors to the heart of British national identity following the years of rupture with the public in the late 1990s.

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[56] "Republicans stage protest at Queen's diamond jubilee," *The Guardian*, June 3, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/jun/03/republicans-stage-protest-queens-diamond-jubilee

[57] David Randall, "The Queen, and her secret," *The Independent*, June 3, 2012, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/the-queen-and-her-secret-7813426.html

As for the particulars of the Diamond Jubilee, for four days at the start of June, 2012 Britons enjoyed a prolonged national holiday in the Queen's name. The highlights of Jubilee weekend included a massive boating pageant along the Thames, a free pop concert and fireworks on the Mall in front of Buckingham Palace, and a service of national thanksgiving in St. Paul's Cathedral.[58] Of course, the customary parade through the streets of London and the Royal Family's appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace concluded the events, and the crowds which gathered in front of the Palace affirmed the public outpouring of support for the Queen (Fig. 6.5). Britons filled the Mall, stretching all the way from the gates of Buckingham Palace to Admiralty Arch and then overflowing into the surrounding parks. A similar scene greeted the

Fig. 6.5. *Crowds in front of Buckingham Palace for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations*, June 4, 2012.[59]

[58]For additional details of the Jubilee events, see: https://www.royal.gov.uk/HMTheQueen/TheQueenandspecialanniversaries/TheQueensDiamondJubilee2012/TheQueensDiamondJubilee2012.aspx

[59] Photo hosted by: http://www.zimbio.com/pictures/eOwgzkdNjql/Diamond+Jubilee+Carriage+Procession+Balcony/VP_jdej_r5M

river pageant earlier in the week, with massive crowds lining the Thames. Breathless television and newspaper commentary captured the occasion, providing the Royal Family with the kind of free publicity that elected public officials spend their entire careers hoping to attain. Moreover, the ceremonial aspects of the 2012 Diamond Jubilee reflected a transformed Monarchy in many ways, which partly accounts for the popular response. The pre-Diana House of Windsor did not happily tolerate pop concerts, boating pageants, and the like at the expense of time-honored Royal ceremonial traditions. Indeed, the pre-Diana distance between the Queen and her subjects reinforced an icy aloofness. The success of the Diamond Jubilee, and in fact the more muted successes of Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee before it, showcased how the Royal ceremonial had evolved to blend popular outreach with the historical pomp and ceremony of traditional Royal spectacles. Gone was the aloofness. In its place, the Diamond Jubilee featured a smiling grandmother celebrating the occasion with her extended family of subjects. It likely was not as Elizabeth wished to celebrate the occasion; rather, it was as her subjects wished to celebrate it.[60] In return, the satiated public doted on the Queen with nearly universal affection.

The importance of the House of Windsor's return to prominence in the shaping of popular imagination also signaled the return of the Royals as a conscious and unconscious force for linking the past with the present in the popular memory. The workmanlike attitude of the Queen demonstrated her deep devotion to duty, but it took the influence of Diana, and the public's reaction to her ways, to finally force the Royal Family, and the Queen in particular, to

[60] Gordon Rayner, "The Queen's Diamond Jubilee: Happy and glorious, the river Queen," *The Telegraph*, June 3, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/the_queens_diamond_jubilee/9309856/The-Queens-Diamond-Jubilee-Happy-and-glorious-the-river-Queen.html. Some suggestion emerged ahead of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, particularly from the Queen's cousin, Margaret Rhodes, that Her Majesty was not much enamored with the Thames River Pageant portion of the celebrations. As the *Telegraph*, the conservative and faithfully royalist publication, reported: "The Queen's cousin, Margaret Rhodes, had claimed the monarch 'slightly dreaded' the flotilla, perhaps following a bumpy trip upriver during her Silver Jubilee, and sick bags were reportedly on board just in case."

accept a more populist touch. By slowly accepting the lessons of Diana's populism, the Queen began ameliorating the hard divisions between duty and accessibility long present in the Royal Family's public role. More importantly, the Queen effectively bridged some of the class divisions between the Monarchy and its subjects that had remained firmly in place even as the old Victorian and imperial order gave way to the new modern and postmodern realities. Such a shift enabled the Royal Family to return to its privileged position at the center of the popular imagination. Consequently, their return to that position allowed them once again to resume their function of bringing the past into the present as living embodiments of history. In turn, the resumption of this role by the Monarch and her family gave new vitality to those timeless public events on the Royal, and therefore national, calendar. The Diamond Jubilee, in particular, acted as the focusing event in which the Royal Family's "comeback" fully took root. It was a happy and glorious occasion not just for Elizabeth II and her family but, indeed, for all those that stood to benefit from the return of the Royal ceremonial to its central position among the bread and circus events staged for popular consumption.

