

decontextualisation of these issues is the outcome of the influence of market forces on programming in a period of competitive broadcasting. It is thus argued that a connection can be established between the economic control of broadcasting and the ideological form of its output. In the 1930s competition with commercial radio stations was a marginal influence on the process of popularisation described in this paper. It was only on Sundays that Radio Luxembourg drew significantly from the BBC's audience. The stylistic innovation in talks reflected the problems faced by broadcasters who were committed to an ideal of public service but were becoming increasingly aware of the differentiated structure of their public. If the more populist programmes failed to give adequate coverage to the most important issues of the day, it was not because producers felt that the public would not be interested in these issues. It was because the popular treatment of serious, controversial issues came into conflict with the BBC's policy on the broadcasting of controversial matter. The differentiation of the serious and the popular described in this paper had as much to do with the relationship between broadcasting and the state as with the relationship between broadcasting and the public.

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A symbolic mirror of ourselves: civic ritual in mass society

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Introduction

In this paper I shall be concerned with the significance for ritual of its being performed in a mass culture. I take the interaction between the actual events in the ritual forms of ceremonial festivals and their presentation in the mass media to be an opportunity to study the terms in which the public, at least in part, are able to participate in the collective life of their nation. The bulk of the paper will be taken up, therefore, with planning decisions in the BBC about how to cover (represent) three major festivals between 1946 and 1953—the Victory Parade of 1946, the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the Coronation of 1953.¹ They are arguably the major events in the years following the Second World War which brought together the Monarchy, religious leaders, other members of the traditional British Establishment and political leaders. In a *Times* editorial the Victory Parade was described as an occasion when the British: 'were enabled to see in a symbolic mirror the image of themselves' (10 June 1946: 5).

The period of these State occasions is particularly interesting because the ending of the War, which had itself forced the State into many new kinds of political mobilization, was followed by the first social democratic government with a large and unimpeachable mandate for radical social change. As a contribution to social change one might assume that the imagery and symbolism of the State and Nation would be altered in ways that were consistent with new structural arrangements. The radical government lasted six years, in a sense culminating in the Festival of Britain, to be followed by the first of a series of consumer-oriented new prosperity conservative governments. It was felt at the time that much of the style of this new conservatism was expressed by euphoria generated at the Coronation of a young Queen two years after the change of government. The three State occasions then span a period of marked differences in social and political climate in which the symbolism of the nation as community should be a barometer of expectations about the political community.

Ritual and the Nation State

The difficulties that arise with the use of a concept of ritual are that the term has been used so often in so many different contexts that it would not be difficult to

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Media + identity

become bogged down in justification and explanation. I shall therefore describe some reasons for my use of ritual fairly arbitrarily and not attempt to consider all the implications. The first point is that ritual collects a class of occasions which are felt to be peculiarly significant for the collectivity. The process of imbuing the occasion with formal significance is frequently accomplished through the use of distinctive forms of dress, ceremonial settings and a formal, often archaic, form of speech. As these marking devices, dress, settings and speech are among the most important ways of marking drama from reality it is unsurprising that ritual ceremonies are frequently described in very theatrical terms. Ritual occasions therefore seem to be highly self-conscious, in the way that we say that actors are necessarily conscious of playing with role and identity, but they are stagings which purport to be natural in that they are not put on for commercial benefit or political advantage.

The dramatic core to ritual alerts our attention to a second important feature. This is that drama works through structural categories. The idiosyncracies of a particular narrative are dependent upon shared categories of relationship, identity, time and orderliness for comprehensibility and meaning. In a ritual ceremony which is not usually organized about the telling of particular narrative the forms of presentation are more clearly about themselves. The meanings being enacted are those of a necessity of structure and what is being celebrated is the ability to impose order: 'collective ritual can be seen as an especially dramatic attempt to bring some particular part of life firmly and definitely into orderly control' (Moore and Myerhoff, 1977: 3).

Part of the meaning of a ritual is that collectivity is shown to be possible and that doubts and tensions are formally proscribed. The essence of a ritual is that a collectivity is postulated or affirmed which might otherwise only have an ambiguous social existence. This does not mean that all participants in the ritual will be equally convinced of its truth nor that when there is an unequal division of power within a collectivity the more powerful will not use their access to staging rituals as ways of legitimating their authority and precluding alternative political arrangements. Thus, for example, traditional celebrations within an institution such as a school will, at least in part, work to affirm the unbridgeable status divisions between teachers and pupils. The political character of ritual is therefore always present, particularly in civic rituals, but these political aspects are usually expressed paradoxically through being denied in favour of an integrated community.

Bocock has suggested four types of ritual in industrial society which vary by the nature of the sponsoring authority. These are religious, civic, life-cycle and aesthetic rituals although Bocock recognizes that these are analytic distinctions and any particular ritual may contain elements from more than one type. Civic rituals, for example, have a tendency to spread and take over other types of ritual such as secular marriages and funerals, and there is an increasing subordination of religious concerns to State pomp on the occasions of life-cycle rituals of members of the Royal Family. The flowering of civic ritual has been closely interdependent upon the development of national, secular publics and means of communication between such publics. Public life is interrelated with civic ritual in two ways: first, an increasing proportion of media space is devoted to both the rituals and the activities front and backstage of ritual performers to the extent that, as I shall argue, civic ritual has become a distinctive genre of mass communication; second, the spectacular character of civic ritual in mass society has come increasingly to con-

sist of the degree of media attention so that ever larger audiences can be ever more intimately present although their participation remains vicarious.

