



Bakalářská práce

The media image of the British royal family in the 21st century and its British public perception

Studijní program:

B0114A300068 Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání

Studijní obory:

Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání
Základy společenských věd se zaměřením na vzdělávání

Autor práce:

Ivana Filipová

Vedoucí práce:

Mgr. Michaela Marková, Ph.D.
Katedra anglického jazyka

Liberec 2023



Zadání bakalářské práce

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<i>Jméno a příjmení:</i>	Ivana Filipová
<i>Osobní číslo:</i>	P19000211
<i>Studijní program:</i>	B0114A300068 Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání
<i>Specializace:</i>	Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání Základy společenských věd se zaměřením na vzdělávání
<i>Zadávací katedra:</i>	Katedra anglického jazyka
<i>Akademický rok:</i>	2020/2021

Zásady pro vypracování:

Práce se zabývá mediálním obrazem britské královské rodiny prezentovaným/utvářeným v 21. století, a popisuje, jak je vnímán britskou veřejností. Teoretická část práce obeznámí čtenáře v rámci stručného přehledu s tím, jak je a byla britská královská rodina v moderních médiích prezentována, a následně se bude zabývat tím, zdali je prezentovaný způsob vystupování členů rodiny možné vnímat jako autentický či naopak. Z tohoto důvodu bude v úvodu definováno současné pojetí fenoménu monarchie ve Spojeném království reprezentovaného především panovnicí Alžbětou II. Pozoruhodnost fenoménu britské královské rodiny jako takové, se odvíjí od celosvětového zájmu o tuto rodinu, a s ohledem na stále vzrůstající roli sociálních médií, která ovlivňují mínění široké veřejnosti, je vhodné zaměřit se právě na změny v pojetí obrazu utvářeného pod jejich vlivem. Tato problematika je nyní o to více aktuální díky nedávnému odchodu prince Harryho a jeho ženy Meghan Markle, vévodkyně ze Sussexu, z předních rolí v britské královské rodině, který byl velkou měrou prezentován a diskutován právě prostřednictvím sociálních médií. Cílem praktické části práce je analýza prezentace obrazu britské královské rodiny v rámci seriálu The Crown, který je adaptací předchozích děl současného britského autora Petera Morgana, jenž se ve své práci snaží o autentičtější zpracování dané problematiky, a jehož díla nutí k zamyšlení o odlišnostech mezi prezentovaným mediálním obrazem a skutečností.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování práce:

Jazyk práce:

tištěná/elektronická

angličtina

Seznam odborné literatury:

Billig, Michael. 1992. *Talking of the royal family*. 1st ed. New York: Routledge.

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Vedoucí práce:

Mgr. Michaela Marková, Ph.D.

Katedra anglického jazyka

Datum zadání práce:

30. června 2021

Předpokládaný termín odevzdání: 15. července 2022

L.S.

prof. RNDr. Jan Pícek, CSc.
děkan

Mgr. Zénó Vernyik, Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

V Liberci dne 30. června 2021

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Poděkování

Děkuji vedoucí mé bakalářské práce Mgr. Michaele Markové, M.Phil., Ph.D. za odborné vedení práce, poskytnuté konzultace a užitečné rady při zpracování této bakalářské práce.

Anotace

Bakalářská práce se zabývá mediálním obrazem britské královské rodiny prezentovaným/utvářeným v 21. století a popisuje, jak vybraná jednotlivá média retrospektivně prezentují obraz Královny Alžběty II. v jejím turbulentním roce jí samou nazývaném Annus Horribilis. Teoretická část práce obeznámí čtenáře v rámci stručného přehledu s tím, jak je a byla britská královská rodina v moderních médiích prezentována, a zaměří se i na to, proč jsou media důležitou složkou k udržení popularity monarchie. Z tohoto důvodu bude v úvodu definováno současné pojetí fenoménu monarchie ve Spojeném království reprezentovaného především panovnicí Alžbětou II. Pozoruhodnost fenoménu britské královské rodiny jako takové, se odvíjí od celosvětového zájmu o tuto rodinu s ohledem na stále vzrůstající schopnost médií ovlivnit mínění široké veřejnosti. Vzhledem ke stále širšímu dosahu médií a rychlosti sdílení informací je tato problematika stále více aktuální.

