

## Staging Modern Monarchs. Royalty at the World Exhibitions of 1851 and 1867

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In 1792 Thomas Paine compared the monarchy with something kept behind a curtain, 'about which there is a great deal of bustle and fuss, and a wonderful air of seeming solemnity; but when, by any accident, the curtain happens to be open—and the company see what it is, they burst into laughter.' According to Paine, a passionate republican who was involved in the American Revolution, nothing of this could happen in the representative system of government. Like the nation itself, this kind of government 'presents itself on the open theatre of the world in a fair and manly manner'. Whatever 'its excellences or defects, they would be visible to all', he argued. 'It exists not by fraud and mystery; it deals not in cant and sophistry; but inspires a language that, passing from heart to heart, is felt and understood.'<sup>1</sup> Paine fiercely rejected the hereditary system of the monarchy, 'a silly and contemptible thing', and its lack of rationality; he accused monarchs and their adherents of deceiving the public by impressing their imaginations with spectacle and pedigree.

Yet, this kind of republican discourse evaporated largely after 1815; it resurfaced in France only after the disposal of the Second Empire and was hardly accepted elsewhere. It was precisely the imaginative appeal of the monarchy that compassed a rather secure and prominent position of *constitutional* kings and queens within national life of the nineteenth century. To be able to survive, particularly after 1870 European monarchies had to adapt to parliamentary supremacy and to transform into popular institutions, thus becoming an integral part of the new cult of the nation. During a preceding stage of 'monarchical constitutionalism', crown, cabinet and parliament had staged a struggle for power behind the scenes or even in the fullness of publicity, because monarchs still stood for legitimate political power. In France (1851) and Prussia (1864-67) the crown had even managed to focus political power on the sovereign and his ministers.

Even before 1870, however, monarchs aspired to fortify their position by publicly underlining their role as symbols of the vitality and stability of nation, society and state. The publicness or suggested visibility of monarchs to all citizens of the nation, advanced by modern mass-media, proved to be of incalculable value for the creation and continuation of the constitutional monarchy. Media historian John Plunkett points to the most important feature of Queen Victoria's successful media-making, what he calls 'mediation': an act of linking and connection. In his view the emerging mass print and visual culture in the 1850s shaped the public character of the British monarchy: it

provided the queen's subjects an intimate and personal interaction with the monarchy.<sup>2</sup> Although newspapers were not able to print photographic portraits until the end of the nineteenth century, the new media evoked a modern perspective on the British monarchy. The queen's ubiquitous presence in written reports and printed cartoons in newspapers and magazines bridged different individual experiences in the industrializing mass society and created a sense of belonging to the national community. Images of the whole British royal family were constantly available on a diverse assortment of media, ranging from engravings and magic lantern shows to street ballads and photographs. Moreover, royal visits and tours stimulated the reciprocal interest present between the British monarch and her subjects. In 1843 the *Penny Satirist* simply declared that Victoria was kept by the nation as a spectacle and that it was only right that she should be seen; it was her duty to show herself.<sup>3</sup>

What makes Queen Victoria especially interesting in this respect is that both her self-representation in staged photographs and the descriptions of her regional tours and civic duties in magazines contributed to the image of an ordinary monarch, a middle-class woman with whom people could easily identify.<sup>4</sup> In 1860 the English royal family also permitted publication of *carte-de-visite* portraits of Victoria, Albert and their children in a simple, domestic setting. Soon, pictures of the royal family and royal events began to circulate. More or less the same phenomenon happened somewhat later in the Netherlands. In the 1890s the Dutch, queen regent Emma devised a media strategy to make the monarchy more visible. To strengthen the bond with the Dutch Emma toured with her daughter across all provinces. At one of these occasions in 1892, when they visited Friesland, Wilhelmina showed up in the traditional costume of this northern province, a tribute to 8,000 Friesian girls and women. The visit turned out to be a tremendous success and stimulated national feelings. Yet, the real novelty was Emma's commission two years later to photograph the young Wilhelmina dressed in Friesian outfit at the palace Het Loo, and the selling of these images as picture postcards.<sup>5</sup> The successful interaction with the media of both Victoria and Emma represented a recovery and reassertion of the monarchy after an all-time low.<sup>6</sup>

The birth of new media in the burgeoning mass culture of the nineteenth century coincided with a more general political and cultural transition of the monarchic institution. In western European countries, the concept of a divine and absolute monarchy was eroded by the growing power of cabinet and parliament, to which monarchs responded by exploring the boundaries of what was left of their power.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, leading politicians increasingly valued the monarchy for its ability to forge a national identity and thus to prevent uncontrollable revolutionary events. Particularly the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in Europe, and the 1857 revolt in India against the British were a real scare and had an enormous impact on political culture. The staging of *national* monarchs above all conflicting parties proved to be an effective instrument to mitigate class differences. This policy was strengthened by an increasing susceptibility of the masses for the pomp and circumstance of the monarchy. The visibility of the Crown might stimulate the consolidation of the nation and consequently the justification of its imperial expansion. Although both kings and queens objected to being 'mere representation', they knew that within a constitutional monarchy the only

solid basis for their position lay in a theatrical support of the nation. Functioning as vehicles of national feelings, monarchs used a symbolic and ritual language either to exalt royal influence or to conceal its weakness. In order to maintain some political power, their first priority was to win the favour of the general public.