A nation is an abstract collectivity because it is too big a social entity to be experienced by an individual. Therefore the 'we-feeling' of the community has to be continually engendered by opportunities for identification as the nation is being manufactured: 'A nation becomes 'one and indivisible' through a continual process of communalization. . . . The most effective symbols of implementing the process are those of common historical fate, of common triumphs of the past: national history bespeaking of grandeur; a national mission; assurance of the nation's worth for mankind' (Gerth and Mills, 1954: 296-297). The use of manufacture in relation to communalization is not meant to imply that it is done cynically, but rather that specific people have to be employed in the management, staging and publicity which is part of ceremonial festivals. The interdependence of mass media and civic ritual only extends the army of presenters. The stock of national images and the rhetoric of their presentation have continually to be reconsidered, developed and extended in terms of what presenters perceive the public mood and expectations to be. The mystical significance of master symbols of the nation does not preclude the inclusion of elements of mundane experience. As Kingsley Martin (1962: 116) has pointed out of the Queen's father: 'the importance of his reign is that he restored the ideal conception of the domestically correct and conventional monarch. . . . In so doing he laid the foundation on which the new TV Monarch was built.' The marriage of the mass media and the most traditional institutional symbol of the nation was actively being consummated during the years 1945-1953, which span these festivals.

Media and civic rituals

I have stressed the interdependence of civic ritual with mass media of communication in the urban industrial state, to the point of claiming that such rituals are a distinctive genre of media programming. There seem to be several reasons for this interdependence and they can be organized into those relating to civic ritual and those relating to features of mass communication. The first point is that if such rituals are dramatizations of the nation as a symbolic community then the infinite reproducibility of media performance makes audiences possible on a scale previously unimaginable. Indeed it is the number and complexity of the publics which the audience constitutes that ensures they are essentially abstract for ritual sponsors. Thus, it is not just that ritual makes the abstract nation tangible. Media organizations supposedly acting as the voice of public opinion necessarily usurp the public on whose behalf they speak. It must be so because the pressures of performance production preclude any adequate process of consultation; public opinion is those attitudes available to producers. The sponsors of civic ritual in seeking to democratize the appeal of that which they are staging are forced to adapt to the expectations and presuppositions of the communications forms which make their audience accessible. In doing so the dramatic impact of the ritual is transformed. Of course, for those present at the procession, service or whatever, the primary emotional impact is still present; but they must be aware that for the vicariously listening or viewing mass audience they as onlookers are as essential for the success of the spectacle as more starring performers. There can be no single response then but for performers through onlookers and spectators a series of more

or less self-conscious involvement with ritual as programme material. The initial aura of the occasion cannot be retrieved only the potential of the new level of performance can be pursued.

For media producers the attractiveness of civic ritual as a programming resource closely parallels the points made above. The concept of a dramatic spectacle is of a highly formalized parade of social types in an elaborate setting organized by a narrative in which moral certitudes are affirmed in ways which often combine inducing awe in the audience with sentimental involvement. As such civic rituals are spectacular displays for which the framework of audience interest can be presumed. There is an easy combination of news as happening with dramatic sequencing so that the twin criteria of immediacy and significance are self-evidently satisfied. It is relevant in this respect to note that programme producers are likely to feel themselves faced mainly with technical problems of ensuring access, continuity and exhaustiveness rather than more complex issues such as the point of view of whose side should be represented. Technical problems can be solved with ingenuity and enthusiasm leading to the sort of uncritical praise found in contemporary newspaper reports; a process that is doubly reassuring for producers who lack any deep familiarity with the public on whose behalf they are staging the presentation. Finally, it is because civic ritual is about the nation as symbolic community that a nation-wide appeal can be presumed. There is none of the competitiveness between genres associated with conventional programming, the ritual speaks for itself and indeed seems to offer a distillation of what national broadcasting should do best.

The further implication of this argument is that the dramatic dimension to collective experience will not just be retained in mass society but will be importantly extended and transformed in the cultural forms of mass communication. It may well be that there are laws or institutional forms to public drama which help to determine structural change (cf. Klapp, 1964, chap. 9). If this is so it takes us some way towards explaining a paradox in the politics of mass society—that the majority of men and women are able to endorse the commonsense, middle-of-the-road rhetoric of institutionalized normality while at the same time being intermittently willing to pursue sectional interests. The political constituencies of mass society are not consistently based on lines of economic cleavage such as class but are an imprecise mixture of quasi-ritualized rhetoric of consensus and shifting more localised concerns based on occupation, leisure interests, generation, race and sex etc.

The studies of media content that have been published in recent years have unfortunately in general been inspired by a desire to display bias and partiality in media representations of topics such as industrial disputes or patterns of criminality. Unfortunate because such studies impute an objectivity to the 'real news' which is impossible and because the charge of bias is bitterly resented by individual media producers. In quarrels over accuracy the ritualistic character of the cast list and motivating dialogue in political drama is too often ignored. An example of the sort of study that might be done more often is Phillip Elliott's (1980) work on newspaper coverage of a bombing campaign in England by Irish Republicans.

Elliott is in this study describing what he calls an affirmatory ritual—a ritual in two senses. First, that it is a standardized way of describing a class of political events, and, second, that the very patterning of the representation ritualizes the

normal political processes which are being implicitly contrasted with these abnormal events. The organizational structure of British broadcasting should mean that the homogeneity of perspective implicit in ritual will be emphasized particularly when broadcasting in Britain was all produced by the BBC. It has been suggested that the austere legacy of public service associated with the name of John Reith is perhaps a mythology (and certainly did not exist in the simple form by which it is usually characterized). Reith did, however, inspire and sustain an institutional ethos or a corporatist spirit. This has continued to guide individual producers as to appropriate attitudes. Such a corporate ethos which, particularly internally, is often praised as professionalism in the public service, is especially significant in the forms of cultural production which Raymond Williams (1981: 55) has recently described as intermediate institutions. Here the institution depends upon public revenue in some form or another but is allowed a significant degree of autonomy in determining day-to-day production policies. The importance of corporate spirit is that it will inform and structure the terms through which affirmatory rituals are articulated. The conceptions of the public and public interest integrating different forms of programming will both set the agenda for a certain level of political participation and help to determine expectations for the ritual performances of public life (in this respect see the study by Blumler *et al.*, 1971).