The Diamond Queen's national party did not, however, singlehandedly complete the restoration of the national spectacle to the core of British identity projection. A mere month later, the continuing transformation of the British public spectacle into its blended formulation of historically-rooted pomp and ceremony with limited aspects of postmodern popular sensibilities—the same sensibilities that failed to carry the Millennium Dome to success—arrived in the form of the 2012 London Summer Olympic Games. Whereas the Diamond Jubilee served as a perfect precursor to the Games in that it helped to settle the formula for twenty-first century national spectacles, the Summer Olympics perfected the formula even further. Born in part out of ageless competition with the French, Britain's main competitors to host the 2012

Summer Olympics, the effort to secure and stage the Games also forced the British to reconcile their post-imperial present circumstances with the rising tide of imperialism on display during the 2008 Games in Beijing, China.[61] As a nation emerging as a major global power, China sought to use its games to project an aura of both a rising player on the global scene and to reclaim its status as a historical power in the Asian-Pacific region. Thus, the Chinese Olympics, especially the Opening Ceremonies, became a model for military precision and cultural propaganda.[62] Against the backdrop of these old and new rivals in the French and the Chinese, the British had to make choices of their own about how to respond.[63] Defeating the French in the bidding process simplified matters on one front—the old enemy offered no more threat going forward. Responding to China's massive imperial Olympic spectacle, however, proved a more pressing concern. Did Britain intend to set its own imperial past glories against the Chinese spectacle?[64] Wisely, Britain charted a different course. Once again, the gaze turned inward. Unlike the Millennium Dome fiasco, however, this time the British got it right.

The Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games did not singlehandedly define the 2012 London Olympics; however, it did serve to establish a thematic identity for the Games that extended beyond the sporting competitions which the Games ostensibly present. In broad terms,

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[61] Mark Oliver, "London wins 2012 Olympics," *The Guardian*, July 5, 2005, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/06/olympics2012.olympicgames1. London won the Games in a 54-50 vote over rival city Paris after three months of intense lobbying on the part of then Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The result was considered an "upset" as Paris was long considered the front runner after a strong bid.

[62] David Yang, "Watching the London Olympics in Beijing," *Foreign Policy*, July 31, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/31/watching_the_london_olympics_in_beijing. As Yang reports: Beijing's opening ceremony was a masterpiece of cohesion: Almost 200,000 people, mostly students and People's Liberation Army soldiers, trained together for months so that their actions would be perfectly synchronous. To showcase the Chinese invention of movable-type printing, more than 1,600 soldiers practiced more than 10 hours a day inside 897 tiny movable-type blocks -- for nine months. Chinese film director Zhang Yimou, who directed the opening ceremony, told a Chinese newspaper that he joked with his performers that only North Koreans could have put on a more uniform show.

[63] Richard Spencer, "London 2012 cannot match Beijing Olympics opening ceremony 'because of trade unions,'" *The Telegraph*, August 25, 2008, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/2617980/London-2012-cannot-match-Beijing-Olympics-opening-ceremony-because-of-trade-unions.html.

[64] Ibid.

the Opening Ceremony permits the host country to frame the Games as an extension of national and cultural identity. Further, it gives the host city an opportunity to showcase itself to the world. In certain cases, such as with the 2012 Games, the host city also acts as the national capital of the host country. The overlap in these instances only serves to underscore further the potential for the host city to influence the Games beyond the sporting field. The Games even begin in a manner that highlights more than just sports. Indeed, if the Games themselves play a dual structural role—sports and international cooperation combined—then it falls to the Opening Ceremony to introduce both the national and international components of the Games. Unsurprisingly, then, the linchpin of the 2012 Olympics, insofar as Britain's national role in presenting the Games as a showcase of modern Britishness was concerned, came in the form of the Opening Ceremonies.

Directed by the Academy Award winning film and theater director, Danny Boyle, the 2012 London Opening Ceremonies presented a vision of the host country which one commentator bluntly summarized thus: "So, Britain: two thousand years of deeply fucking odd and a lot more socialist than some people would like. 'Bout spot on."[65] Unlike the awkward sentiments expressed with the Millennium Dome fiasco, the Opening Ceremony embraced a droll understanding of how Britain's contemporary, post-imperial culture juxtaposes with its historical roots. As the *New York Times* attempted, with a resigned sense of futility, to summarize the sheer unpredictable zaniness of the Opening Ceremony to Americans who had not seen it, or even to those who had watched, bewildered:

> The noisy, busy, witty, dizzying production somehow managed to feature a flock of sheep (plus a busy sheepdog), the Sex Pistols, Lord Voldemort, the engineer Isambard

[65] Lauren Collins, *The New Yorker*, "Danny Boyle Wins the Gold," July 27, 2012, http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/sportingscene/2012/07/olympics-opening-ceremony.html The quote is attributed to Laurie Penny.