Cílem praktické části práce je posouzení prezentace obrazu Královny Alžběty II. ve specifickém období. V této části práce jsou představena vybraná média zastupující denní tisk, bulvár, uměleckou seriálovou tvorbu a knižní vyobrazení. Zároveň práce reflektuje obraz královny v jednotlivých titulech a zkoumá, zda je rok 1992 popsán věrohodně a v jakém světle je královna vyobrazena. Toto nutí k zamyšlení o odlišnostech mezi prezentovaným mediálním obrazem a skutečností.

Klíčová slova

Královna Alžběta II., Média, Britská Královská Rodina, Britská Monarchie, Annus Horribilis

Annotation

The bachelor's thesis deals with the media image of the British royal family presented/formed in the 21st century and describes how selected individual media retrospectively present the image of Queen Elizabeth II in her turbulent year she called *Annus Horribilis*. The theoretical part of the work acquaints the reader with a brief overview of how the British royal family is and was in the modern media presented and why the media is an important component in maintaining the popularity of the monarchy. For this reason, the current concept of the phenomenon of monarchy in the United Kingdom, represented primarily by Queen Elizabeth II, is defined in the introduction. The remarkableness of the phenomenon of the British royal family as such derives from the worldwide interest in this family with regard to the ever-increasing ability to influence the opinion of the general public. Due to the wider reach of the media and the speed of information sharing, this issue is still relevant.

The practical part of the thesis aims to assess the presentation of the image of Queen Elizabeth II in a specific period. This part of the work presents her depiction throughout selected media such as representing daily press, tabloids, television series and book illustration. At the same time, the work reflects the image of the Queen in individual titles and examines whether the series of events which formed *Annus Horribilis* is described accurately and in what light Queen Elizabeth II is depicted. This forces one to consider the differences between the presented media image and reality.

Key words

Queen Elizabeth II, British Royal Family, the British Monarchy, Media, *Annus Horribilis*

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1 Introduction

People vary from one another and they have different areas of interest. However, what most people share is inquisitiveness which drives them to seek information and entertainment on matters they are interested in. The media provide news, information, and entertainment accessible to a wide range of readers and watchers. Before technological development, as well as the invention of the Internet, the primary sources for obtaining information were printed newspapers, books, and journals. Over time, with the development of different kinds of media, such as radio and television, information consumption increased as these media offered different content on different aspects of human life. The media capitalise on people's curiosity and aim to create content that intrigues the public because their existence is dependent on maintaining people's interests. With the media and the development of technology, almost every topic, from politics and economics to fashion and gossip, started to be presented in these on a daily basis.

In the 21st century, the Internet and new media platforms have become an integral part of our everyday lives. In fact, social media, streaming platforms and web news provide people with news and entertainment in a matter of seconds. According to statistics published by Any Petrosyan for the platform *Statista* in April 2023, there were 5,18 billion of the Internet users in the world (Petrosyan 2023, NP). Nowadays, people can consume an excessive amount of information and various topics from the media from all over the world. The media create trends and hype, attracting people's attention and interest, which further increases the public drive for information. According to research on psychological impact of the media, these media platforms have an impact on guiding public opinion, beliefs, and attitudes (Wang, et al. 2021, NP). Also, the platforms are helpful in sustaining the popularity of individuals, institutions or firms in today's world. However, with this rapid development of the media also come significant problems. The spread of misinformation, fabrication of reality and media manipulations can influence the public in a negative way, resulting in some people not being able to distinguish truth from a lie, or to discern what is authentic information and what is not.

One of the well-known topics in the British society that both media and the public are interested and invested in is the British Royal Family. The British Monarchy, represented by the Royal Family, is a unique phenomenon that has maintained its position to this day despite the fact that most monarchies have been transformed into republics

(Langewiesche, 2017). One aspect which has helped to maintain the monarchy is the media. The Royal Family duties, events, life, and fashion are depicted daily throughout media platforms. Such news drives the interest of the nation in the Royal Family. Moreover, the Royals themselves partake in the process. Their participation might give the public a feeling that they have been given a glimpse of their life. Indeed, the media provides engagement between the Royal Family and the broad public and gives the public a feeling of closeness to the members of the Royal Family. The Royal Family should be aware that they must engage, react and respond quickly to public opinion to keep a positive image¹. This thesis relies on the assertion that modern media strongly influence the popularity and therefore relevance of the British Royal Family. The topic of the bachelor's thesis has been narrowed down and is focused on Queen Elizabeth II and her *Annus Horribilis*, discussing how different media retrospectively presents the events of 1992, regarding Her Majesty and her portrayal². In the theoretical part, the thesis briefly describes why popularity and media are essential for sustaining the position of the Royal Family and the British monarchy and how media can influence the public opinion.