The Victory Parade 1946

The Victory Parade had to be more hurriedly prepared for than the other two festivals for although the Corporation had been planning for Victory in Europe for two years, the decision to hold a celebratory procession on 8 June 1946 was only formally announced by Antler in the House of Commons in February.

At the first meeting to discuss how the BBC should cover it the Director General decided that programmes for that day 'should be generally gay and cheerful' (BBC Written Archives Centre, subsequently referred to as WAC, R34/920, 1 February 1946). Another early choice determining the character of the occasion turned on style of reporting. In the run-up to VE night the decision had been made to present the celebration through the responses of common people as far as possible. This had led to an emphasis upon 'vox pop' broadcasting which had been extensively and favourably commented upon at the time. But the plans for coverage of the Victory Parade suggest a Corporate attitude of sympathetic observation rather than popular identification. Of the five commentary positions selected to cover the event only one was provided with a hand-grip microphone with extension suitable for crowd interviews. There were in addition commentators in the procession itself and in an aircraft circling above, but while these may be said to have added to the breadth of coverage they did not speak from the viewpoint of the man in the street. Similarly the coverage of the evening celebrations had a mix of fixed commentary positions with mobile transmitters in a launch and an aircraft, only the commentary position in Piccadilly Circus had a possibility of direct crowd participation.

An uncertainty in the Corporation's attitude stemmed from more widespread doubts over the purpose and form of this particular ritual. The Conservative press was generally hostile to the idea of a Victory Parade—despite its normal enthusiasm for militarism and chauvinistic self-congratulation. Perhaps because of

the conviction that the conflict just ended had been a 'people's war' it had led to the first majority government pledged to massive social change and the Parade celebrating the successful accomplishments in that war was to be held under the aegis of that government. It was therefore only to be expected that there would be some crucial differences between this Parade as a celebration of military valour and the normal military procession. One difference, for example, is that the ceremonial route around certain predictable streets in the West End of London was significantly extended by sending one of the constituent elements in the Parade—the motorized column—on a tour of the proletarian East End. The rationale was that it was the working class districts which had borne at least the initial brunt of the urban bombing campaign, but to celebrate their part in the national resistance was to broaden the concept of the fighting forces and marked a significant shift in the appropriate audience for rituals of national celebration.

Another difference was the emphasis given to the supplementary services. There were of course a flotilla of cars carrying victorious allied leaders and commanders of the naval, army and air services to head the procession, but behind them came a further thirty units of vehicles covering civil defence services, agriculture, transport services, public utilities and general services including mobile canteens from the YMCA and the Church Army and Salvation Army, and National Savings vans. Such a proportion of civilian service vehicles is I think interesting and particularly that a national focus was stressed, so that, for example, as well as two buses from London Transport, two buses from Halifax and Manchester Corporation Passenger Transport Services took part in the mechanized column. The concept of those engaged in the war effort was being significantly extended.

A similar theme of the breadth of the effort that had been necessary to win the war was emphasized in the composition of the marching column. In addition to the massed ranks of troops, who themselves had a strong international flavour, there were two civilian contingents. The first comprised representatives of the Police, National Fire Service, Civil Defence, Nursing Services and Agriculture. The second contingent was even more broadly based and included representatives of transport services including docks, more Civil Defence services such as fire guard and raid spotters, representatives of utility services such as post, gas, electricity and water. This contingent culminated in representatives of what the supplementary notes prepared within the BBC for commentators summarized as: 'workers from every part of the country and from every conceivable trade which helped us along the road to victory. Men from the factories, the mines, the shipyards will march with women who will represent the millions of women who, in addition to running their own homes, worked in every side of the industrial effort' (WAC, T14/12917, 1, n.d.).

This shift in tone from a parade of a purely military type to one of a more embracing democratic character was well captured in a long editorial in *The Times* the day before the event itself:

There can be few indeed among the spectators who do not feel that they are also qualified by service for some place in the parade, were there room for all who shared in the achievement. That, indeed, is what separates it from the victory celebrations of earlier years. Once the civilian part of the nation saluted the fighting men as sole victors, now the whole people does honour to the whole. It is an act of corporate communion between all sections of the people, and acknowledgement of interdependence by each and all; a renewal of that essential unity of spirit which the war revealed and intensified, and in which it must trust no less implicitly in the strenuous and perhaps dangerous years that lie ahead (7 June 1946-7).

For the BBC the challenge of representing this 'act of corporate communion' presented peculiar difficulties.

Obviously for the majority of people in the country living outside London their main mode of access would be through radio, but this could be either a vicarious listening-in or an active participation in a democratic celebration. By and large, the Corporation ducked the latter option. Instead the spectacle as a thing external to the audience was emphasized and the formal elements of anthems, displays etc. were rigidly adhered to. In effect this meant that rather than take up the challenge of what victory this parade might have been celebrating, there was an unnecessary emphasis upon military ritual.