In the changing media structures, world exhibitions played a particularly influential role in the framing of royal representation and popular spectatorship. Being part of a broader visual culture, these grand spectacles offered an unprecedented opportunity to promote a populist monarchy and to sustain a royal culture industry on a mass scale, while thousands of visitors had a chance to gaze at 'real' kings and queens. Watching royals became part of a growing entertainment industry. In the words of Vanessa Schwartz: 'Real life was experienced as a show at the same time that shows became increasingly lifelike'.<sup>8</sup>

In this essay I will compare some articulations of the emerging popular monarchy at the world exhibitions of 1851 and 1867: how monarchs exposed themselves and represented their nation with modern means and (re-)invented discourses, and how the masses consumed and (re-)appropriated this royal spectacle. It will become evident that David Cannadine's chronology about the populist invention of the British monarchy between the late 1870s and 1914 does not hold.<sup>9</sup> Yet, my main goal is to show how the impact of world exhibitions furthered the reconfiguration of Western monarchies into popular, national institutions. Evidently these modern sites attracted many royals. They exchanged the latest news on family relations and political developments, explored national repertoires and compared the achievements of the exhibiting countries, while experiencing the possibility to be seen by large crowds from different backgrounds.

### *World Exhibitions and Visual Culture*

The world exhibitions that became *en vogue* in the second half of the nineteenth century primarily celebrated scientific and technological progress by enforcing competition between Western nations. For more than fifty years, local and national exhibitions in several European countries had been organized to promote industry and agriculture. Just like the national version, the idea of a world exhibition originated in France. When the French were planning for another national exposition in 1849, the minister of agriculture and commerce, Louis-Joseph Buffet, proposed that it should be open to foreign participants. In the end, the French organizers rejected the whole idea out of fear for revolutions and the sapping of their economic protection policy. When the British architect Matthew Wyatt and the manufacturer Henry Cole visited the Paris exposition, they conceived the notion of an international exhibition of industry. With the support of Prince Albert and other manufacturers, Cole successfully launched the project in London in 1851.<sup>10</sup>

Other Western countries soon followed and copied this format. Until 1900, millions of visitors came to the extensive sites of industry and artisanship in London, Paris, Vienna, Philadelphia, Chicago, Brussels and other cities, to see manufactured goods,

tools, machinery, arms, inventions, architecture, art, exotic objects, animals and people on display. These metropolises managed extraordinary educational projects out of distant lands and peoples. The essential performative character of world exhibitions, with a duration of six to seven months, was evident in the tremendous amounts of money and energy invested in mass festivities and rituals, such as the opening of the exhibition by the political elite, the reception of foreign royals, the presentation of winning medals for specific exhibits and the organization of international conferences.

In contrast to national exhibitions, world exhibitions were organized so as to match the classification of the exhibited items with explanatory walking tours, a strategy probably derived from the classical mnemonic techniques.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, world exhibitions were layered narratives, articulating specific temporal and spatial experiences. The organizers and exhibitors presented their—sometimes contradictory—visions of society by the construction of rooms, halls and pavilions, the selection and ordering of objects, the textual explanation and the marketing of the exhibition. The whole layout gave meaning to the objects on display, whereas walking tours and guides helped the visitors to link the elements and to make the world exhibitions ‘readable’. Illustrated maps guided spectators through the buildings and brought the colonies within reach; detailed catalogues explained the different objects; engravings and picture postcards of exhibits and specific festivities were sold to the public as a kind of fair souvenir.

Despite differences in rhetoric and design, all world exhibitions expressed some important Enlightenment features, such as: the encyclopaedic urge to classify every single object, a desire for a visual overview of the world as a whole, and an extreme emphasis on progress and the future. The ‘super-plot’ of every world exhibition was the advancement of Western civilization: ‘the world had to be seen as being in some kind of advancing flux, with a stable—and inevitable—future of plenty on the horizon’.<sup>12</sup> Hence, by and by world exhibitions visualized on a gigantic scale the increasing asymmetrical power relations in society. Interestingly enough, almost from the start, the past played a significant role in the designs of the exhibition plan. Demonstrating the latest inventions and modern lifestyles evoked—whether implicitly or explicitly—a view of what the exhibitors considered old fashioned and traditional. Eventually world exhibitions overwhelmingly articulated the need to link the past with the present and the future—in the words of Reinhart Koselleck, to bridge the growing gap between ‘the space of experience’ and ‘the horizon of expectations’.<sup>13</sup>

What exactly do we know about the public’s perception of the world exhibitions? Historical sources such as official procedures, minutes of committees, correspondence with private exhibitors and printed exhibition catalogues generally shed more light on the intentions of the organizers. A central committee of the host country always provided for the construction of the industrial palace, the setup of halls and pavilions, the selection and ordering of objects and the marketing of the exhibition. The governments of participating countries installed official national committees—if possible, officially headed by a king or royal prince—that arranged the most important and characteristic exhibits of their country. These committees intended to showcase somehow a kind of national identity. To require the cooperation of grand entrepreneurs and to raise the enormous amounts of money, government support was absolutely

necessary. Last but not least, the involvement of royal houses facilitated fund raising, because royalty often ascribed a sense of magic and glamour to the ceremonials.

With regard to public perceptions, there are reports about visiting experiences in the newspapers and illustrated journals, letters of ordinary people and observations of famous writers and activists such as Charles Dickens, Karl Marx, Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglas and Louis F. Celine. From these sources we know that visitors were young and old, men and women, illiterates and intellectuals, labourers and entrepreneurs, politicians and aristocrats. Encouraged by their employees, large groups of artisans and other employees visited the exhibitions. In this respect, world exhibitions articulated, in Jürgen Habermas' terms, the changing public sphere of the nineteenth century, the space where people with no stake in the outcome of the debate discussed issues of general interest. Since the Enlightenment, this has been the arena in which new forms of citizenship were moulded. At the time of the first world exhibitions, the 1850s and 1860s, the aristocratic elite of Europe stood to lose its self-evident role in governing the nations, while the middle classes and working classes would in principle gain full citizenship rights. Yet, according to Nancy Fraser, the public domain was never a monolithic entity but consisted of various sometimes overlapping publics and counter publics.<sup>14</sup> Precisely the multiform character of the public created new forms of inclusion and exclusion, and new possibilities of opening horizons and transgressing boundaries. World exhibitions served as modern, urban spaces for public consumption and entertainment, combining different visual attractions.