> Kingdom Brunel, a suggestion that the Olympic rings were forged by British foundries during the Industrial Revolution, the seminal Partridge Family reference from "Four Weddings and a Funeral," a group of people dressed like so many members of Sgt. Pepper's band, some rustic hovels tended by rustic peasants, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" and, in a paean to the National Health Service, a zany bunch of dancing nurses and bouncing sick children on huge hospital beds.[66]

Also struggling to describe the event, the *Washington Post* settled on the statement that "if the Opening Ceremonies of the London Games sometimes seemed like the world's biggest inside joke, the message from Britain resonated loud and clear: We may not always be your cup of tea, but you know — and so often love — our culture nonetheless."[67] As such, the Ceremony saw Britain welcoming the world with open arms, a vast departure from the days in which British spectacles of empire overtly attempted to intimidate international participants. Perhaps even more tellingly, the Opening Ceremonies also confidently presented a multifaceted image of what being British meant in 2012. In doing so, the Opening Ceremony, ostensibly designed to introduce the world to Britain, actually spoke of something substantial about contemporary British life to Britons themselves.

If national spectacles operate on two levels regarding their internal audience—as either reflections of shifting national issues or as deliberate attempts at shaping national discourse—then the fact that the 2012 Opening Ceremony dealt specifically with the question of national identity (i.e. how to introduce London to a global audience) opens the door to commentary on the ways in which the event sought to define contemporary Britain. Several specific facets of the ceremony offer clues, starting with Boyle's own commentary. In a preview to media for the event, Boyle declared that he wanted the Opening Ceremony to create a "picture of ourselves as

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[66] Lyall, "A Five-Ring Opening Circus," *The New York Times*, July 27, 2012.
[67] Anthony Faiola, "As Olympics Open, Britain Rocks," *The Washington Post*, July 27, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/as-olympics-open-britain-rocks/2012/07/27/gJQAElvpEX_story.html?hpid=z2

a nation," and that he hoped viewers would "find something of themselves" in the ceremony.[68] Boyle, therefore, clearly intended to speak to an internal audience as much as a global one. To start, the ceremony began with something more familiar to Britons than to outsiders: an expansive sweep of British history.[69] The historical survey relied upon the heavy symbolism of fields, pastures, cottages, and animals before giving way to heavy machinery and furnaces, all in the service of showing Britain's shift from a largely pastoral, elegiac land to an industrial power akin to what one commentator recognized as Milton's concept of Pandemonium.[70] Such a move effectively served not to obliterate the memory of England's "pleasant pastures (once) seen" but to reflect on the lost countryside. Furthering the point, as the scene played out and the transformation from fields to foundries began, discordant drumming drowned out even the playing of Sir Hubert Parry's hymn to social justice: "Jerusalem."[71] Then a final transformation: the new industrial scene gave way to the forging of five flaming Olympic Rings, which were then hoisted into the air over the Olympic Stadium (Fig. 6.6).[72] Thus, Boyle ended the historical segment by situating the Olympics within the present industrial, modern, and even postmodern scene. From that point onwards, Boyle deliberately addressed the nature of contemporary

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[68] *The BBC*, "London 2012: Olympics opening ceremony details revealed," June 12, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-18392025

[69] In the days leading to the Opening Ceremony, and immediately afterwards, some controversy broke out over how Boyle chose to address British history. In particular, questions swirled about the extent to which David Cameron, the Conservative leader and Prime Minister, viewed Boyle's treatment of certain historical passages. Further, one Conservative Member of Parliament complained vehemently that the Opening Ceremony espoused "leftie multicultural crap." In spite of these criticisms and concerns, the even won the enthusiastic support of the Prime Minister following its successful critical reception. For more information, see: Patrick Wintour, "David Cameron: Tory MP's attack on Olympic opening ceremony was idiotic," *The Guardian*, July 30, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/jul/30/tory-mp-olympic-opening-ceremony. Also: Tim Walker, "Did David Cameron get the show he expected?" *The Telegraph*, July 30, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9436433/Did-David-Cameron-get-the-show-he-expected.html.

[70] Collins, "Danny Boyle Wins the Gold," *The New Yorker*, July 27, 2012. Collins helpfully supplies that "Pandemonium" was the word Milton invented to designate the capital of Hell. Of course, the invocation of Milton implies that there is something of "Paradise Lost" in Boyle's vision as well.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Owen Gibson, "Danny Boyle's Olympic opening ceremony: madcap, surreal and moving," *The Guardian*, July 27, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2012/jul/27/olympic-opening-ceremony. The *Guardian,* with its typically jaundiced eye, declared the forging of the five great rings in the Olympic Stadium to be less of a moment out of Tolkien and more "the first big photo opportunity."

Fig. 6.6. *Olympic Rings, 2012 London Olympic Opening Ceremony*, July 27, 2012[73]

Britain, using British humor to represent some of the same shifts in contemporary British culture that the Millennium Dome planners attempted, but failed, to recognize. Boyle's efforts proved much more successful, in large part because he got no less an institutional figure than the revered Diamond Queen herself in on the joke. More significantly, however, the use of humor disarmed the audience, allowing Britons to put aside the remaining tensions that exist in a nation still trying to discover its own identity and purpose in a post-imperial world.