The supplementary notes provided for commentators had little to say about those representatives of millions of workers, particularly women, who were included in the second civilian contingent, other than the brief passage quoted above. It seems that the lack of military qualities made them virtually invisible—even to the point that the only remarkable feature of industrial workers as the different coloured overalls or boiler suits they would wear. There was a rich supply of details for the military personnel—decorations, awards for distinguished service and other medals. Likewise military features were produced wherever possible for non-military participants. For the engineers and service corps stress was laid on how often REME recovery teams had been forced to go into the midst of battle, in order to carry out their service and support rôles. The supplementary note on the Women's Voluntary Services contingent could only offer this information to assist the commentator: 'Miss K. M. Halpin, O.B.E., Regional Administrator *i/c*. The detachment includes personnel with decorations as follows—5 O.B.E., 3 M.B.E., 1 B.E.M.' (WAC, T14/12917, n.d.) while the most notable feature of the Home Office contingent was that it was led by two rescue dogs who had been decorated with the Dicken Medal awarded by the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals.

The issues raised by a study of the representation of a civic ritual such as the Victory Parade in 1946 concern ritual in social democratic societies. There is some evidence that the victory being celebrated was conceived by those who planned it in interestingly unusual ways and that public broadcasting had an opportunity to act as a medium for popular participation in ways that were correspondingly challenging. The opportunity was not taken up and there was instead a repetitive stress on predictable features such as military function, bravery, technical complexity and occasional colourful features such as the severally repeated note that the Commander of the West African Contingent in the Parade was an exceptional 'Big Game Hunter'. The character of the occasion was in general presented as uncomplicated national integration, formality and celebration of military virtues. This is not to imply a lack of popularity. The contemporary press was united in praising Corporation coverage and listeners' appreciation indices were consistently high. This should be unsurprising as, of course, the public at large had no more idea of what ritual in a changing society might be like than did Corporation executives—the familiar might therefore be especially welcome.

Festival of Britain

The Festival of Britain posed the nature of collective celebration in a social democracy even more forcefully. The suggestion was resented in certain quarters because it was closely identified with a Labour Government and 'the idea it expressed most,

that of the post-war Welfare State' (Strong, 1976: 9); and as Asa Briggs (1979: 19) has commented: 'for the more conservative (with a small c) its predominant styles; "anti-commercial" in tone, already graded.' It was a Festival that celebrated social change, without being particularly partisan, from the viewpoint of the common, anonymous, man and woman. In this respect one paradoxical aspect gradually became apparent—for a Festival so identified with post-war Labourism it seemed to celebrate a mood of change which 'marked the climax of the age of austerity and the shift to a new era of affluence' (Briggs, 1979: 392), an era soon to be identified with Conservative governments.

This meant that the Festival was intrinsically political in that it was about what British society could and should be like even if this was to be articulated through versions of previous achievements: 'The Festival tried to regain the national identity of Britain which people had felt during the war: in the South Bank Exhibition, and various local events throughout the country the nation's achievements and goals for the future were to be displayed. The ideal motives about influencing civilisation filled the air again' (Brown, 1978: 245). The political basis to the Festival did not mean, however, that the rituals which constituted the opening of the Festival were significantly different—there were the conventional elements of monarchy, processions, religious services and formalized rhetoric of endorsement. It was rather that these elements were set in a significantly changed political context and the BBC's rôle in articulating the meaning of ritual for this context became particularly problematic.

This Festival differed from the other two under consideration as it was spread over several months rather than concentrated on a single day and even at its inauguration there was not a single procession but a number of ceremonies. On the morning of 3 May there was a royal procession from Buckingham Palace to St Paul's where there was a service of dedication followed by a royal broadcast and the return procession. That afternoon the Festival Gardens at Battersea were opened by Princess Margaret and that evening the Royal Festival Hall was ceremonially opened by the King, an occasion which included another religious service and a special concert. Finally, although the South Bank site was not formally opened in its own right there was a ceremonial visit by the Royal Family the following morning of 4 May.

Although the Festival embodied interesting innovations in national consciousness the opening was set very firmly within traditional forms for ceremonial occasions. The BBC recognized its responsibilities and kept very much to a predictable style. For example the commentary positions for the Royal Procession were at Buckingham Palace, Victoria Memorial, The Citadel, Bush House, Temple Bar, Ludgate Hill and St Paul's, both outlining a traditional route and symbolizing the ceremonial rôle of the commentary. A similar solemnity is shown by the Procession, Service of Dedication and Opening Ceremony being carried simultaneously on both Home and Light Programmes. It is true that on the evening of 3 May the opening was marked on the Home Service by an outside broadcast round various provincial towns including a visit to the Festival ship, and that the King's visit to the South Bank site the next day was followed by a microphone tour co-ordinated by Wynford Vaughan Thomas, but these were hardly exercises in participating. The main innovation was a further advance in the acceptance of broadcasting as a key element in the ceremonial structure. First, television cameras were allowed inside St Paul's to transmit the Dedication Service; and, second, the Speech of

Opening by the King was integrally linked to the Service but was designed to be broadcast. And so, for the first time secular ceremony, religious dedication and national broadcasting were combined as equally important elements in constituting a public occasion.

In their initial attitudes when planning for the Festival there were significant differences between the radio and television services. For the staff of the radio services the Festival was seen at first as primarily a source of news items, although it was recognized that the BBC might complement this material with Festival-type programmes of its own. This was despite the fact that by early 1950 it was clear that Festival organizers had a considerably greater rôle as publicist in mind for the Corporation. It was decided that actual publicity: 'will be judged on its news value' (WAC, R34/363, 19 April 1950), and while recognizing that there was a responsibility to make people festival-minded, 'quality was the aim rather than quantity and any plans were to be subject to "listeners" and "viewers"' capacity for sustaining that interest' (WAC, R34/363, 25 April 1950). In part this reluctance to become too directly involved stemmed from unwillingness to be seen as an arm of Government, partly from unwillingness to become involved in any extra expenditure, and partly from an uncertainty within the Corporation over the extent to which it should identify with the Festival's essential purpose: 'to publicise British life and British achievements both to our own people and to the rest of the world' (Festival Council, 1952: 15).

