Queen Victoria: the Mother of Modern Celebrity.

An Honors Thesis (Honors 499)

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Abstract

Celebrity culture has become a pervasive multi-million dollar industry. Our daily lives are saturated with media coverage of celebrities through magazines, newspapers, television news, talk shows, advertisements, and the internet. It is difficult to imagine a time before Hollywood, but by tracing the roots of modern celebrity, we can better understand this global phenomenon. By providing information on the changing status of the British monarchy, the growth of the media and advertising industries, the development of consumerism and by documenting advances in technology, I demonstrate that modern celebrity traces its roots to the reign of Queen Victoria.

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Images


Figure 13  "Jay’s." Queen, 1890. Cited in Lori A. Loeb, Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 87.


Figure 18  "Unauthorized use of royal figure for advertising." Cited in T.R. Nevett, Advertising in Britain: A History (London: Fletcher & Son Limited, 1982), insert between 114-5.


Figure 22  "My Queen Vel Vel." Lady’s Pictorial, 1893. Cited in Lori A. Loeb, Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 94.

Figure 23  "Royal Infant’s Preservative, 1872" (Bodleian Library: The John Johnson Collection, Food 8). Cited by Lori A. Loeb, Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 93.
Figure 24  “Matchless Metal Polish” n.d. (Bodleian Library: The John Johnson Collection, Oil and Candles II.). Cited in Lori A. Loeb, Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 89.


Figure 30  “Cover of Baby’s A.B.C.” Cited in Adrienne Munich, Queen Victoria’s Secrets (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 103.
The death of Princess Diana on August 31, 1997 brought a nation to its knees and impacted the lives of millions of people, most of whom had never even met her. Even the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, announced: “I am utterly devastated. The whole of our country, all of us, will be in a state of shock and mourning. Diana was a wonderful, warm and compassionate person who people, not just in Britain, but throughout the world loved and will be mourned as a friend.”¹ Affectionately titled “The People’s Princess,” Diana had a way of attracting attention and admiration from the public. In fact, some of her fans even speculated that it was Diana’s popularity which brought about her untimely death. Indeed, at the time of her death, members of the media known as the paparazzi were earning hundreds of thousands of dollars for exclusive photographs of the princess.² Unfortunately, this obsessive media coverage is not unique to Princess Diana, but a burden shared by nearly all modern celebrities. There are hundreds of ad campaigns, magazines, websites, and television channels dedicated to updating fans on every insignificant detail of the lives of the rich and famous. If there was no public demand for these services, they would not exist. The paparazzi play a necessary part in assisting a celebrity’s maintenance of his or her status by providing a sense of accessibility to the fans as well as a consumable good. The media niche currently occupied by the paparazzi was developed out of the unprecedented relationship Queen Victoria was forced to establish with the media to satisfy public interest. Before the growth of the media


and advertising industries along with the technological developments which occurred during
the reign of Queen Victoria, celebrity in the modern sense was not possible because the fame
of a celebrity relies upon the novelty of his or her image, his or her accessibility to the public,
and the production of consumable goods related to him or her.

Celebrities are separated from the 'ordinary' public by either possessing a novel
characteristic such as beauty or talent, or by doing something unusual. Queen Victoria was no
exception. Not only was Queen Victoria a female ruler in a patriarchal society, which was
unusual enough, but she was also young, available, and she refused to hide her 'amorous
disposition'.³ Her 'amorous disposition', as Munich puts it, was an affront to Victorian
values in and of itself, but when officials began to suspect that her sights were set on her
advisor, Lord Melbourne, Victoria's sexuality became a political concern worthy of media
attention. John Plunkett, author of Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, attributes this
negative attention to Victoria's single status more than her choice of interest, arguing that "the
potency of her glamour and desirability owed much to her overtly sexual status as an eligible
Virgin Queen."⁴

The Victorians feared a sexually potent, independent female ruler. There was a
widespread belief that powerful "women in public might turn men into women."⁵ "The Field
Marshall of the British Empire" (figure 1) is just one visual manifestation of this concern. It
portrays Queen Victoria as a military commander leading petticoat-clad English soldiers into
battle despite their protests regarding her choice of uniform. Clearly, the soldiers in the

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⁴ John Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 85.
⁵ Lynn Hunt, The Family Romance of the French Revolution (Los Angeles: University of California
Press, 1992), 90.
cartoon feel emasculated under Queen Victoria's control, just as Parliament suspected they would. Other objections to female rule manifested themselves in the form of erotica: obscene letters, pornographic literature, and death threats aimed at the young Queen. In fact, Victoria survived seven assassination attempts during her lifetime which were provoked, according to some of the assassins, by her rejection of their love.