The Queen's arrival at the Opening Ceremony demanded a spectacular entrance, but Boyle chose not to employ one of the gilded coaches so familiar to Royal processions. Rather, Boyle had James Bond, as played by Daniel Craig, to escort Her Majesty to the event via a prepared spoof video and staged helicopter jump (Fig. 6.7). When the Queen greeted 007,

[73] Gordon Rayner, "London 2012: breathtaking, brash and bonkers...an utterly British Olympic opening ceremony," *The Telegraph*, July 27, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/news/9433818/London-2012-breathtaking-brash-and-bonkers...an-utterly-British-Olympic-opening-ceremony.html. Photo included in article.

"Good evening, Mr. Bond," and then proceeded to accompany him with the Royal corgis in tow, it became evident that even Her Majesty had not just relaxed protocol for the occasion but had thrown it completely out the window.[74] Britons cheered openly for the display.[75] Yet Boyle then proceeded to demythologize British ceremonial precedent even further by employing Mr. Bean as a member of the London Symphony Orchestra and ending his performance with a rude noise.[76] In effect, the Queen of England, James Bond, and Mr. Bean staged a comedy double act that ended with a fart joke. Cool Britannia had finally arrived.

The Opening Ceremony featured many other highlights of British culture past and

Fig. 6.7. *Film of The Queen, James Bond (Daniel Craig), and the Royal corgis for the Olympic Opening Ceremony*, July 27, 2012.[77]

[74] Anthony Faiola, "As Olympics Open, Britain Rocks," *The Washington Post*, July 27, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/as-olympics-open-britain-rocks/2012/07/27/gJQAElvpEX_story.html?hpid=z2

[75] Collins, "Danny Boyle Wins the Gold," *The New Yorker*, July 27, 2012. Ms. Collins talks about how her entire neighborhood cheered when the Queen, the real Queen, greeted James Bond. Footage from the Opening Ceremony reveals the same reaction in the crowd.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Andrew Hough, "London 2012 Olympics: Princes' delight at Bond girl Queen," *The Telegraph,* October 30, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/news/9642396/London-2012-Olympics-Princes-delight-at-Bond-girl-Queen.html. The photograph is included in article.

present, always demonstrating the push and pull between the two with a nod and a wink that the British were finally comfortable enough to joke about themselves even during serious state occasions.[78] At the same time, Boyle's production managed to valorize British state institutions as disparate as British literature, the National Health Service, and 1960s music. All of this took on a vaguely left-wing, progressive air. Consequently, the further demythologizing of British pomp and circumstance that began in earnest with the post-Diana national mourning and the wayward Millennium Dome debacle continued, albeit much more successfully, with the Opening Ceremony.

Yet whatever the particular politics of Danny Boyle and his Opening Ceremony production, the spectacular success of the evening—a vibrant introduction for London and the British state to the rest of the world, and a reintroduction of Britain to Britons themselves—ultimately served to restore the British ceremonial, even with elements of postmodernity mixed in, as something which could successfully reveal something about British identity and culture. While the "Britishness" presented at the Opening Ceremony reflected a smaller vision of Britain that virtually absented all of the old imperial trappings, and while it proceeded to offer up a clear-eyed assessment of how empire had influenced the course of British history, the Opening Ceremony also demonstrated how the continuity of the state and its history remained as unconquered as ever. Finally, and as an interesting postlude to the event, fears that British efforts could not surmount the Chinese spectacle of 2008 came to naught when the people of Beijing responded positively to the 2012 Opening Ceremonies. Some citizens even expressed

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[78] Ibid. In astute fashion, Ms. Collins claims "the trick of this was that, by deflating the national myth of stoic heroism, Boyle bolstered the national myth of the British sense of humor."

polite envy of London's efforts. "[I]t was more sincere [than the 2008 Opening Ceremonies]," summarized one Chinese onlooker.[79] Perhaps such praise represents a far cry from the types of envy expressed at British events in 1851 or 1897, but once again the British ceremonial proved its worth as a propaganda effort, both at home and abroad.

Taken together, the events of 2012 demonstrated the evolution of the British spectacle from gatherings which had previously depended on their imperial roots to succeed to events that now housed a more comfortable pairing between the institutions of the past and the social concerns of the present. Effectively, this served as their broader purpose, at least beyond the circumstances for which they were staged. Whether or not the unlikely pairing of the Queen and Danny Boyle truly resurrected the British spectacle to its former glory remains an open question. Surely future endeavors will determine the final evolution of the ceremonial in public life. For now, however, the events of 2012 further reinforced the permanence of the great convocations in the broader discourse associated with Britain and its role in history.