Yet, the sheer number of innovations and the unprecedented crowds of spectators caused many to experience the intended order as total chaos.<sup>15</sup> In the last decades of the nineteenth century the bourgeois worried increasingly about the dangers of the masses. They feared the commercialization of culture, the degrading level of art and the mixture of different publics on one location.<sup>16</sup> The exhibition grounds could be 'invaded' by all sorts of people. To handle the densely packed crowds, the designers drew up schedules of fixed opening hours and viewing days for certain exhibits or performances. Newspapers and guides allowed visitors to familiarize themselves with the vast exhibition. There were special walking tours for white middle-class women which took them to shops and parks, providing an opportunity for leisurely viewing without male companions. While wandering on the exhibition grounds, they seemed to challenge the male concept of the flâneur. Particularly the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago assured them a safe cultural place by masking the social dangers of mixing classes and ethnic groups. Yet, this strolling was, above all, connected to the rituals of urban commodity consumption.<sup>17</sup> Women had become important targets for selling goods, making their husbands spend.

According to Anne McClintock, visitors shared the experience of the gaze: the privilege of watching, the power and freedom to meander, to choose where to look, to indulge in the pleasure of the gaze and yet remaining anonymous in the crowd.<sup>18</sup> The imaginary bird's-eye view, reproduced in maps and tourist guides, displayed the world exhibition as a distant panorama, offering the illusion of mastery and comprehension.<sup>19</sup> Walking at exhibition grounds also suggested the idea of being at the centre of a world in which one could readily survey its farthest reaches as well as its past and future, while measuring the differences between inferior and superior civilizations. Hence, visitors

shuffled side by side through halls and pavilions. Both the design of rooms and the display of objects, products and people with information plaques steered the spectators in their interpretation. But they also retained considerable freedom of choice. Visitors could move about as they pleased, skip over exhibits or return for a second look, comparing observations with others. They could weave together all these impressions into their own stories. Thus, while the narratives of the world exhibitions articulated features of new temporal and spatial experiences, they also allowed the public to 'refigure' its plots.

Royal visits undergirded the prestige of world exhibitions with real and imagined spaces, displaying industrial goods and the latest technical inventions with imperial spectators and colonial 'objects'. Kings, queens, princes and princesses symbolized a romantic or heroic past and offered many people something to cling to in the rapidly changing world of the day. From their point of view, monarchs considered these exhibitions a splendid opportunity to link themselves to modern society and to embody their nation. Watching the setup of colonies with people on display, they could imagine themselves reigning a large colonial empire. Their presence might suggest that they approved of industrial progress and were still in charge of their country's future. However, because royals were instrumental to the fair's prestige, they ran the risk of becoming a commodity spectacle that could easily de-mystify their status. In that sense world exhibitions formed perfect tryouts for the popular monarchy: royalties tried to exploit the crowd's gaze effectively while simultaneously protecting their sacral image. But they could not completely control the perception of their image. Apart from political pressures, the expanding media structures with modern print techniques and new possibilities for the public's appropriation were far too complex. This becomes clear if we take a closer look at the world exhibition's festivities in London (1851) and Paris (1867).

### *Domestic Royalty at the Great Exhibition*

In the 1790s the American politician Thomas Paine had announced the advent of meritocracy and the downfall of the monarchy, that irrational and silly institution. Nevertheless, more than seventy years later, the English economist Walter Bagehot considered the monarchy an important 'theatrical show', a disguise for the real workings of government, which were all the more effective for going on in secret. Although his argument actually obfuscated the real power of the Lords, Bagehot did not cling to the *ancien régime* of the absolute monarchy. He deliberately distinguished between the appearance and the reality of power, what he called 'the dignified parts' and the 'efficient parts . . . of the Constitution'.<sup>20</sup> The 'dignified parts' referred to monarchy and the Lords, performers who put on a good show; the 'efficient parts', Commons and the Cabinet, did the real work of governing the country. Each of these parts had its own dignified and efficient aspects; even the monarchy had its efficient side. The dignified parts of the government were a disguise or outward (mis)representation of the efficient parts. Particularly the dignified parts of the monarchy were necessarily 'the theatrical elements—those which appeal to the senses [. . .]. That which is mystic in its claims

[. . .]; *that which is seen vividly for a moment, and then seen no more*'.<sup>21</sup> The mere idea of coming close to the 'real' monarchy, if only for a few seconds, could throw people into a rapture and stimulated the process of imagining the nation. The crucial component of this magical spell was the mixture of inapproachability and nearness of the royal family.

One of the first orchestrated shows of the popular monarchy occurred on 1 May 1851, when the British queen Victoria opened the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations in London Hyde Park. Some 24,000 guests and authorities squeezed into the Crystal Palace, with thousands of people packed in the streets to catch a glimpse of the queen and her family. Nine state carriages were driven quickly along the route, while the clocks of all Anglican churches in England announced the opening.<sup>22</sup> At twelve o'clock sharp the queen, Prince Albert and their two little children entered the Crystal Palace. While everyone rose from the seats and a choir of 600 voices sang *Britannica Rules*, the procession strode to one end of the transept where they reached a platform with a throne under a baldachin.<sup>23</sup> Albert explained the purpose and history of the event and offered the official catalogue to the queen. After a prayer and Handel's *Hallelujah*, Queen Victoria made her inspection tour through the Crystal Palace and finally opened the Exhibition. The choir sent forth *God Save the Queen*, trumpets sounded and cannons boomed. The *Illustrated London News* reported:

The ceremonial was one [. . .] without precedent or rival. The homage paid by the Sovereign of the widest empire in the world to the industry and genius of both hemispheres, will not fill a page in history as a mean and unsubstantial pageant. While the race of man exists, this solemn and magnificent occasion will not readily fade away from his memory [. . .].<sup>24</sup>

Prince Albert, although at first reluctant to become involved, had devoted himself energetically to the Great Exhibition. By the time of its closing in October, more than five million visitors had attended the exhibition. This success brought distinction to England and greatly improved Albert's reputation. When he had married Victoria, there had been significant opposition to the German prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Being a foreigner and the queen's cousin, his activities often roused much suspicion, particularly amongst the English aristocracy. Moreover, there was no clear public role for Albert. No wonder newspapers ridiculed him for being mere decoration. The Great Exhibition had offered the prince an excellent opportunity to prove his patriotic loyalty and, indirectly, to promote himself. At the same time the exhibition organizers—liberal politicians, manufacturers, architects, civil engineers—used the monarchy to sell the idea of an international exhibition. Consequently, the Crystal Palace became the project that linked the royal family to middle-class values.<sup>25</sup>

According to Tom Nairn, Albert also metamorphosed into the first and most important of all royal impresarios. Together with Victoria he created a new image of the royal family, according with both social and national needs: 'a matriarchally inclined symbol-family bringing home a traditionalist national identity to ever-wider circles of population'.<sup>26</sup>

For the opening ceremonial Albert had deliberately staged a domestic setting. The private family of the queen secluded from public gaze was revealed for all to see in a glass house amidst displays of modern industry, latest inventions and new sciences. In this way the royal family personified Great Britain's leading position in the modern world.<sup>27</sup> In behaving publicly like members of the middle class, Victoria and Albert set an example for their subjects to consider themselves members of a middle-class nation who could share in its power and prosperity.<sup>28</sup> The combination of domesticity and royal grandeur appealed to the masses; it stimulated a collective sense of belonging to a national unity. At the same time this family image obscured the unequal society of the British empire: the sharply separated social classes, ranks and ethnic groups with the monarch at the top of this hierarchy, buttressed by tradition and religion. Victoria's performance also demonstrated the constitutive role of gender in the making of national identity: as a woman she symbolized both the biological reproduction of true (white and Protestant) members of the nation and the cultural transmission of English values.<sup>29</sup>

According to historian Jeffrey Auerbach contemporaries were struck by the social mixing in the Crystal Palace. Indeed, people of every class and rank came to visit the Great Exhibition. Soon after the opening, *Punch* printed a cartoon showing 'Her Majesty, as She Appeared on the FIRST of MAY, Surrounded by 'Horrible Conspirators and Assassins''.<sup>30</sup> Yet the drawing itself shows the royal family quietly walking through the Crystal Palace surrounded by animated well-dressed ladies with gentlemen behind them, apparently from the middle classes, who were settled along the principal avenues and galleries. The masses flocked in after May 26, when the shilling days started. Only then did social mixing take place among upper, middle, and working classes. Nevertheless, this kind of social encounters was a rare phenomenon. Even more exceptional was the fact that the queen attended the Crystal Palace frequently, before and after the opening, sometimes passing workmen, exhibitors and ordinary visitors.<sup>31</sup> One of the main characteristics of world exhibitions was the creation of a social space where different classes, gender and ethnic groups could coexist and observe each other. But bringing these groups into closer proximity also enforced hierarchies and differences. Particularly in the last decade of the nineteenth century the bourgeois increasingly feared the masses and the mixture of different publics on one location. Journalists often reported on densely packed crowds flooding the exhibition grounds.<sup>32</sup> While 'only' six million people came to the Crystal Palace in 1851, the Paris World Exposition of 1900 attracted 50 million visitors.

Although the number of foreigners during the Great Exhibition was relatively small, English journalists warned against the dangers of foreign visitors. Xenophobic pamphlets about Turkish, Russian, Prussian and Jewish travellers stimulated prejudices and evoked curiosity after 'exotic' people. Newspapers and cartoons referred to 'dark looking fellows' and 'black men with fearful eyes and teeth'. One of *Punch*'s drawings shows the Crystal Palace as an exhibit packed with Oriental looking people, with Western spectators gawking at them.<sup>33</sup> Other caricatures depict black visitors from non-Western countries as primitive beings. Drawings and caricatures like these were the first expressions of a globalizing society, emphasizing a supposed gap between so-called inferior and superior civilizations. Later, at the world exhibitions of 1873 and 1878,



indigenous people from the colonies worked as restaurant personnel; since the Amsterdam world exhibition in 1883, they were put on display as objects, often under humiliating circumstances.<sup>34</sup> Yet spectatorship was not a privilege for white, middle-class Westerners. In these public spaces visitors and displayed people interacted, playing with the very boundaries that the world exhibitions helped to set up. Visitors particularly discovered the return gaze and the agency of non-Western performers.<sup>35</sup>

A hilarious incident during the opening of the 1851 Great Exhibition showed something of the confusion of the organizers about how to treat Oriental guests. The foreign officials assembled in the nave included a mysterious Chinese man, clothed in satin, silent but seemingly at ease. The sight of him shaking hands with the Duke of Wellington led observers to believe that he was a Chinese Mandarin. Then suddenly, during the singing of the *Hallelujah Chorus*, he pushed his way through the crowd to the throne, began to bow repeatedly to the queen and tried to kiss Victoria's feet. Since no one knew who he was, but not wanting to offend him, they let him attend the procession that toured the Palace. It turned out that this man, called He-Sing, was no Mandarin but the proprietor of a Chinese junk, moored at a pier in the Thames. There he performed Chinese swordplay with his crew every night.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, He-Sing had played a convincing role in the opening ceremony, demonstrating the vulnerable boundaries between the 'real' and the spectacle of a mass event. This *petite-histoire* also illustrates that class and status could privilege over colour and ethnicity. In his book *Ornamentalism*, Cannadine emphasizes that the British Empire was above all a complex social hierarchy: it was not exclusively based on the collective, colour-code ranking of social groups, but depended as much on the more venerable colour-blind ranking of individual social prestige. He points to the new culture of ornamentation in the British Empire, with a pseudo-mediaeval spectacular of rank and inequality. The British hailed the ruling princes in South Asia as the 'native aristocracy of the country'; their support was vital for the stability of the Indian Empire.<sup>37</sup>