Initially, Queen Victoria did little to allay these mounting concerns. According to Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich, there was a “remarkable disruption caused by the young queen’s firm refusal to allow any tampering with her ladies,” a political scandal known historically as the ‘Bedchamber crisis’. It was customary for the leaders of Parliament to change members of the queen’s household, however, Queen Victoria insisted that she did not discuss politics with her ladies of the bedchamber and therefore it was not the prerogative of the government to choose them for her. This unprecedented refusal of cooperation from a queen had the effect of reinforcing the fear of petticoat rule. Increasingly nervous government officials sought to rectify the situation immediately; they urged her to marry.

Victoria’s marriage, which was supposed to rescue England from the dreaded petticoat rule, actually intensified the novelty surrounding the young queen by forcing her to violate explicit gender roles. First of all, Victoria was required to propose, something that no self-respecting Victorian woman would do and an offer no self-respecting Victorian man would

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6 Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 158.
7 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 215.
accept. The discomfort society felt over this arrangement is reflected in a popular 1841 London street ballad:

Since the Queen did herself for a husband 'propose,'
The ladies will all do the same, I suppose;
Their days of subserviency now will be past,
For all will 'speak first' as they always did last!
Since the Queen has no equal, 'obey' none she need,
So of course at the altar from such vow she's freed;
And the women will all follow suit, so they say—
'Love, honour,' they'll promise, but never—'obey.'

Additionally, Victoria had the unprecedented privilege of choosing her consort, which further illustrated the difference between her and other Victorian women. Victoria’s wedding also set her apart, for it was “the first wedding of a Queen Regnant is historical memory,” and therefore became a highly publicized spectacle of public interest. There was even considerable interest regarding Albert’s title. As Adrienne Munich points out, the Parliament was at a loss as to “what to call a foreign male person who was the conjugal superior but national inferior of the ruler.” It seems that no matter what Victoria did, it attracted attention. Throughout Victoria’s reign it became clear that “the one thing that Victoria could not be was ignored.”

Once Victoria’s celebrity had been established, her popularity, like that of so many others, relied on her ability to keep her image accessible to her subjects. As Queen, Victoria had the unusual distinction of being a ‘kept’ celebrity, meaning that her subjects paid taxes to

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12 Munich, *Queen Victoria’s Secrets*, 191.

support her lifestyle. In return, they expected to have the 'privilege' of seeing her occasionally. Plunkett argues that "to the middle-classes...it had become nearly a right...that the great men of the country should pay them the compliment—we might say the homage—of appearing periodically." The Penny Satirist took this sentiment even further by declaring, "She is kept by the nation as a spectacle and it is right that she should be seen. In fact it is her duty to come out and show herself, that we may have value for our money." In short, the approval of Victoria's subjects was required to validate her rule due to their financial investments. In accordance with these demands, Victoria and Albert appeared often in public at a variety of venues and for a number of different engagements. "The couple established a precedent of royal duties, consisting of civic visits, military reviews, meetings, and benevolent charity work." While philanthropic acts were carried out by previous monarchs in the name of noblesse oblige, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert transformed service into a viable industry, selling their accessibility to the public for a good cause. Today's celebrities are expected to carry on this tradition, as demonstrated by Princess Diana's volunteer work at hospitals, American Idol's "Idol Gives Back" program, or even celebrity basketball games for charity. This work not only fulfills their obligation to assist the less fortunate but also provides the public with accessibility to celebrities through tickets to star-studded events or through individual participation in a celebrity's organization. Victoria and Albert received


15 Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*, 46.


17 Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*, 40.
assistance with their endeavors from developments in transportation, namely the railroad, which made it possible for them to travel faster, farther, and cheaper, thus simultaneously increasing accessibility and visibility.

In contrast, when Victoria abruptly disappeared from public life for nearly twenty-five years after Albert’s death, her sudden and prolonged retreat from the glare of the spotlight threatened to end her career. While her subjects “expected [Victoria] as a wife to mourn deeply, she was also expected, as Queen, to violate mourning practices and appear on display as usual.” Celebrities often fall victim to this type of identity paradox. As Kantorowicz explains, the Queen, or any celebrity, has two bodies, one private and one public. Albert’s death would fall into the private realm for any non-celebrity, but as Prince Albert was a national figure, the public felt they had a right to grieve for him alongside Queen Victoria. British subjects felt betrayed by Victoria’s seclusion in the same way members of the public were angered by Queen Elizabeth II’s refusal to appear following the death of Princess Diana. Victoria, in turn, resented that she was expected to ‘perform’ during this time of acute suffering. She refused to participate not only in public events, but even in hallowed political traditions, such as the opening of Parliament, making exceptions only for events featuring Albert. During this time, the public relied on the extensive media coverage of Queen

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21 Homans, *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876*, 64.

22 Ibid., 157.
Victoria and the liberal use of her image in advertisements in order to maintain a connection with their absent queen. No longer imbued with the divine right to rule, Queen Victoria had become a replaceable commodity in danger of being removed. "With the growing dissent in the 1860s over Victoria’s continued seclusion, Disraeli and Gladstone both emphasized the importance of monarchy continuing to have a public face." Fortunately, Queen Victoria was nearing the fiftieth year of her reign and her Golden Jubilee celebrations afforded the perfect opportunity for her triumphant return to public life.