British history, and by extension the British ceremonial, often reveals an island nation that resists the invasion of foreign elements, avoids social and political upheaval, and almost never indulges in bloody revolution. Modern British historical development, and by extension the modern British ceremonial, often successfully took this fundamentally conservative set of core values and national practices a step further: the British way of life became outwardly projecting and imperial in nature. Indeed, the British Empire project succeeded on so many different levels that it became an integral part of British national identity. The legacy of mid-Victorian equipoise, the stability-driven apex of Britain's ascendant influence in human affairs, continues to underpin British self-reflection, even as Britain has seen its empire fall away and its

[79] Yang, "Watching the London Olympics in Beijing," *Foreign Policy*, July 31, 2012.

international ambitions reduce. British convocations since 1851, therefore, always reaffirm something about the fundamentally conservative nature of the British nation. Even in their contemporary instantiations, British ceremonials still make room for the stability of the Constitutional Monarchy, for a pastoral and elegiac national imagination tamed by Victorian values and progress, and for the belief that Britain is a unique and special culture worthy of displaying. One need look no further than Boyle's progressive Opening Ceremony to see these forces still in full effect. New cultural values, politics, and beliefs may influence life in contemporary Britain, but millennia-old institutions remain entrenched fixtures of both the popular imagination and the public spectacle.

Only the most wayward of moments tend to allow for drift away from the ceremonial as a conservative force in British public life. The Millennium Dome fiasco occurred in large part because of its lack of conservative British identity as a project. Without foundational British institutions represented, as had become the norm for public convocations, the Dome lacked the same kind of ceremonial definition the public had grown familiar with and understood. The Dome became a temporary political vanity project. Boyle's Opening Ceremony, combined with the wildly popular Royal Wedding of 2011 and the Diamond Jubilee of 2012, effectively restored traditional institutions to the public ceremonial, even as they wisely made room for a new popular outlook on what those institutions should do. Put simply, Britons enjoyed them.

The 2012 events, therefore, presented a visual metaphor for the healing of the ruptures between contemporary, post-imperial Britons and the historically significant institutions of state and society. The post-Diana Royal Family, for example, no longer performs the removed and symbolic role of religious and secular imperial figurehead at most public convocations. Instead, the House of Windsor now seeks to perform as a somewhat populist, though still privileged and

socially separate, family firm geared towards representing the British people as they are now: inward-looking but still aware of their unique history, cultural legacy, and evolving values. Hence, the reason why the typically stoic Queen Elizabeth deigns to entertain the notion of James Bond as her escort to an occasion as important at the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games. In return, the popular imagination more readily accepts the increasingly populist face of the British Monarchy. By accepting the Monarchy in this way, the popular will continues to accept implicitly the class-based social structures the Monarchy continues to validate. Thus, we see a specific example of how contemporary British spectacles, even with their increasingly postmodern overtones, remain largely conservative projects.

Contemporary British public convocations continue to trace the evolution of Modern British history, even as they begin to reflect a new era of national devolution and political autonomy from the imperial past. The fact that contemporary public events in Britain continue to look backwards towards their imperial origins vis-à-vis their continuing reliance upon the institutions of the British imperial past, however, means that the British grand spectacle remains, at least in some form, a convocation of empire. Yet this does not necessarily connote a negative or retrograde reading on the premise of British popular ceremonials in contemporary life. The genius of Danny Boyle's Opening Ceremony vision rested in its wide-eyed acceptance of all facets, including both the good and the bad, of British history. The Opening Ceremony did not seek to obscure or revise the circumstances of Britain's past or present. Instead, the Opening Ceremony revealed Britain for what it truly is: an old country, a historically significant contributor to the course of human history, and a people willing to change, with measured reserve, for the sake of continuing stability and in the service of progress. That same description applies to the best of those values on display at the 1851 Great Exhibition, and at many of

ceremonial and popular occasions since. Through its grand public spectacles, be they imperial or post-imperial in nature, Britain has always revealed something about itself to both Britons and non-Britons alike. The events of 1997-2012, with their sometimes erratic undertones, still make room for an ever-evolving formula for the practice and staging of spectacles. The inherent meaning of those events remains unchanged, however. Each major British public spectacle uniquely reflects the past, present, and future of Britain. In this way, British ceremonials, for good or for ill, have become as much a part of British identity and practice as the myriad facets of Britishness they seek to display. Public ceremony, even in contemporary life, is simply part of ritually being and acting British, and it likely will be for some time to come.

Chapter 7

Conclusion:
The Future of British Public Ceremony

The arrival of a new Royal baby, often an occasion for considerable media attention and popular interest, also sometimes means the birth of a new heir to the British Throne. When Queen Elizabeth II's great-grandson was born on July 22, 2013, he automatically became the third in line to the succeed her after the baby's grandfather, Prince Charles, the heir apparent, and the baby's father, Prince William, Charles' firstborn son and the second in the line of succession. While considerable attention focused on the birth announcements of both Charles and William, the arrival of the little prince, still unnamed at the time of his birth, generated a massive popular media spectacle. British tabloids breathlessly reported the news that the social media website Twitter had more than 487 million users viewing postings about the Duchess of Cambridge, the new Royal baby's mother, going into labor. [1] The instantaneous sharing of the news meant that Britons and non-Britons alike experienced the announcement very near to real time. Clarence House, which housed the official offices of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, used its Twitter account to broadcast the news of the occasion at 8:29 p.m., nineteen minutes ahead of the traditional posting of the announcement on a gilded easel by the gates of Buckingham Palace. (Figs. 7.1, 7.2).[2]

While the use of Twitter represented a deviation from traditional Royal protocol, it fell in

[1] Claire Ellicott, "Twitter in meltdown: 487million take to social networking site to share in the baby frenzy," *The Daily Mail*, July 22, 2013, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2374252/Royal-babys-birth-news-sends-Twitter-meltdown-487m-congratulate-Duchess-Cambridge.html.