Compared with this foot-dragging response in radio, television programmers were not only quicker off the mark in planning for the Festival (WAC, T14/441/1, 3 February 1948), but were also committed to the idea that television was part of the Festival, for British achievements and technical accomplishments in the field of television were an element in the story the Festival was trying to tell. This enthusiasm also stemmed from the rapid growth in the popularity of television. In June 1946 around one thousand three hundred licences were held but this number had grown to over six hundred thousand by May 1951. Of course the mass audience was still to be reached but such rapid growth made reasonable the producers' suggestion that they were part of the rapid social change they celebrated. The initial ambitious plans for there to be a working television studio on the South Bank site where the public could both see programmes being made and perhaps participate in transmitted items had to be shelved under the recurrent budget restrictions that constrained the Festival. The architect, Wells Coates, did however, design both a television pavilion and the Tele Kinema—which subsequently became the present National Film Theatre. Television was therefore part of the Festival as part of the spectacle, but the television service also tried hard to make the Festival a central element in its programme service throughout the summer. Two new television outside broadcast units were assigned to the South Bank and Battersea Gardens sites for the duration of the Festival and other outside television broadcast facilities were brought in to cover national and regional events as necessary. Based on these facilities *Festival Close-up* was broadcast weekly with further regular programmes in both alternate weeks and monthly. These plus other broadcasts produced 46 television outside broadcasts from Festival sites over the summer and there were in addition frequent visits for material by programmes such as Children's Hour.

The programmes produced to express the spirit of the Festival were of two kinds: prestige programmes and programmes about Britain. Through the former the BBC

sought to 'make its own particular contribution, in the spirit of the Festival, by special programmes of an outstanding character during the summer months' (from the Introduction to the BBC's contribution to the Festival of Britain published by the BBC in December 1951). The latter were programmes that particularly addressed the Britishness of the society that was being celebrated.

Prestige programmes devised to accompany the Festival were a heterogeneous set. In part prestige was interpreted as the best and so budgets were agreed for expensive items such as a special season of plays by Shaw and Congreve together with broadcasts of specially commissioned plays from Rattigan and Priestly. At least this collection of playwrights were all British and so related loosely to the Festival. Whereas an equally prestigious outside broadcast of *Così Fan Tutte* from Glyndebourne could make sense in relation to cultural standards only ambiguously relevant to a Festival of Britain. Documentaries were prepared on the Metropolitan Police and a London hospital but it is unclear whether these were taken to be paradigmatically British or were symbols of excellence. It was only in the area of lighter entertainment that the historical dimension to the Festival was exploited. For example Light Entertainment built a musical comedy around the 1851 Festival and also staged five hour-long programmes on the five decades of changing styles of entertainment since 1901. Finally, four films were specially made for television, these were two reel specials with themes that seem to me to be very festival-minded — 'the sea', 'the land', 'industry' and 'the future'.

As for the Britishness of Britain this was largely conveyed through outside broadcasts whose numbers increased by 50 per cent during the Festival. An earlier suggestion, by Norman Collins then Controller Television, was that the Festival provided an opportunity to capture: 'the face and pageant of London', via a conducted television tour taking in: 'the Pool, the Tower, St. Pauls, Westminster Abbey, St. James' Park, Hyde Park Corner, Marble Arch, the Zoo etc.' (WAC, T14/441/2, 25 April 1950). In a more lyrical vein Cecil McGivern, Collins' successor, proposed that outside broadcasts should try to express: 'The changing scene, the cities and hamlets, the store of treasures in our museums and art galleries, the sports and pastimes, the traditions and ceremonies, the ritual which a long history has bestowed upon us' (WAC, T14/441/2, n.d.). Participating in the Festival from this perspective meant documenting the nation visually, as a rich repository of historic tradition and a way of life, a considerably more innovative approach than broadcasting *Così Fan Tutte*. There is also, it should be noted, a fascinating correspondence between this approach to British cultural distinctiveness and the assurance that: 'as outside broadcasts are *television, real television*' (ibid., emphasis in original), such programmes were appropriate to a Festival of Britain.

Although the radio services were initially less enthusiastic than television the Festival was not ignored by radio. By the time it opened broadcasting on all channels and services was dominated by Festival-related material. In May 1951, the first month of the Festival there were 285 radio programmes broadcast which related to or were based upon the Festival of Britain. Less than half the national broadcasts were carried on the Light Programme, these were a mixture of variety shows, popular entertainments magazine programmes and talks, 77 programmes were carried on the Home Service, after the programme concerned with the opening ceremonies and other formal occasions, these including a number of concerts, serious broadcasts (such as a visit to the Science Exhibition which was clearly more educational than entertaining), and a large number of talks, discus-

sions and commentaries on themes raised by aspects of the Festival. The Third Programme was more austere and restrained. It relayed nine concerts from the Festival site and had four talks about it.

An important strand in the inspiration for the Festival was that it should not be confined to London, nor should it be content with ephemeral celebrations: 'an excuse merely to reiterate the nation's past glories, but that permanent improvements and amenities . . . were as much a part of the Festival idea as exhibitions, concerts and pageants' (Festival Council 1952: 4). If the Festival was to succeed there had to be some form of local participation in the Festival: something more than the Festival travelling ship, the *Campania*, or by the Travelling Land Exhibition although these were important. If the BBC as a public institution were to adequately engage with this broader sense of the Festival then regional radio broadcasting became particularly important.