The Jubilee celebrations were large media spectacles which provided several opportunities for publicity. Each day the queen had an itinerary which included banquets, processions, unveilings, inspections, and meetings with honored guests ranging from foreign dignitaries to school children. Queen Victoria even sponsored a ball, the largest in England’s history. Some of these events were made accessible to all classes, which only increased the wave of enthusiasm surrounding the Jubilees. "Making the monarchy available to the People gave royal events an inclusive rhetoric that mitigated much potential criticism." The media seemed to forgive Victoria for her vanishing act, providing glowing reviews of the event and even bragging about the price for a good view of the procession. Nearly three million visitors crowded the streets to catch a glimpse of their ruler during the

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23 Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 55.

24 Chapman and Raben, Debrett’s Queen Victoria’s Jubilees 1887 & 1897, 3.


26 Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 37.

procession. Figure 2 is a copy of an invitation ticket for the Diamond Jubilee procession, complete with Victoria’s image, decrying her as the ruler of the “longest, noblest, wisest, reign.” Queen Victoria was a beloved celebrity once more. Her subjects once again felt a connection to their long-lost leader. As one reporter remarked, “But what gives its special point to today’s ceremony is the purely personal relationship, a relation of real attachment, which has so long existed between the Queen and her people, and which, in the minds of the masses, has now grown into a feeling of conscious pride.” It is worth noting that after the Jubilee celebrations ended, Queen Victoria maintained her public image, instead of reverting to seclusion again.

When celebrities cannot or will not appear in public, the media can always be counted upon to provide the latest behind-the-scenes details to vigilant fans, whether they are true or not. As previously noted, the Queen depended on the dissemination of her image while she was in seclusion. Fortunately, Victoria’s reign coincided with an unprecedented growth in the media industry which afforded a steady stream of royal coverage for the masses. As Plunkett argues, “Victoria and Albert’s ongoing public duties were ideal for being created in the form of regular graphic news.” After all, “Victoria’s tours and visits provided a guaranteed source of coverage in that they followed an itinerary that was well broadcast in advance.”

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29 Ibid., insert.

30 Ibid., 38.

31 Ibid., 16.

32 Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*, 98.

33 Ibid., 100.
this way, Queen Victoria and the media served each other. The media needed a constant supply of news to provide to their growing number of readers, and Queen Victoria relied on the press to circulate information about her to a distant audience. To satisfy this need, Queen Victoria forged a new relationship with the media which caused them to be incorporated into court life. As a result, the media was saturated with stories and images of the royal family. Victoria was hounded by the press throughout her reign. Victoria found herself the subject of street patterers’ songs and poems, much like her predecessors. Correspondents from women’s periodicals, such as *Vanity Fair*, attended important royal events to report on matters of fashion and gossip. Focusing on gender as a common bond, women’s periodicals manufactured an intimate relationship between their readers and Queen Victoria. They also idealized her physical appearance in a series of publications known as the “Beauty Books”, highlighting her “glamour, sexuality, and attractiveness” in a way similar to current portrayals of women in periodicals such as *Cosmopolitan, Vogue,* and *Seventeen* (figure 3). Additionally, *The Penny Illustrated Paper* points out that, “in the year 1867 appeared the first of those naturally-written Royal publications, which...have had the effect of drawing yet closer the bonds of affection which unite her loyal subjects to the frank and gracious Lady who so openly laid bare her heart, and let all the world know the everyday doings of the most exalted but still purist of households.” Even “as Victoria lay dying at Osborne House on the
Isle of Wight, hundreds of British and foreign journalists gathered at the gates to receive the latest bulletins upon her condition."^{38}

In addition, the increasingly visual focus of newspapers and other media allowed for the dissemination not only of Victoria's words and deeds, but also of her image. "During the 1820s and 1830s, few newspapers gave illustrations of contemporary events,"^{39} but by the time of Victoria's coronation, an illustrated press was flourishing. "The Coronation," (figure 4) shows an example of the type of illustration provided at this time. While there are two sketches on the page, the bust of Queen Victoria is clearly the focus of the page. The sketch is an idealized image, without blemish or flaw, designed to reflect the beauty and purity of the new ruler. In contrast, figure 5, though also on the subject of the coronation, shows an example of news coverage before widespread use of steel engravings. The figure is a detailed description of the newest royal portrait to be exhibited and while the coat of arms is featured very prominently to let readers know that this article is about the queen, no image of the queen appears on the page. Fortunately for Victoria, this type of news coverage steadily declined after technological advances in the production of steel plates allowed for cheaper illustrations. Engravers were able to copy sketches and royal portraits for use in newspapers and magazines. These images, due to their differences, portrayed the young Queen in a variety of roles, instead of limiting her to one representation. Queen Victoria was an expert in exploiting these discrepancies to her advantage, in much the same way that Madonna or David Bowie has been able to achieve a flexible image. This may be part of the reason Victoria chose to ignore her advisor's advice to ban all likenesses of her that were not issued


^{39} Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*, 95.
THE CORONATION.
by the court portrait maker. After all, “the growth of a mass print and visual culture in the nineteen century was a vital influence upon the development of the British monarchy,” mainly because the media could transform the public image of the monarchy through its illustrations and articles.