The Great Exhibition also linked progress to consumerism. Exhibitors showed the large public the newest goods and persuaded them to buy products that would bring the industrial world into their homes. The display of historical objects and images from the past made a good contrast with the Exhibition's general message of modernity. As a consequence, the exhibition produced a tension between modernity and tradition. While some groups cherished anti-modern sentiments and feared the loss of tradition, others had optimistic feelings about the industrial mass society. In this ambivalent atmosphere, opponents and adherents of the Great Exhibition used the monarchy—the institution that supposed to symbolize a glorious past—for their own purposes and commercial interests. A contradictory combination of progress and nostalgia was well illustrated in the pictures of a jewel cabinet made for Queen Victoria by Ellington and Company and exhibited at the Crystal Palace. Whereas Albert advocated internationalism, free trade and progress, the image of the royal couple shows him standing in armour and Victoria sitting in late mediaeval dress with a child near her lap.<sup>38</sup>

But the cabinet's pictures reveal something else as well. While Victoria embodies domesticity and motherhood without any explicit references to her position as queen regnant, Albert obviously represents an ideal of English masculinity by combining the

fighting spirit of the medieval knight with the chivalrous guardianship of the modern gentleman. This image of the royal couple might have expressed the queen's desire to claim for her German speaking husband an English identity, an ideal women hardly could achieve. According to Elizabeth Langland, narratives of Englishness at the time of Victoria developed into an increasingly masculine construction.<sup>39</sup> Hence, immediately after the opening, the queen credited the success of the Crystal Palace both to Albert and to England. In her view he had demonstrated successfully the superiority of the English and what true Englishness meant in the world. Six years later the queen could endow Albert the official title of Prince Consort. Although Albert became a leading national figure, he remained a foreigner, certainly in the eyes of the aristocrats. His ties with the middle classes and his involvement in the construction of a domestic image of the queen and the monarchy defined him as Victorian but alienated him from the discourse of 'true' Englishness.

### *Keeping Up Appearances at the Paris Exposition Universelle*

In 1867 the French emperor Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte was determined to outdo the English in the size and magnificence of the fourth world exhibition. More than 11 million people came to the *Exposition Universelle et Internationale* in Paris.<sup>40</sup> Napoleon III was in urgent need for this megaproject to enhance his political status and to place France in the centre of the civilized world, because European monarchs considered him a parvenue emperor, linked to the French Revolution, who had seized his power by a coup d'état and had established a dictatorial emperorship by the grace of people's favour.<sup>41</sup> He was never fully accepted by the age-old royal houses who used to govern by divine right. Whereas the Great Exhibition had been a compromise between private initiative and state intervention, supported by a cautious Prince Albert, a French Imperial Committee produced the concept for the whole Exposition, and [DELETE 'then'] groups of state officials executed the plans. French manufacturers were not in charge; the emperor was, along with his government and some experts, particularly mining engineer Frédéric Le Play.

Le Play had designed a plan that articulated a desire for a harmonic, rational society. His utopian palace, built on the Champs de Mars, consisted of seven concentric oval galleries and resembled the Coliseum in Rome. In the roofed-over galleries, objects were displayed according to specific categories. By touring one gallery, spectators could compare countries in a particular category. The outer ring was reserved for shops, restaurants and cafés from the participating countries. The next and largest ring was full of steel and smoke; there were power looms, spinning machines, typesetting machines, locomotives and cannons. The innermost ring was devoted to the (mainly French) history of labour. Sixteen radial cross-sections offered exhibition space to the various countries, so that a pie-shaped cross-section showed all exhibits from a single country. Just like England's Great Exhibition, the 1867 Exposition focused on the doctrine of progress, but this time the organizers devoted much more attention to the evolutionary process of the innovations.<sup>42</sup> Hence, the importance of historical settings and rituals.

The opening ceremony was planned for April 1. To cover up the still-unfinished Exposition, a kind of Potemkin façade was constructed with textile and paint.<sup>43</sup> It did not disturb the theatrical opening, which deliberately aimed for a close association with the triumphal marches of the Roman emperors. Louis-Napoleon, an admirer of Julius Caesar,<sup>44</sup> toured with the empress in an open carriage through the streets of Paris to make himself visible for some 100,000 (apparently) exulting people. Thousands of workmen, the majority with their picks and shovels hoisted in the air and the others holding tricolour flags surmounted with gilt eagles, were ranged on each side of the road.<sup>45</sup> When the emperor entered the building via *la Porte d'honneur* [triumphal arch], soldiers and labourers formed a line, while music played. Napoleon surveyed the building, the Exposition sections, the organizing committees and its exhibitors. Members of foreign monarchies, such as the Dutch crown prince William of Orange, joined the imperial procession. When the emperor and empress quit the palace, they made their way through cheering crowds.