[2] Vicky Smith, "Royal baby news: The Twitter of tiny feet as William and Kate announce arrival online in historic first," *The Mirror*, July 23, 2013, http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/royal-baby-news-twitter-tiny-2079381. *The Mirror*, like all of the tabloids, reported in excruciating detail on every aspect of the Royal birth announcement, even down to the exact minute the dueling birth announcements went public. Such attention to detail traditionally belongs in the newspapers of record, for example, but the public appetite for famous babies, apparently, inverts the model.

Fig 7.1. Clarence House, Twitter Post, July 22, 2013, 12:35 p.m., http://twitter.com/ClarenceHouse

Fig. 7.2, *The Official Announcement of Prince George's Birth*, July 22, 2013.[3]

[3] Jaymi Mccann and Amanda Williams, "Euphoria outside Buckingham Palace as letter is placed on easel to announce arrival of bouncing baby prince," *The Daily Mail*, July 22, 2013, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-

line with the general trend towards the modernization of the Monarchy's public affairs in the aftermath of Diana's death and the public backlash towards the House of Windsor that emerged from it. Indeed, the official embrace of social media helped to fuel the public's attention, as evidenced by the extraordinary amount of chatter on Twitter in the run up to the baby's delivery. Crucially, however, the participation by official accounts on social media helped to control the dissemination of information about the Royal birth. After all, if hundreds of millions of people around the globe simultaneously learned of the information at the same time, then the purveyors of that information, especially by using social media in conjunction with traditional media outlets, exercised a great deal of controlling influence over the story. The Royal birth provided a case study in how an ancient institution managed to exercise this controlling authority.

First came the long buildup and anticipation associated with the nine-month pregnancy, made all the more interesting to the public because of the question of how the Duchess of Cambridge, an oft-discussed style icon, would manage her image during her pregnancy. As the expected delivery date grew closer, questions abounded about the sex of the child, the child's name, and the exact date of the impending birth. Once the Royal Household announced the birth, they held both public and media attention by delaying on naming the child. As bookies at the various British betting shops placed odds on the likely names, punters collected their winnings from previous bets about the timing of the birth. Then, finally, the announcement of the baby's name came: George Alexander Louis. All that remained, the introduction of the new baby to the public, came on the day after the birth when his parents took him home.[4] Before leaving the hospital, the doting parents allowed the cameras to get a look at the little prince and

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2374212/Party-palace-Euphoria-thousands-delighted-wellwishers-gather-The-Mall-celebrate-news-birth-Britains-new-prince.html#ixzz3MBrq0LaC. The photograph is included in the article.

[4] "Royal baby leaves hospital with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge," *The Telegraph*, July 23, 2013, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/kate-middleton/10198319/Royal-baby-leaves-hospital-with-the-Duke-and-Duchess-of-Cambridge.html

even answered a few questions about him.[5] The public fixated on the story, while the media, undoubtedly, loved the ratings generated by the story. Indeed, every aspect of the Royal birth represented a carefully controlled, meticulously planned, savvy media operation. Therefore the operation unfolded until Prince George of Cambridge, the future King of England, became a household name in countless homes around the world. The plan all along, as one sympathetic commentator put it, was to rejuvenate the Monarchy: "The great-grandmother in this story has not been a passive observer. Now the Duchess of Cambridge has had her son, the Queen will know that she has secured her dynasty, and the Monarchy, up to three generations into the future—perhaps into the 22nd century."[6] Thus, the public spectacle, as had so often happened in the 150 years of British history preceding it, served to aid in the conservation and perpetuation of a powerful national institution.

Of course, very little about the birth of Prince George actually suggested anything new. While the deft use of social media marked an awareness on the part of the House of Windsor that it now had to communicate in decidedly twenty-first century ways, the narrative surrounding the Royal birth still slotted into the broader, ever-evolving historical metanarrative of British convocations. In other words, the contemporary Royal spectacle, while stage-managed differently than Royal events during previous eras, remains a fundamentally conservative occasion. The same applies to other public spectacles of state, as many of them aim to bolster standing governmental, commercial, or charitable interests all in need of public support (e.g. Remembrance Day, national sporting events, various charity schemes). The trend towards integrating social media, while simultaneously retaining the time-tested fundamental structures

[5] Ibid.
[6] A.N. Wilson, "Her crowning moment: Her beaming smile last night said it all. The Queen has secured her dynasty with THREE heirs to see the monarchy through to the next century," *The Daily Mail*, July 23, 2003, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2375377/Royal-baby-The-Queen-secured-dynasty-THREE-heirs.html

concerning what a spectacle does and how it does it, means that so long as institutions demonstrate a willingness to adapt to new models of operation, they will effectively retain the ability to conserve the public spectacle as an institution of authority and power in its own right.