By the late 1840s, the increasingly illustrated press was the main source of information regarding the monarchy. Newspapers and other print media were responding to a growing demand for information about their monarch. Diana and George Hindley note that “visual marketing was aimed largely at satisfying this audience of readers/viewers who voraciously wanted to see and know more of their sovereign.” From 1842 until 1847, the royal family was the subject of roughly 18 percent of the front covers for three newspapers, while the Illustrated London News produced over two dozen illustrations of Victoria’s family each week. Over a five week period, the Illustrated London News even devoted 70 percent of their illustration space to the royal visit to Paris! Figure 6 represents a typical cover the Illustrated London News produced. This is a pictorial representation of Victoria’s visit to Birmingham on July 3, 1858. Sketches like the one shown were quite elaborate and beautiful, but they were about to be replaced by the cheaper and more realistic photograph.

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40 Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 107.

41 Ibid., 1.


43 Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 98-100.

44 Ibid., 102.
The first royal photograph was taken in 1842, and by the 1850s photographs had become a popular and inexpensive method of illustration.45 “Their ubiquity helped to provide a shared national experience of well-known individuals…creating the familiar and iconic image of Queen Victoria in her widow’s weeds.”46 Photographs offered a stable image of Victoria, even if it was less flattering than her early portrayals. The common public liked photos because they made Victoria seem ordinary, like one of them.47 As figure 7 illustrates, Victoria and Albert were often photographed in middle-class attire. This had the effect of making “the highest woman in the land [appear] indistinguishable from the lowest.”48 Adrienne Munich argues that by “deciphering the message written on her clothes, the people know the queen as one of them.”49 Many researchers, in fact, refer to the democratizing potential of the photograph as an important factor contributing to its popularity. Plunkett, for example, cites that “the realism of photography gave them a demythologizing equality at the same time as they created an intimate familiarity with the royal family.”50 Adrienne Munich and Margaret Homans, on the other hand, argue that “the concept is rather voyeuristic, making outsiders instantly ‘insiders’, witnesses to what was a quintessentially private and painful event.”51 In their opinion, the royal family is not demoted to the status of the public, but the public is newly enfranchised by their access to the everyday private details of the

45 Homans, Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876, 44.
46 Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 145.
47 Homans, Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876, 46.
48 Munich, Queen Victoria’s Secrets, 60.
49 Ibid.
50 Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 163.
51 Homans and Munich, eds., Remaking Queen Victoria, 195.
Queen’s life. Indeed, critics of the photograph objected that some of the pictures were too personal, an opinion many celebrities share today. The camera was able to violate the separation between the private sphere and the public sphere in unprecedented ways by capturing images that court portrait painters or illustrators would have been too modest to depict. Regardless, photographs, like other forms of media representation, took an increasingly important role in disseminating the queen’s image, especially to illiterate subjects, once Victoria secluded herself from the public. Victoria neither tried nor was able to control the reproduction of her image in either the media or the advertising, but this dissemination worked to her benefit.

Another effective method for the transmission of images is through the advertising medium, an industry Queen Victoria exploited, but one through which she was exploited as well. Timing was once again in Victoria’s favor, as “the advent of the Industrial Revolution marked an important transformation in the character of advertising. From being a novelty, something of an oddity, it gradually began to gain acceptance as a commercial weapon, and to be employed...as a means of regulating demand.”52 Before the 1850s the majority of ads were, like media, composed primarily of print-type, not illustrations.53 However, “between 1850 and 1880 a combination of factors—new techniques of illustrating, the recognition of an expansive middle-class market, the rise of the press, the abolition of the advertising duty, and the professionalization of technical and creative assistance...produced an unparalleled

advertising craze⁵⁴ that manifested itself in illustrations and photographs. The majority of ads which used Queen Victoria employed the royal warrant, her name, or her image to sell their products. A number of examples of each type of use have been included for comparison.

The first set of ads use the Royal Warrant. One such ad (figure 8) can be found in Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management, a huge best-seller of the time, second only to The Bible. The Royal Seal appears in the top left corner to endorse ironmongers. Figure 9 employs a different type of seal to express the queen’s approval not only of their product, but also of their company’s operations. An ad for the International Fur Store, (figure 10) subtly displays the royal warrant as part of the store’s decorations, implying that the company itself is royalty. All three of these ads followed the stringent rules on how the warrant was permitted to be used. “In theory, the royal warrant was to be displayed with taste and discretion. In practice, tradition dictated that in print advertisements the royal coat of arms should be displayed in a size never larger than the caption or product name... but the conventions restricting advertisements were flagrantly ignored.” Figure 11, for example, not only enlarges the warrant, it also includes the words royal and imperial four times to ensure that the consumer associates Egerton Burnett’s Royal Serges with the royal family. Figure 12 also enlarges the royal warrant, uses Egerton’s word trick, and deliberately patterns the mother figure on Queen Victoria. The last ad in this section (figure 13) goes a step further by including the royal warrant of not only the queen, but also the princess of Wales, and ‘the late duchess of Cambridge’. The use of the royal warrant in each of these ads serves the same purpose: to imply quality through association with the queen. After all, no testimonial could be better than the queen’s.