This ritual lacked the sophisticated mix of enchantment and domesticity that had characterized the opening of the Crystal Palace. Being at the centre of the 1851 Great Exhibition, Queen Victoria had self-evidently incarnated the whole English nation. The opening ceremony of the 1867 Exposition mainly intended to reinforce the idea of the paternal care of the French emperor for his people. However, considered from a gender perspective there was at least one interesting similarity: the (self)representation of Albert and Louis-Napoleon referred to the figure of the active male agent of modernity. Both men played their roles in the making of the nation with other men. But also in this respect, differences dominated the scene. Prince Albert had offered his queen and wife a modern world under a glass house, a world which might gradually downgrade traditional social hierarchy and its titles. Committed to middle-class interests, he strived for free trade and peace among nations.<sup>46</sup> Whereas the British queen had appropriated the attitude of a modern monarch and thus became imitable for the upcoming classes, the French emperor seemed to shore up the *ancien régime*, disguised in a modern shape. The military character of ceremonies and rituals during the 1867 Exposition explicitly emphasized social hierarchy within a corporative state.

The cult of Louis-Napoleon and the Bonaparte family reached its climax at the awarding of prizes on July 1. The glass court of the huge industrial section, *le Palais de l'Industrie*, was transformed into a classical Roman circus with ten award trophies set up in the centre. The building was filled with more than 20,000 selected visitors, including royalty. The emperor dominated the circus like a *pater familias*. Situated on top of the largest platform, he was surrounded by the empress and their son, by representatives of European courts and oriental royals.<sup>47</sup> The whole stage suggested not only the international acceptance of Napoleon's regime but also the support of his government by the French people. Yet, at that time, despite some liberal reforms and a gradual process of parliamentarization, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte still ruled a rather authoritarian, centralized, imperial nation-state. The military organization of the exhibition awards clearly demonstrates this. The triumphant prize-winners descended the state staircase, marched like an army through the circus behind a flag of their professional group to honour the emperor and finally took their places near one of the

trophies. After several speeches, some members of the group (always patrons or employers) were allowed to climb the stairs to receive their awards from the emperor. This over-organized ritual ended with a triumphal march of the emperor. Representatives of all national committees were introduced to Napoleon while their national anthem was played.<sup>48</sup>

A remarkable and new feature of the 1867 Exposition was the gathering of so many Western and non-Western monarchies with their dignitaries in [at?] one location. About fifty royal visitors attended the opening, such as the emperors of Russia and Austria, the Dutch queen Sophie and her two sons, the Belgian king and queen, the son of Queen Victoria, the king and queen of Prussia, the sultan of Turkey Abdül Aziz and his nephew, the viceroy of Egypt, and the Japanese Mim Bou Tayou (brother of the Taïkoun or ruler).<sup>49</sup> Perhaps world exhibitions evoked the international socialist movement, but they certainly echoed 'the International of monarchies' of previous times. In these gatherings, royalty connections, social status and grandeur overruled ethnic and colour differences.<sup>50</sup> The 1867 Exposition also produced a genuine royal culture industry. Week after week there were huge festivities to celebrate the presence of one royalty after another: the gala in the Paris Opéra to honour the Russian tsar; special rituals for the arrival of the Turkish sultan (his tour through the streets of Paris, the welcome by the emperor's son and his visit at the palace of L'Elysée); a ball at the town hall to honour all foreign royals; a special military reception for the Austrian emperor; and the presentation of the winning awards.

Artists, often under commission of publishing companies, made accurate engravings of these events with a very good likeness of the royals. The *Grand Album de l'Exposition Universelle 1867* consists of 150 impressive wood-engravings, made by French and foreign artists. Plunkett describes the revival of the wood-engraving and the subsequent development of an illustrated press already in the 1840s, thus before the advent of photography. One result in England was an accumulation of realistic and satiric images of Queen Victoria.<sup>51</sup> World exhibitions were an important impetus in this culture industry, because the organizers had to set up the publication of special journals, albums and illustrated maps to attract visitors. Several engravings of world exhibition albums or journals appeared in foreign journals, and consequently reached a large public that in the future could recognize the royals because of the realistic images.<sup>52</sup> At the exhibitions, visitors also could buy picture postcards and photographs.

Apart from political motives, royals were also invited at the world exhibitions for commercial reasons. The organizers addressed the public by official and spectacular announcements of the arrival of kings and queens in the newspapers. In this way they tried to attract more visitors, making royalty a part of the display and an object of entertainment.<sup>53</sup> The mass press played an important role in the interaction between spectacle and spectator.<sup>54</sup> Journalists prepared the visitor's perception by describing the details of the royal visits to world exhibitions: how they were dressed, what kind of jewels, the family relations and the genealogies of the monarchies they represented. Many were eager to come close to the unapproachable elite, to gaze at emperors, kings, queens, princes and princesses while they were watching new technologies or experiencing modern inventions such as navigating an air-balloon. Royalty attracted

ordinary people for obvious reasons of imagination and appropriation. The opportunity to actually see ‘real’ representatives of distant countries and ancient monarchies, if only for a glimpse, made the world exhibitions increasingly lifelike. Being at the same site where royalty had been enhanced the status of visitors. Absorbed by the royal spectacle they may have learned about other countries and their place in the world. The sight of magnificently dressed queens chaperoned by sturdy kings in military uniforms also suggested that fairy-like monarchs carefully ruled their countries and protected their people—fantasies which were nostalgic escapes from a disagreeable present.