If local broadcasting was to be successful it had to be more than retrospective—the temptation to see the provinces as an endless archive of quaint folkisms runs very deep in British culture. It also had to avoid being either vicarious—as in 'local man visits metropolitan wonders' or as in 'London orchestra gives concert in our town tonight', or merely officious—as in reports of the squirearchy and local governments treating each other at a civic banquet. While there were elements of all these types of programmes in local schedules, there are interesting and consistent differences between regions. If one can generalize, however, it is that programmes on what was happening in the region as part of the Festival, such as outside broadcast visits and feature programmes, for example the West Region broadcast on Fawley Oil Refinery on 9 May 1951, or the extended series of programmes that Midland Region produced about the County of the Week, Northamptonshire in mid-May, all combined to spread the occasion nationwide in interestingly unusual ways.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the confusion over the rôles of publicist as opposed to reporter which was characteristic of home broadcasting, was swiftly precluded for the Overseas Services. As early as February 1949 the BBC's Internal Festival of Britain Committee decided that their task 'would be to give advance publicity, and when the time came to carry concerts etc., and to "report" the Festival in all possible ways' (WAC, R34/363, 22 February 1949). The notion of report has been marked in this minute because, as a later minute makes clear, the Overseas Services had to have regard: 'to their special obligations towards Overseas Listeners' (WAC, R34/363, 25 April 1950). Special obligations which seem to have been less duties owed to those overseas than duties owed to the British Government. A letter from the Private Secretary to the Privy Council Office to the Chairman of the Governors asking about Corporation plans for Festival publicity overseas reminds him 'This is a matter in which the Lord President is personally interested, and I am wondering would you kindly let me know the current position for his information' (WAC, R34/363, 2 February 1951). Within three days the Controller European Services had produced a memorandum describing in detail the planned range of programmes related to the Festival planned, and reassured him that 'since first January we have noticeably stepped up publicity on the Festival of Britain to all territories this side of the Iron Curtain' (WAC, R34/363, 6 February 1951). Governmental nervousness about BBC commitment to publicity may have been related to one potential justification for the Festival. It is all very well for the official 'Story of the Festival' to complain, 'On no aspect of the Festival

of Britain was there more widespread misunderstanding than on its rôle in attracting tourists' (Festival Council, 1952: 30). On its own admission it was 'one of the main objectives' and the figures cited in the report do not confirm that it was an aim that was 'fully achieved', indeed for reasons beyond the Government's control such as the Korean War this area was a comparative failure.

Coronation

The third festival, the Coronation, was the most traditional in many ways but coming early in a period of social stability and affluence, it also presaged an ideology of post-war Conservatism. To the extent that the BBC saw itself as looking and commenting on behalf of the nation conservatively (with a small c) then the Coronation should have posed fewer problems in terms of attitude and stance etc. than the previous festivals. In practice new problems were raised by the previous successes of the Corporation. In that it had become generally accepted that civic rituals were public occasions staged and accessible to the media, and thereby mass audiences, it was hard to devise criteria for restricting public access. It was because previously mysterious parts of traditional ritual became literally visible that this Coronation, more than any other royal ceremonial, marked a turning point between symbolism articulating constitutional relationships and ritual as dramatic spectacle. This was realized at the time and was controversial, although the spectacular implications of monarchy as superstar were not fully appreciated. What is particularly interesting is that debates over media participation in civic ritual were not so much raised for the BBC by the wider political society but were initiated by the Corporation in pursuit of what they felt to be the public's rights.

In considering this point we have to recognize a shift in the relative status of radio and television as national broadcasting media. It is one of the established truths of British media history that television came of age with the Coronation. What is less often appreciated is that this shift in relative importance had been tacitly accepted within the Corporation for at least the year spent in preparation for the Coronation. This meant that policy issues centred on television's coverage of the event, while radio was treated largely as a matter for administration and organizational routines. The central reason for this was given in a memorandum from Head of Outside Broadcasts (Sound) summarizing their experience of the Coronation, when he remarked almost complacently that a television monitor 'gave everyone in the sound control point added confidence. On several occasions it enabled me to advise commentators about things that were taking place which they were missing' (WAC, R34/321, 13 August 1953).

Although state ceremonial occasions were public events this had not meant that they were accessible to every member of the public. Television made such accessibility possible and in doing so made it clear that 'public' had in practice previously been used to refer to a social elite, in particular through two innovations.

The first overrode the prejudice that there should be an implicit hierarchy in line-of-sight so that more important people had a better view than less important. Through their television receivers anonymous viewers would have a better view than, for example, Churchill. For some this was self-evidently inappropriate. The second innovation was that television meant that every part of the Service could be broadcast live. There did not seem to be a problem with the Procession but it was very strongly held in some quarters that live broadcasting should not follow the

Queen past the Screen in the Abbey. It is important to realize that it was the live factor that was crucial as newsteel cameras would be present throughout but their coverage required processing and could be edited. The main objection was that if there was a fluff by anyone it would be picked up and might undercut the solemnity of the occasion, but this in itself seems to point a deeper conviction that public ceremonies are primarily dramatic forms requiring careful staging and management. Both innovations therefore violated previous conventions of dramatic distance particularly in respect of unprivileged members of the public.