⁵⁴ Loeb, Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women, 5.
Advertisers also used Victoria’s name as well as those of her children to imply an association between their product and the life of a royal. T. R. Nevett reports that the use of other famous individuals, such as the pope, the queen’s doctor, poets, writers, and even the occasional actress were often used without the consent of the individual.\textsuperscript{55} Ironically a person might be said to endorsing a product they would not even approve of, much less endorse. Unsurprisingly, “Victoria and Albert found their names appended to a bizarre variety of goods.”\textsuperscript{56} An ad for Beecham’s Pills (figure 14) implies their product is consumed by the royal couple by claiming that they are perfect regardless of whether the individual consuming them resides in “the castle or the cottage”, but the ad does not invoke their name directly. Advertisers for Swan Soap, (figure 15) on the other hand, not only boast they are “soap makers to the Queen”, but the illustration used in the ad implies that by using Swan Soap, maids will be rescued from their lives into a royal romance. An ad for Clarke’s Pyramid Lights is even less subtle. In their ad, (figure 16) lights spell out the phrase, “used by Her late Majesty the Queen” across the middle of the ad and also “used during FOUR generations by Her late Majesty The Queen and her humblest subjects” at the bottom of the page. Both phrases imply that if the Queen was still alive, she would want her subjects to purchase this item. The fourth ad of this genre, by Express Dairy Milk, (figure 17) shows a well-dressed milk-purveyor pointing to his cart which reads, “Majestical Appointments to Her Majesty The Queen” for the benefit of the maid who stands in the doorway. Ads that made use of the Queen’s name or warrant kept the Queen in the public’s mind, but only the illustrated ads filled the visual vacuum Victoria created during her prolonged seclusion.

\textsuperscript{55} Nevett, Advertising in Britain: A History, 130.

\textsuperscript{56} Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 104.
Advertisements that used Victoria’s image made her a commercial logo capable of being consumed by the public along with other products. “A portrait of her majesty, cup in hand, about to sample some steaming beverage, was sufficient, together with a manufacturer’s name proudly displayed in capital letters, to convince the casual reader that here was the very cocoa drunk wherever crowned heads foregathered.” Similarly, a picture of Queen Victoria featured prominently in an ad for Golfer Oats (figure 18) implies that the Queen cares not only about the Constitution and ruling, but also about the type of oats her subjects should use. An ad for The “Louis” Velveteen (figure 19) shows Queen Victoria presiding over a beautiful young woman adorned in velveteen. Here she is portrayed as having a discerning eye for quality. She has, of course, chosen the best. An ad for Sunlight Soap (figure 20) is so confident in its use of the Queen’s images that it does not even include the product in the ad. In honor of her Jubilee, this ad emphasizes the power of the empire, including a shield for each conquered territory as well as a crown, the Union Jack, the coat of arms, and two pictures of Queen Victoria. It would be difficult to image a more patriotic ad than this, however, some advertisers felt that the presence of more than one royal in their ads would better convince consumers to buy their products. These ads capitalize simultaneously on the middle-class obsession with families and with consumption by linking the ideal family with their products. “My Queen” Vel-Vel has two ads featuring the Queen and her family. In both ads, the family is clearly the focus, although the Queen is the ultimate decision maker. In one, (figure 21) the Queen sits enthroned among women in the lady’s castle, the home. The illustrators have even included a coat of arms in the background of the parlor. In the other, (figure 22) the phrase “My Queen Vel-Vel” is repeated to emphasis the royal nature of the

product. Another ad (figure 23) uses the Queen’s image as the nation’s mother to endorse the use of Royal Infants Preservative by claiming, “Important to mothers patronized by Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria and all the royal family.” One ad for Matchless Metal Polish (figure 24) urges the consumer to “Be Loyal” by purchasing their polish. A stern-looking Victoria presides over the polish, which is cleaning two pennies also bearing her image. Two other members of the royal family join her in her vigil.

These advertisements both reflect and shape the society’s values. “Ultimately the Victorian advertisement emerges as a graphic depiction of the deepest materialistic desires of the Victorian middle class,” argues Loeb.\textsuperscript{58} It can be argued, therefore, that Victoria not only reflected Victorian values, but that she was also incorporated into an existing value system.

Thomas Richards argues that, not until the Jubilee, however, when the image of Victoria became a common text and a prevailing context for the nation, did advertising and spectacle meet. The result was that the advertised image of Victoria became a kind of repository for the semiotics of commodity culture, advancing the spectacularization of the commodity and making it loom even larger in the cultural and political life of nineteenth-century England.\textsuperscript{59}

In other words, the growth of the advertising industry and the middle-class market paved the way for an increasingly consumer culture.