The British public spectacle as an institution, at least in its modern incarnations, ultimately aims to advance productive formulations of authority and power. No longer does the public spectacle involve beheadings at the Tower of London. Rather, the institution of Monarchy, for example, experiences revitalization by turning the happy occasion of weddings, births, and coronations into events designed to generate sympathetic sentiment. Such benevolent measures of control fit the framework for one formulation of what Michel Foucault discussed in terms of power discourses. As Foucault explained:

> [I]t seems to me that the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law which says no, power is taken above all as carrying the force of prohibition. Now I believe that this is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, one which has been curiously widespread. If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.[7]

The modern British spectacle certainly supplies plenty of Foucault's "productive network." One needs look no further than the use of hundreds of millions of people simultaneously celebrating through social media not just the birth of a new baby but the periodic renewal of the body politic to see how the modern British spectacle shapes productive power in the service of existing institutions.

[7] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 119. Taken from Foucault's essay on "Truth and Power."

Because the shaping of power through spectacles almost invariably serves to enhance the status of existing institutions—Monarchy, the government, commercial interests—the modern British spectacle, especially as determined by the sort of imperial and post-imperial metanarrative underpinning convocations from 1851-2012, remains a largely conservative force in contemporary British life. Unsurprisingly, then, the political use of public spectacles has emerged over time between conservative and progressive political forces; the propaganda value of spectacles in helping to shape public opinion and the broader discourse has proven too great for either the Tories or Labour to resist taking up the planning of wide-scale events. Yet because of the fundamentally conservative shaping of most spectacles, right-leaning political support for the staging of events, especially imperial events, tends to occur more enthusiastically. For example, the Great Exhibition of 1851, while "progressive" in theme, featured a great deal of establishment support, especially from the Royal Family.[8] The Jubilees of Victoria witnessed the enthusiastic support of a true champion of British imperialism, the Conservative Prime Minister, the Marquess of Salisbury.[9] The Coronation of Elizabeth II saw the heavy involvement of Sir Winston Churchill, another imperialist Tory awash in late-Victorian sentiment.[10] While more recently, the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth II and the 2012 London Summer Olympic Games received the enthusiastic backing of the Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron.[11]

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[8] James, *Prince Albert*, 196.
[9] Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, 215.
[10] Winston Churchill, "King George VI: February 7, 1952, Broadcast, London," *Churchill Speaks*, 953. From the very beginning, even as evidenced by Churchill's eulogy broadcast upon the death of George VI, Churchill threw himself into championing the Coronation as a turning point in postwar British history.
[11] James Kirkup, "Diamond Jubilee: David Cameron says Queen will never abdicate," *The Telegraph*, June 3, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/the_queens_diamond_jubilee/9308914/Diamond-Jubilee-David-Cameron-says-Queen-will-never-abdicate.html. Speaking of the Monarch on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee, Cameron gushed effusively over the Queen's dedication to her people and her lifelong commitment to service. So it goes with almost all politicians on the subject of the extremely popular Queen. To wit, Cameron enthusiastically backed her Diamond Jubilee celebrations; David Cameron, "Prime Minister's speech on the London 2012 Olympics," July 5, 2012, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-ministers-speech-on-the-london-2012-olympics. The Prime Minister's enthusiasm for the Olympics was evident in his pre-Olympics speech: "For me, that vision is about

After all, these spectacles supported causes closely aligned with the politics of the British right: Empire, industry, Monarchy. Even sports, with its valorization of rules, fair play, hard work, competition, teamwork, community building, and national unity, appeals to many of the sentiments of the right.

The alignment between conservative values and the Conservative Party reinforces the claim that public spectacles act to validate certain aspects of British state and society that remain largely absent from left-leaning politics. Indeed, attempts made by the Labour Party to influence spectacles tend towards less successful outcomes. The Millennium Dome fiasco, personally championed by Labour's Tony Blair, stood as an example of how not to turn various postmodern ideals—inclusiveness, diversity, multiculturalism—into a national event. The diffuse nature of the values at play simply did not form any sort of cohesive purpose, other than to speak to some sense of new politics. In fact, the Millennium Dome, with its new attempt to convey something post-imperial to the British public, effectively undercut 150 years of metanarrative development about the nature of spectacles in British life. It did not, however, successfully sever that metanarrative. When Danny Boyle, for instance, also sought to champion certain progressive ideals in his production of the Opening Ceremony of the London Summer Olympics, he found a great deal more success by blending a left-of-center conceptualization of British history and identity with the same kinds of traditional institutions of British state and society which spectacles traditionally support. Effectively, Boyle managed to reshape a grand national convocation into a reflection of Britain both past and present, all without undermining the event itself. Ultimately, however, Boyle's best of both worlds approach proved that the true nature of the spectacle remains conservative in nature. British public ceremonies look to the past, they

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buildings, it's about people, it's about sport, it's about the economy, it's about legacy, it's about inspiration for the future - and frankly I want us to break records on every single one of them."

support deep-seated institutions of power, and they actively reinforce social conceptions of historically informed Britishness.