It is relevant to ask why the Corporation chose to fight for live telecasting, how they countered oppositional doubts, and how they managed the business of a suitable tone and style. A key figure in the Corporation's fight was the Head of Religious Broadcasting, Revd F. H. House. In an early letter he sent to the Dean of Westminster he set out the main points of the Corporation's case (WAC, T16/169, 17 July 1952). These were that the intrusiveness of broadcasting could be met through technical sophistication—for example careful planning of which shots to use at different moments in the ceremony, through the use of wide-angle lens, and through good production techniques such as shifting 'in a fraction of a second' to something less controversial. Problems of taste could be met through a monitor who would sit beside the producer to advise him. He concluded that as the principle of televising religious services had previously been conceded, 'There are very strong religious and national reasons for letting as many people as possible share in the service through television' (ibid). The case against television was doubts over whether mechanical intrusion could be minimized allied with a strong repugnance for theatricality and distaste for highly symbolic moments becoming secularized through public accessibility.

The debate over the form of television coverage was therefore in effect a debate over forms of public drama. It was generally agreed that the symbolism of the Coronation Service culminated in a dramatic transformation of identity, which appropriately took place in a part of the Abbey called the Theatre; what was not agreed was the right of the public at large (and particularly the implications of the exercise of that right) to be present. It would be wrong to characterize the debate as a simple conflict between populism and elitism. While the popular press, such as the *Herald*, the *Mirror* and the *Express*, were all in favour of televisual participation the opposition came not just from conservative journals. For example, the *Sunday People* argued that television was an inappropriate onlooker, almost a peeping tom, at such a sacred ritual. Corporation executives were motivated by a desire to establish television as an integral element in all public occasions and 'as part of the national life'. The meaning of this phrase is the crux of the relationship between broadcasting and public drama, and some light is thrown on its use in this context in a confidential memorandum from the Director of Television Broadcasting to Huw Wheldon, summarizing the implications of the Coronation telecast: 'The effect of the broadcast both in this country and abroad of direct participation in the ceremony and as the ceremony is a service of the Church the religious effect has been profound. . . . The acceptance of television as part of the life of this country comes latest, as with radio, to the governing classes, because they have the least leisure and know how to use what they have' (WAC, T16/169, n.d.).

The importance of television getting full access to the Coronation Service was so self-evident within the Corporation that nobody seems to have queried the internal decision to ignore for as long as possible the Earl Marshal's initial decision to

exclude cameras East of the Screen. While planning for how the rest of the Service could be filmed continued, effective lobbying and political pressurizing of all sorts to have this decision reversed continued unabated. It soon became apparent that the traditionalists could not really sustain their case for an exclusive ritual and a quietly smug memorandum dated 25 November 1952 from the Head of Outside Broadcasting Television leaked the news to colleagues that the decision was to be reversed, although there was a delay of some days before the decision was publicly announced. Although the battle had been over a small part of the whole day's happenings the symbolic significance was recognized to have been considerable.

Among the general principles which were laid down to govern the televising of the ceremony in the Abbey were 'There will be no close-ups of any person. There will be no picture of any person during (i) the Anointing, (ii) the Communion prayers, (iii) there will be no picture of any individual kneeling in worship' (WAC, T16/169, n.d.). In addition the same document formulated a distinction, originally made by the Head of Outside Broadcasts for Television, between ordinary shots and symbolic shots. The latter would focus on inanimate features of the Abbey such as 'the altar cross, the Coronation Plate or some Abbey stone work' (ibid.). As there were to be no close-ups the Service would be filmed in a mixture of midshot, longshot and symbolic shot, the latter planned to amount to at least a third of the total footage of the Service. Given this reverential approach, almost pretending not to look, it is perhaps less surprising that the transmission of the pictures on American networks intermingled with advertisements caused such consternation (Briggs, 1979: 457-473).

A concentration upon the Abbey Service was justified by its significance in transforming the meaning of ritual but it was not the only element in television coverage of the Coronation. The attitude was that the importance of the whole occasion justified unheard of expense: 'We must not let it down in any way' (McGovern, Controller, Television Programmes, WAC, T16/169, 22 September 1952). Such a matching of the scale of the occasion would have other beneficial consequences: 'Our programmes around this period should be so interesting and exciting that they will merit considerable advance publicity. They should increase our reputation. They should sell sets' (ibid.). An attitude of a commitment to extravagance set new standards of expectation: 'On the previous Saturday, May 30th, I should like a Gala Coronation Music Hall—two hours long, if (a) it must be the best Music Hall ever or it is just no good. . . . This should be the most exciting and gayest Theatre OB we have ever done or will do for a long time' (ibid.). In practice the programme ideas for the Coronation were the same old styles in the Corporation's representation of national festivals. For example, the Documentary Department was asked to generate documentaries on the East End and Edinburgh to coincide with Royal visits to those places. The Talks Department was asked to prepare programmes on the achievements of British Science over the past 25 years and 'Leading up to the Coronation, a series of programmes on the changes in the once called British Empire over the past 25 years, designed to bring out the breadth of vision of the British as a ruling and civilising force' (ibid.). Possibly most predictably of all there were the usual plans to commission a play (from someone like Rattigan) to be a major drama offering suitably bedecked with stars: 'The above should be "grand" or tender in atmosphere. If it is, could H. Tel. commission a second play, a comedy under some title like 'oop for t' Coronation', from another playwright, a good comedy or farce writer. J. B. Priestley?' (ibid.). In this frame-

work the complexities of relationship between a new monarch and the post-war political public were not even beginning to be addressed.