Like many modern celebrities, Queen Victoria’s image was incorporated into the consumer culture through a variety of objects. The difference between the use of her image in an ad versus on an object is that a consumer is not longer purchasing a product the Queen recommends; now the consumer is actually purchasing Queen Victoria. “A program permanently impressed on advertising by the experience of the Jubilee—was simple: find an

\textsuperscript{58} Loeb, \textit{Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women}, viii.

image so universal, so familiar, so fungible, that it would sell anything.”60 Indeed, Victoria’s image sold a barrage of strange goods. One manufacturer sold a walking stick made of 10,000 compressed postage stamps which featured Queen Victoria as well as a musical bustle that played the National Anthem.61 Another vendor produced shoes similar to stilts or platforms to help short subjects view the queen during the Jubilee processional.62 Busts, statues, and lithographs flooded both the British and American markets.63 Embroidered pictures, book marks, tea cups, and official programs were all produced for the Jubilee.64 One program produced (figure 25) included a color portrait of the queen, which was collectible. Panoramas, cosmoramas, and dipramas of historical events were also constructed and sold.65 Victoria was featured on pottery, medals, and additional souvenirs.66 Holloway’s souvenir (figure 26) is simply a schedule of events during the Jubilee. Figure 27, though similar, is just a commemorative card handed out at Sunday school; it serves no functional purpose, unlike Holloway’s souvenir. Perhaps the strangest item containing a royal image, though not that of Victoria, is described by Diana and Geoffrey Hindley: “when the fascinated viewer, agog to see what this marvelous effect might be, did hold the leaflet up to the light he revealed a watermarked portrait of Edward Prince of Wales...[which read] ‘Pear’s Soap, is England

61 Chapman and Raben, Debrett’s Queen Victoria’s Jubilees 1887 & 1897, 11.
62 Ibid., 23.
63 Homans and Munich, eds., Remaking Queen Victoria, 7.
64 Chapman and Raben, Debrett’s Queen Victoria’s Jubilees 1887 & 1897, 13-15.
65 Plunkett, Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch, 104.
66 Loeb, Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women, 85.
soap—Prince of soap makers, soap makers to the Prince'.”\textsuperscript{67} Stanley Weintraub notes that by the time of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897, “few anywhere now encountered the real Victoria, yet few homes in Britain…were without some representation of the youthful or the aged Queen—on calendars, oleographs, cabinet photos, Jubilee mugs, commemorative plates—and on every postage stamp of the millions printed and posted since 1840.”\textsuperscript{68}

Images of Queen Victoria were not only attached to objects but they were also sold outright as a commodity. One engraver recorded that “374 proofs and prints of Victoria were sold compared to a combined total of 165 other engravings.”\textsuperscript{69} According to these figures, Victoria’s image was over twice as popular as all other images combined! The realism of the photograph encouraged photo collecting. “With the pleasure of seeing photographs of family, friends, and celebrities for the first time, collecting cartes became the latest fashion.”\textsuperscript{70} Cartes (figure 28) were carded pictures, traded and posted into albums throughout the 1860s and 1870s with the enthusiasm shown by baseball card collectors during the 1950s.\textsuperscript{71} Queen Victoria enjoyed photographs, encouraging their proliferation by posing often, and even by sending them as gifts. During the war, for example, “she sent out a box of chocolate to every man at the front with a coloured print of herself on it.”\textsuperscript{72} She even commissioned an official

\textsuperscript{67} Hindley and Hindley, \textit{Advertising in Victorian England 1837-1901}, 105.


\textsuperscript{69} Plunkett, \textit{Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch}, 72.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 158.

\textsuperscript{72} Munich, \textit{Queen Victoria’s Secrets}, 187.
Diamond Jubilee photograph for sale and distribution (figure 29).  

Queen Victoria deliberately moved away from court portraiture toward photographs, which could be afforded by all classes and were easier to circulate. “Photography helped to make the monarchy available for public consumption, but it encouraged expectations that could not be controlled or contained.” Since every class could afford photos, they sold by the millions. Indeed, Munich and Homans argue that “countless homes, however humble, had images of her on their walls, [as a] testimony to the affection and loyalty she inspired, the power of the popular imagery and mythology, and her tenacity in the public image.” These photos represented Queen Victoria as an inclusive monarch who wanted a personal relationship with her people, a message that kept subjects loyal during her long seclusion.

To appease her subjects, Victoria adopted a variety of representational substitutes besides the photograph during her withdrawal from public life, including the publication of books. She oversaw creation of a few books about Albert’s life, but she also published her own journal, entitled, *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands, from 1841 to 1861.* It circulated privately from 1865 until January of 1868, when the Queen permitted publication of the book. It became an instant success, selling 20,000 copies in just two weeks. The Queen specifically requested that her book be priced low enough that all her

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73 Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch,* 197.