The official invitation policy of the Imperial Committee had reflected Napoleon’s strategy to consolidate his internal position and to strengthen his international alliances—this was certainly the case when the Prussian king came to the Exposition accompanied by Chancellor Bismarck. In March 1867, just before the opening of the Exposition Universelle, Napoleon’s reputation had been severely damaged in the crisis about the status of Luxemburg with Germany. The Dutch called for a conference attended by France, Prussia, Austria, the Netherlands and England in London, May 7–11, where all parties were reconciled. Probably to make a gesture, the Prussian king came to the Paris Exposition, but his state visit did not really improve the relationship with France. In 1870 the French-German war broke out, and the alliance with the Russian emperor, gloriously sealed at the 1867 Exposition, turned out to be of no value. The second empire had become history. One could thus conclude in hindsight that the ‘dignified parts’ of French governmental power—so much appreciated at the Exposition Universelle—could not conceal the failure of the ‘efficient parts’ anymore.<sup>55</sup>

### *Performing the Nation*

At first sight, the attempt to sanctify the world exhibitions with royalty may have contributed to the demystification of the represented monarchies. Yet these spectacles also offered them the opportunity to come to terms with mass society and to understand their new performing role within national frames. At exhibition sites, royals could experiment with that complex mixture of magic attraction, grandeur and ‘ordinariness’ of kings and queens. It was also the beginning of a phenomenon to which Anne McClintock refers when she suggests that the singular power of nationalism since the late nineteenth century has been its capacity to organize a sense of popular, collective unity through the management of a mass national *commodity spectacle*.<sup>56</sup>

In Benedict Anderson’s well-known account of nation formation, the newspaper was central to the growing awareness of a national identity, which he considers a cultural and imaginative process, not identical to state formation and definitions of citizenship. Print culture gave people new ways to think about themselves and to relate to each other. Anderson’s image of middle-class men reading their morning newspaper over breakfast while getting ready to go to work points to the importance of mass media for the dissemination of ideas about a national community. In my view, McClintock rightly criticizes Anderson for neglecting the influence of visual culture. Nationalism ‘takes shape through the visible, ritual organization of fetish objects—flags, uniforms,

airplane logos, maps, anthems, national flowers, national cuisines and architectures as well as through the organization of collective fetish spectacle'. Despite the commitment of European nationalism to the idea of the nation-state as the embodiment of rational progress, she argues, 'nationalism has been experienced and transmitted primarily through fetishism—precisely the cultural form that the Enlightenment denigrated as the antithesis of Reason.'<sup>57</sup> The public's fascination for royalty at the world exhibitions in 1851 and 1867 relates to that sentiment. But royalty also manifests itself in different shapes within different environments.

The boastful and military performance of the people's emperor Louis-Napoleon at the world exhibition of 1867 revealed the fake and ephemeral character of the Second Empire. The presence of many foreign royals masked its own poor situation. Yet the different role of Victoria at the 1851 Exhibition was not only a matter of character or gender. According to Nairn, England/Britain should be interpreted *really* as a 'disguised Republic', a republic since the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in the sense of a 'Parliamentary Sovereignty', hidden, ornamented and preserved by the Windsor Monarchy.<sup>58</sup> The Windsor Crown, he argues, functions as a barrier against people's sovereignty and republican democracy. In 1792 Thomas Paine could not foresee that the monarchic institution would benefit from the new media to perform spectacles that mobilized masses and consequently shaped the modern English nation-state, even in the twenty-first century. The French Second Empire had been a last gasp of plebiscitary autocracy, an attempt to actually subordinate the modern to the traditional.

In 1878 the Third Republic of France organized another world exhibition in Paris. At the crowded opening ritual, when president Mac Mahon entered the main building with many royals, people cheered 'Vive la République!'<sup>59</sup> French royalty belonged to the past. It was now represented by the display of ancient jewellery of the French crown, set up in one of the exhibition rooms left to the public's vivid imagination and referring to a distant past.

## Notes

I would like to thank Siep Stuurman and Coen Tamse for their valuable and inspiring comments.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Paine, *Rights of man* (1791-1792; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), part II, chapter 3 'Of the old and new systems of government', p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria. First Media Monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 7–8.

<sup>3</sup> Plunkett, *Queen Victoria*, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Alison Booth, 'Illustrious Company: Victoria Among Other Women in Anglo-American Role Model Anthologies', in *Remaking Queen Victoria*, ed. by Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 59–78.

<sup>5</sup> Maria Grever, 'Matriarch of the Nation. Queen Wilhelmina's Cause', *Royal Family. Monarchy and Metaphor in European Culture*, ed. by Jo Tollebeek and Tom Verschaffel (Leuven: University Press, 2006), in press.

<sup>6</sup> Maria Grever, 'Colonial Queens: Imperialism, Gender and the Body Politic During the Reign of Victoria and Wilhelmina', *Dutch Crossing. A Journal of Low Countries Studies* 26 (Summer 2002), 1, 99–114, 100.

<sup>7</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Programme, Myth and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 84; Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism. From the*

*Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp. 202–03; David Cannadine, ‘From Reverence to Rigour. Writing the History of the Modern British Monarchy’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 January 2004, pp. 11–13.

<sup>8</sup> Vanessa R. Schwartz, ‘Cinematic Spectatorship Before the Apparatus: The Public Taste for Reality in Fin-de-Siecle Paris’, in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. by Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 297–319, 297.

<sup>9</sup> David Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance, and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the “Invention of Tradition”, c. 1820–1977’, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 120–21.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs 1851–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 3–26; and Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851. A Nation on Display* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 22–31.

<sup>11</sup> Pieter van Wesemael, *Architectuur van instructie en vermaak. Een maatschappijhistorische analyse van de werelddtentoonstelling als didactisch verschijnsel (1798–1851–1970)* (Delft: Technische Universiteit Delft, 1997), pp. 112–13.

<sup>12</sup> Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 349–75. For an interpretation of world exhibitions from this theoretical perspective, see Maria Grever, ‘Tijd en ruimte onder één dak. De werelddtentoonstelling als verbeelde vooruitgang’, in *De ongrijpbare tijd. Temporaliteit en de constructie van het verleden*, ed. by Maria Grever and Harry Jansen (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), pp. 113–30.

<sup>14</sup> Maria Grever and Berteke Waaldijk, *Transforming the Public Sphere. The Dutch National Exhibition of Women’s Labor in 1898* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 14–15; and Nancy Fraser, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy’, *Social Text* 25/26 (March 1990), 560–81.