This was not an omission that worried the other institutionalized voice of 'British public opinion', the newspapers. They were as usual overtly concerned with the scale and complexity of BBC operations so that the international diffusion of commentary was thought more important than any consideration of the purpose of civic rituals. A major theme in press commentary on BBC preparations for the Coronation was a personalization of the commentary team, in particular the female members. Following the great day the press was unified in praise of the sensibility displayed by the Corporation, the dramatic access television produced for the public at large leading to an emphasis upon the human interest possibilities of television for British public life. This post-broadcast euphoria with what had been accomplished was shared within the Corporation—particularly when the Listener Research figures became available. It was reported that 88 per cent of the adult population was estimated to have caught at least part of the Service at the time of transmission and for the first time the television audience (56 per cent) exceeded that for radio (32 per cent). In fact all the programmes that day got good audiences; for example, the Queen's speech that evening was heard by 63 per cent of the adult population. Not only was the public interested in what the BBC made available they were also pleased with what they were offered—98 per cent of the television audience claimed complete satisfaction with what they saw. It was therefore a dramatic triumph to complete the years of the Corporation's monopoly. Some members of the Corporation might have hoped that their success would stave off the threat of commercial competition but the momentum behind the bandwagon was quite independent of the BBC's track record.

Conclusion

I have been concerned with the extent to which programming can be said to have run counter to the social content of each particular festival. In relation to the Victory Parade, the political character of the war which was explicitly addressed in the organization of the Parade was acknowledged by the BBC but was not effectively met by the broadcasts which represented the occasion. Instead the Corporation's coverage was circumspect and there was excessive reliance upon the form of the ritual at the expense of its social democratic aspirations to envisage a new type of collectivity. In relation to the Festival of Britain a judgement as to whether the coverage of ceremonies surrounding its opening ran counter to the social purposes of the Festival has to be mixed. There are several reasons for this. The first is that the ceremonial opening of the Festival was itself a little anomalous in the context of the vision of Britain that was being promoted. Second, the organization of the Festival was ambivalent over the terms and essential features of the Britain that was being celebrated. The Festival was organized by those who were in Michael Frayn's telling phrase 'liberal herbivores'—kindly, paternalistic members of the established intelligentsia. They offered a very distinctive and selective, version of British culture and offered it as something educational rather than celebratory—a style of presentation that was reflected in the narrative themes which were supposed to hold the exhibits and the pavilions together. Although the narrative idea was essentially sound as it was worked out it too often had the moral earnestness and complacency of a school text. To the extent that working class life

and experience was noticed it was as something to be preached to rather than explored as a point of view. Against this background it is unsurprising that BBC programming played safe and did not respond in any depth to the promise of a festival of the common man's experiences and achievements.

I have tried to emphasize that there were marked differences within the Corporation over programming for the Festival of Britain; attitudes were more inconsistent than in relation to either of the other Festivals being discussed. The several reasons for this inconsistency can be summarized as a fundamental ambivalence over whether the picture of Britain being created was an account of intellectual accomplishments or institutionalized achievements. To have left the safety of reference points based upon established cultural achievements would have taken festival producers and sympathetic elements in the BBC, into attempting a completely new conceptualization of British culture and community. Despite the popular mandate for the Labour Government, and perhaps partly because of the way that mandate had been used, the intellectual climate was insufficiently radical to motivate and sustain a deep re-think of contemporary cultural history. But if the Festival of Britain did not inaugurate an era of confidence and prosperity resembling the precedent set by the Great Exhibition a 100 years before, it was, in fact, followed by what has recently been described as a 'particular moment in British cultural history' when in a number of fields there were attempts 'to discover and legitimate a tradition of culture that could authentically be termed "working class"' (Dyer, 1981: 2). I do not think it misplaced to make some connections between this moment and the re-examination of Britain from the perspective of the common man involved in the Festival of 1951.

In relation to the third festival, the Coronation, it is clearer that there was no radical disjuncture between the form of representation developed within the Corporation and the social content of the ritual. And yet there were more important assumptions in the BBC's approach to the Coronation which involved significant developments in the relationship between the public and monarchical rituals—in essence it was established that the television camera acting on behalf of the public had an untrammelled right to be present at the most intimate moments of symbolic ritual. This quasi-democracy of intimate access is characteristic of politics in mass society and therefore the innovations in the coverage of the Coronation were in effect a radical transformation of the ritual form to be more consistent with its social content rather than the latter being subordinated to the former. Subsequent developments in the iconography of the Monarch towards an increasing integration of ceremonial formality with domestic normality are consistent with new modes of civic ritual in which national festivals have become effectively media occasions rather than occasions to which the media has access.

Notes

1. The substantive research reported in this paper was undertaken at the BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, Reading. The staff there were consistently helpful and co-operative and the author gratefully acknowledges their generous assistance.
2. The report of the Listener Research Department on the Victory Broadcasts of May 1945 stressed how much the naturalness and social and geographical breadth, had been appreciated: 'If there was a criticism, it was that there had been too much commentary' (WAC, LR/3470/24.5.45).

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A Critical Reader

edited by

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Nicholas Garnham, Paddy Scannell,
Philip Schlesinger and Colin Sparks



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Contents

Introduction	1
PART ONE: Approaches to cultural theory	7
Contribution to a political economy of mass-communication NICHOLAS GARNHAM	9
(X Cultural studies: two paradigms STUART HALL	33
X Codes and cultural analysis JOHN CORNER	49
Women and the cultural industries MICHELE MATTELART	63
PART TWO: Intellectuals and cultural production	82
In search of the intellectuals: some comments on recent theory PHILIP SCHLESINGER	84
Intellectuals, the 'information society' and the disappearance of the public sphere PHILIP ELLIOTT	105
Pierre Bourdieu and the sociology of culture: an introduction NICHOLAS GARNHAM AND RAYMOND WILLIAMS	116
The production of belief: contribution to an economy of symbolic goods PIERRE BOURDIEU	131
The aristocracy of culture PIERRE BOURDIEU	164
Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston: the creation of an organizational base for high culture in America PAUL DIMAGGIO	194