74 Ibid., 177.

75 Homans and Munich, eds., *Remaking Queen Victoria,* 183.


77 Ibid., 131.

78 Ibid.
subjects might be able to afford it.\textsuperscript{79} Besides her own books, Queen Victoria became the subject of all types of literary works, ranging from fictional stories to children’s books (figure 30).\textsuperscript{80} “The unprecedented popularity of the image of Victoria had permanently altered the landscape of English commodity culture…”\textsuperscript{81} By allowing her image to be used almost without limit, Victoria set a dangerous precedent in which “monarchs become cult-objects by being turned into artifacts,”\textsuperscript{82} argues Helen Hackett. Thomas Richards agrees with Hackett, claiming that “the monarchy and the commodity are one and the same thing.”\textsuperscript{83} Lisa Loeb disagrees, arguing that “nineteenth-century socio-economic and technological changes cultivated the expansive Victorian interest in personal fame and celebrity.”\textsuperscript{84} A combination of factors led to the expansion of Britain’s commodity culture, including the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization simultaneously shortened the amount of time needed to make products and lowered the prices of these items for customers by producing more than the market demanded. At the same time, the standard of living rose and individual budgets increased, which meant that shoppers had more money to spend on goods previously considered luxuries.\textsuperscript{85}

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\textsuperscript{79} Homans, \textit{Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876}, 149.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 115.

\textsuperscript{81} Richards, \textit{The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914}, 105.

\textsuperscript{82} Helen Hackett, “Dreams or Designs, Cults or Constructions? The Study of Images of Monarchs,” \textit{The Historical Journal} 44, no. 3 (2001): 812.

\textsuperscript{83} Richards, \textit{The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914}, 112.

\textsuperscript{84} Loeb, \textit{Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women}, 73.

\textsuperscript{85} Nevett, \textit{Advertising in Britain: A History}, 67.
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Queen Victoria became known among historians as the 'consumer queen' because she championed the cause of consumption to her subjects.\textsuperscript{86} “For though shopping had long been a principal domestic activity for middle- and upper-class women, it had yet to be elevated to the sacred status of their other occupations, notably homemaking and motherhood.”\textsuperscript{87} “Her transcendent presence both legitimated consumption for women by offering them the queen’s stamp of approval and lured even more women into department stores by leading them to believe that there they too, would be treated like royalty.”\textsuperscript{88} Like an elaborate masque, shoppers became royalty for the duration of each shopping trip, though in reality consumption did become a way of enhancing one’s social status, especially for the middle-class. As Loeb points out, the same products Queen Victoria was endorsing in ads were available to middle-class consumers.\textsuperscript{89} The shopper would justify the purchase of each royally endorsed product, perhaps persuading herself that “her home, if only in the laundry, will become like the palace.”\textsuperscript{90}

While individual celebrities come and go, the institution of the movie star, the rock god, and the beauty live on eternally. To the British people, for example, Queen Victoria represented that stability, a bulwark in a time of transitions and changes. “Darwinism, technology, urbanization, irreligion all challenged ideas and realities that a hundred years

\textsuperscript{86} Richards, \textit{The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914}, 95.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 101.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 102.

\textsuperscript{89} Loeb, \textit{Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women}, 10.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 86.
before had seemed certain or sacred."\textsuperscript{91} The English had also developed a new type of government, which changed hands frequently. Queen Victoria, on the other hand, reigned for over sixty years. She was a pillar which stood for empire, for England, and for her people. Ernst Kantorowicz, the author of \textit{The King's Two Bodies}, argues that all kings have the Body natural, which encompasses the mortal aspects of a particular ruler and the Body politic which provides the immortal qualities of the institution of the monarchy.\textsuperscript{92} "The monarch has a material body, limited in scope and subject to decay, and an immaterial body, limitless, changeless, and ethereal."\textsuperscript{93} For the English, Queen Victoria represented two immortal institutions: the government and the family. By transposing Victoria's authority from Mighty Sovereign to Great Mother, Victorians extended the rule of the Queen's material body through her children's lives, which in this case includes not only her biological children but also the citizens of the entire British Empire. As a result, Victoria's public identity rested in the hands of her people, but their identity rested in her. "She rules because she represents them, and she represents them because she is like them, although she is like them because they follow her example."\textsuperscript{94}

Celebrities are invested with the ideals of their fans. Their values must coincide with the spirit of the time and the culture, or completely contradict them. "Victoria reflected back to her subjects their own values to reassure them about the comprehensibility of their lived reality; they in turn created her in their image to serve their social and economic needs.

\textsuperscript{91} Loeb, \textit{Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women}, 72.

\textsuperscript{92} Kantorowicz, \textit{The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology}, 7.

\textsuperscript{93} Richards, \textit{The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914}, 82.