<sup>15</sup> Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition*, pp. 151–58.

<sup>16</sup> Christoph Prochasson, *Paris 1900. Essai d’histoire culturelle* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1999), pp. 140–51.

<sup>17</sup> Laura Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure. Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the Century Chicago* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), pp. 178–81.

<sup>18</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 37; and Grever and Waaldijk, *Transforming the Public Sphere*, chapter 4.

<sup>19</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), p. 41; and James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities. Chicago’s Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), pp. 65–68.

<sup>20</sup> For Walter Bagehot, monarchic theatre was mere theatre, separated from governmental power: *The English Constitution* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1872), p. 61 (originally published as a series of magazine articles for the *Fortnightly Reviews* in 1866). See Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations, Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837–1876* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 106–07.

<sup>21</sup> Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, p. 64. Italics are mine.

<sup>22</sup> ‘The Queen’s Journal, May 1’ printed source in Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, *The Great Exhibition of 1851* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery office, 1951), p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> An extensive description of the opening in *Le Palais Crystal. Journal illustré de l’exposition de 1851 et des progrès de l’industrie universelle* (2 Mai 1851).

<sup>24</sup> Quote in Van Wesemael, *Architectuur van instructie en vermaak*, p. 618.

<sup>25</sup> Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass. Britain and its Monarchy* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), p. 195.

<sup>27</sup> Adrienne Munich, *Queen Victoria’s Secrets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 10–11.

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations, Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837–1876* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 5–6.

<sup>29</sup> For this topic, see also Grever, ‘Colonial Queens’, pp. 103–05.

<sup>30</sup> Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition*, p. 152.

- <sup>31</sup> Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition*, pp. 151–55.
- <sup>32</sup> *De wereldtentoonstelling van 1878 te Parijs* no. 4, 11 mei 1878, p. 74.
- <sup>33</sup> Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition*, pp. 174–75, 180–85.
- <sup>34</sup> Grever and Waaldijk, *Transforming the Public Sphere*, chapter 5.
- <sup>35</sup> Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure*, pp. 65–66.
- <sup>36</sup> Description of this incident in *Le Palais de Cristal. Journal illustré de l'exposition de 1851 et des progrès de l'industrie universelle* (Mercredi 7 mai 1851). See also Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition*, pp. 178–79.
- <sup>37</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism. How the British saw their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), pp. 8–9, 46.
- <sup>38</sup> Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition*, p. 172.
- <sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Langland, 'Nation and Nationality: Queen Victoria in the Developing Narrative of Englishness', in *Remaking Queen Victoria*, ed. by Homans and Munich, pp. 13–32, 14.
- <sup>40</sup> Three previous world fairs had been organized in London 1851, Paris 1855 and London 1862. Brigitte Schroeder-Gudegus and Anne Rasmussen, *Les fastes du progrès. Le guide des Expositions Universelles 1851–1992* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), p. 76.
- <sup>41</sup> Adrianus P.J. van Osta, *De Europese monarchie in de negentiende eeuw. Het Britse en Duitse model* (Ph.D. diss., Utrecht University, 1982), pp. 23 and 87.
- <sup>42</sup> Patricia Mainardi, *Arts and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Exhibitions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
- <sup>43</sup> Van Wesemael, *Architectuur van instructie en vermaak*, p. 238.
- <sup>44</sup> Helped by his minister of Education Victor Duruy, Napoleon III wrote two volumes on the history of Caesar. See Roger Williams, *The World of Napoleon III 1851–1870* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 185–87; Eugen Weber, *My France. Politics, Culture and Myth* (Cambridge Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991) p. 31 and p. 37. On the glorification of the military system during the reign of Louis-Napoleon see Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Saint-Napoleon. Celebrations of Sovereignty in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2004).
- <sup>45</sup> Van Wesemael, *Architectuur van instructie en vermaak*, p. 636.
- <sup>46</sup> Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass*, pp. 41 and 101–02.
- <sup>47</sup> *Grand Album de l'Exposition Universelle 1867* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1868), pp. vii–viii, and 100–01 a large engraving of the exposition awards.
- <sup>48</sup> Van Wesemael, *Architectuur van instructie en vermaak*, pp. 260–62.
- <sup>49</sup> *Grand Album de l'Exposition Universelle 1867*, engravings of royals on pp. 9, 17, 23, 25, 107, 109 and 111.
- <sup>50</sup> Martin Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes. From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 9. Quoted in Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, pp. 8–9, 124.
- <sup>51</sup> Plunkett, *Queen Victoria*, p. 5.
- <sup>52</sup> For instance, several engravings that had been published in the *Grand Album de L'Exposition Universelle 1867* popped up in the Dutch journal *De Katholieke Illustratie* of 1867–68. About the influence of engraving techniques, see Marga Altena, *Visuele strategieën. Foto's en films van fabrieksarbeiders 1890–1919* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003), pp. 15 and 47.
- <sup>53</sup> See also, for observations on royalty, Emile Zola, *Nana* (transl. novel 1888) (Rijswijk: Blankwaardt & Schoonhoven, 1953), pp. 61–63.
- <sup>54</sup> Schwartz, 'Cinematic Spectatorship Before the Apparatus', pp. 297–319.
- <sup>55</sup> As will be demonstrated by Henk te Velde in the present volume, applying too easily Baghot's ideal of a radical distinction between the dignified and the efficient parts of power, between 'cultural ornaments' and 'real politics', may obscure more than elucidate our understanding of the meaning of politics in the nineteenth century.
- <sup>56</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 368 and 374.
- <sup>57</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 374–75.
- <sup>58</sup> Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass*, p. 155.
- <sup>59</sup> *De wereldtentoonstelling van 1878 te Parijs* (11–5–1878) p. 75.