One major exception to the general rule that British spectacles affirm a conservative vision of Britain comes about when occasional public reappropriations of the meaning and message of popular events take place. The postwar war memorial movement and the public outcry after Princess Diana's death both stand as good examples of the popular will dictating to the institutions of state how the performative aspects of public events will occur. In the case of the postwar memorial movements that sprung up in towns and cities all across Britain, ordinary people organized public grieving and memory in accordance with their own wishes. For once, the government followed the lead of the people, responding supportively for the most part. The hue and cry that followed Diana's death resulted in nothing less than the abandonment of centuries of ceremonial protocol for large, semi-state funerals. In both cases, the institutions of power reacted to the spectacle of the people, rather than the people reacting to the spectacles of the institutions.

The sorts of "ground up" mass movements in which the popular will asserts itself tend to occur only rarely in modern British history; nevertheless, they represent something akin to authentic social expression. In the instance of the war memorial movement, Britons responded to the horrors of war with solemn but concerted effort; the response signaled a growing weariness of the costs of war and Empire. The public outpouring over Diana's death indicated a sense of growing discontent with the perceived stagnancy of the Monarchy. In both cases, the institutions of state responded to the popular will. The government grew increasingly reluctant to engage in the sorts of military games so common in the late-Victorian era in the aftermath of the new postwar sentiment, only rallying behind the militant Churchill in the dark hours of the

Second World War. The Monarchy, meanwhile, responded to the public reaction against them in the wake of Diana's death with a new spirit of openness and transparency. While these are small concessions on the part of the powerful to the people, they do suggest that public spectacles can, under the right circumstances, work as "bottom up" affairs.

Overall, however, the willingness of the institutions most commonly responsible for the staging of national convocations to adapt to the contemporary post-imperial scene has meant that public spectacles remain a viable force in British social and political life. Danny Boyle's Olympic Opening Ceremony, with its politely socialist politics and its open recognition of the limitations of the Victorian worldview, demonstrated that room remains for even some limited progressive ideals in the modern instantiation of the national convocation. Even still, the formula for mass public events retains much from its Victorian origins. Each new spectacle renews and reaffirms the formula ensconced by the century-long imperial metanarrative arc that dominated popular gatherings: British mass convocations serve to reveal essential components of Britishness, both at home and abroad. In the Foucauldian sense, however, such revelations deserve a skeptical eye. Foucault once questioned: "what does it matter who is speaking?" When investigating events that speak to wide audiences, discovering those who establish, present, and underwrite those events matters a great deal, for it is the backers of those events who "speak." In turn, it is those backers who strive to establish the sort of Britishness—the values, beliefs, practices—each event reveals. Mass public spectacles, therefore, help to define the British nation and its people. Tracing those spectacles over a period of time means not only identifying the historical evolution from imperial Britain to post-imperial Britain, it means identifying the significant power structures at work that drove that historical evolution.

Ultimately, each major British public event merits consideration from both a broad and narrow historical lens. In a broad sense, the placement of each gathering within the historical context of its time deserves ample consideration. So do the social and political forces present within that context. Further, the idea of each event representing some link in a broader metanarrative chain also requires consideration, and, perhaps, a good deal of critical investigation in the Foucauldian tradition. In a narrower sense, the particular arrangements associated with each event—who, what, when, where, why—require careful analysis. According to the Geertzian tradition, so does the symbolism inherent in each spectacle. Finally, there stands a need for analysis on the influence of each event in its immediate aftermath. Taken together, both the wide and narrow examination presents an overview of modern British convocations that demonstrates their importance to recent history. Going forward, further wide-angle and narrow perspective foci on public spectacles will undoubtedly continue to reveal them as significant benchmarks to the story of contemporary British life.

From the moment Britons gathered to watch the Houses of Parliament burn in 1834 until the tweets heard around the world went out about the birth of Prince George in 2013, the British spectacle has marked the rise and fall of an empire, the economic transformation from industrialization to globalization, and the shifts in society from the Victorian to the postmodern. The great convocations of public life provide a means of measuring key moments of those changes in British history. Little reason exists, therefore, to think that the public spectacle will not in some way continue as occasional historical, social, and political benchmarks well into the future. In the coming decades alone, state funerals and coronations will occur. The cry will inevitably ring out: "the Queen is dead, long live the King!" The people will gather to mourn and to remember the passage of one Sovereign, and then they will gather again to celebrate the

crowing of their new Sovereign. In the process, new public practices will emerge while ancient traditions are upheld. Those practices and traditions will serve to aid in the conservation of the institutions of state. They will aid political goals and satisfy media demand. They will generate debate about the purpose of Monarchy in a changing world. Above all, however, future state occasions, both Royal and non-Royal alike, will reveal a defining sense of Britishness to Britons and the rest of the world. Indeed, no matter the particular event, that is what British public gatherings ultimately do.

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