\textsuperscript{94} Homans, \textit{Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876}, 147.
Queen Victoria, her subjects around the globe, and even those outside the empire collaboratively made her into a myth and an icon.\textsuperscript{95} Victoria and Albert represented the ideal middle-class family, the most important structure in Victorian England. “In the pictorial medium of the middle classes, Victoria and Albert assume increasingly the guise of the middle classes, their clothes, and most important their rigid gender hierarchy.”\textsuperscript{96} Society saw Victoria as the ideal wife, mother, and lady. “She acquired the image of a mother-figure who stood above the coarse realities of politics. She presided over her family and her Empire with a maternal devotion shaped as much by her femininity as by years of political experience.”\textsuperscript{97} Victoria preferred to complete her political obligations privately, in keeping with social constraints, but she paved the way for women to become involved in the social sphere through acts of charity. Victoria donated over 15 percent of her personal income to patronize over 150 charitable institutions and established what was later dubbed, the “welfare monarchy”.\textsuperscript{98} Plunkett argues that one result of Victoria’s good will efforts is that “the value of each individual royal is now often measured according to the number of engagements he or she carries out. Indeed, the recent casting of Diana, Princess of Wales, as the ‘People’s Princess’ merely serves to underline the continuing hold of the rhetoric of royal populism.”\textsuperscript{99} It is that old idea of the noblesse oblige, that the privileged are charged with the sacred duty of caring for those less fortunate, a trend many celebrities carry on today, as previously discussed.

\textsuperscript{95} Homans and Munich, eds., \textit{Remaking Queen Victoria}, 2.

\textsuperscript{96} Homans, \textit{Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876}, 55.

\textsuperscript{97} Loeb, \textit{Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women}, 87.

\textsuperscript{98} Plunkett, \textit{Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch}, 36.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 67.
They are expected to serve as role models for a generation and their failures are not tolerated publicly. Their photographs are retouched, their faults are buried under vows of silence or surgically removed, and their obstacles are overcome behind carefully guarded closed doors.

On the other hand, some celebrities are famous for violating social norms and conflicting with the ideal. Marilyn Manson, for example, is famous for representing the physical form of many people’s deepest fears and anxieties. While he also serves as an ideal to his fans, he creates a public forum for people who object to his personality and what it represents to them. In a similar manner, Queen Victoria became the subject of numerous books, cartoons, and jokes expressing discomfort with her overt sexuality, her apparent interest in men of low socio-economic status, and her representation of female power. “Part of the enduring appeal of monarchs seems to be not only their glittering public facades, but the desire in the beholder to penetrate behind the facade by exposing the scandal or fleshiness and fallibility.”100

At the same time that the public distances itself from celebrities by imbuing them with special status and idealized characteristics, people need to believe that celebrities are ordinary and that celebrity status is attainable. “The fantasy of the common reader is to gain access and intimacy to a queen, to partake in regal glamour, to discover that she was herself a princess all along.”101 If a celebrity is just a common person in fine clothing, then anything that happens to a celebrity could happen to anyone else. If an ordinary person could marry a queen, then anyone could be queen. If an ordinary person could become rich and famous, then anyone could become rich and famous. Queen Victoria is not just The Woman, she is

100 Hackett, “Dreams or Designs, Cults or Constructions? The Study of Images of Monarchs,” 819.

101 Ibid.
every woman. Through their shared qualities, the Queen and her subjects share an intimate relationship. It is this relationship which makes the ordinary woman important and elevates her status. Fans today clamor over one another to get the closest seat to the stage, the latest exclusive, or an autograph in order to achieve superiority. Celebrity achievements are shared by their fans as personal achievements—dreams that are carried out in their name. When the Indianapolis Colts won the Super-bowl in 2007, for example, their fans taunted Chicago Bears fans with shouts of “We won the Super-bowl,” as if they had anything to do with the game’s outcome. The message is clear—my celebrity won, therefore I won and your celebrity lost, therefore you lost. Individual self-esteem becomes attached to celebrity identity. “Just as monarchs needed writers and artists to forge their public image, so writers and artists needed monarchs to give them inspirational material and to personify their values and aspirations.”

Queen Victoria demonstrates why celebrity culture is still so prevalent. She established stability, embodied the values of her time, became the focus of public anxieties, and fostered a sense of relationship with the middle-and lower-classes, filling a psychological void for her subjects. She allowed the media to provide increasingly personal accounts of her daily life and to disseminate a variety of images of her, however, this new unrestricted and intrusive relationship with the media paved the way for the paparazzi to develop to provide exclusive coverage of celebrities, like Princess Diana, for an insatiable commercial market. Combined with the availability of consumable objects bearing Victoria’s name or image, these measures ensured a continued interest in celebrity culture in Britain and abroad as individuals invested in Victoria. Queen Victoria established the celebrity industry and became one of the first celebrities due to her novelty as a female ruler, her ability to remain

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102 Hackett, “Dreams or Designs, Cults or Constructions? The Study of Images of Monarchs,” 821.
highly accessible to the public through various forms of media, and as a commercial symbol attached to products.
Bibliography