As is known the media tries to capture the interest of its audience, benefiting from delivering information. The Royals function as an inspiration, creating endless content for the public. Media contributes to the general knowledge about the Royal Family and provides the public with information about different aspects of their life. The Royal Family can take the initiative and they have used the media for their benefit. For example, Queen Elizabeth II used television in hopes of being accessible, direct and personal for the nation (Benji Wilson, 2022, NP). Her Majesty Queen's decision to fully televise her Coronation in 1953 has been seen as one of the determining moments in television history. In connection with this event, two months prior to the Coronation, 2,5 million television sets were purchased in the UK, causing a cultural shift (Edward Owens 2019, 352). According to Benji Wilson, writer for *The Telegraph*, television as a medium helped the British public to view the Queen's reign and to create a collective experience. This experience gave the public feeling of unity and intimacy shared with the members

¹ This awareness applies even from historical precedents as when Charles I. was executed because he was unpopular (Kevin Sharpe 2000, 384-385).

² When choosing the topic, I did not have sufficient insight into the problematic that occurred to me when studying the available resources. With regard to the focus and range of the thesis, with the supervisor's recommendation, the topic of work was narrowed down.

of the Royal Family. Her Majesty continued to benefit from television as she decided to broadcast her annual Christmas speeches, directly addressing the nation and being personal (Willson 2022, NP). Not only was television used for keeping up her positive image, but also over time, social media started to play an important role. In the theoretical part the usage of television and social media by the Queen Elizabeth II and members of the Royal Family is introduced as way to illustrate in what ways they are beneficial for the Royal Family. According to Philipp Ditter, the Royal Family started to use social media to inform and engage with the public. Twitter and Facebook accounts were the first social media on which the Royal Family started participating in. They gained an enormous number of followers and started navigating the public opinion and the interest of their nation (Philipp Ditter 2013, 10). Nevertheless, the social media are not the main focus of this thesis; however, their importance in sustaining popularity of the Royal Family in the society of the United Kingdom is introduced in the theoretical part³.

The practical part of the thesis focuses on the evaluation of the events of the year 1992 that Queen Elizabeth II called her personal “Annus Horribilis”, a horrible year. Throughout this year, the media and public criticized the Queen and the Royal Family members due to numerous scandals they had been involved in, consequently, their position and good reputation were threatened. The thesis discusses how the media retrospectively present the year 1992 and what kind of portrayal or depiction the public can get from the selected media of Queen Elizabeth II. The thesis uses various selection of the media, specifically newspapers *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and tabloid *Daily Mail*, the Netflix series *The Crown* and the biography book *The Queen: Her Life* by Andrew Morton. Considering the geographical location, the thesis worked with an online version of the selected newspapers. With the newspapers and biography book, the thesis assumes a certain objectivity and accuracy, unlike with the Netflix series and tabloids which serve more for entertainment and dramatized reflection, but that does not mean that it cannot be based on facts. The thesis assumes that the journalistic high-quality sources provide more detailed and accurate information without emotionally charged words, and depiction of the Queen Elizabeth II is more unbiased.

³ Initially, the thesis should have focused precisely on the changes in the conception of the image of the Royal Family formed under social media influence. This decision was changed since different chosen media sources, such as the Netflix series *The Crown*, are more suitable for the purposes of this thesis.

As already mentioned, television during the Coronation was one of the first central sources of information for British families, sparking public interest. Nevertheless, nowadays the streaming platforms such as YouTube or Netflix dominate the screens in the UK (Mann, 2022). The lives of the Queen and the members of the Royal Family have been recently depicted in the now famous Netflix-original historical drama series *The Crown* (2016 -), partially written by Peter Morgan who developed this series from his previous works, stage play *The Audience* (2013) and the film *The Queen* (2006). The series follows the Royal Family's key life events, which the audience can watch from the comfort of their homes. That causes the public to have easy and quick access to the information about their life, and the level of consumption of royal themes has increased⁴, which is important to mention as it serves as an indicator that the public is still interested in the Royal Family. *The Crown* is said to be inspired by real-life events, that pose a certain risk because it is not and can never be fully accurate. Question of objectivity must be also considered due to the fact that Peter Morgan himself describes the series as a love letter to Queen Elizabeth II (Bamigboye, 2022). To some extent, the series can be taken as a supplementary resource about the Queen's life, with assumption that many teachers may use the series as teaching material. The thesis uses the series because of its dramatised approach to the given topic, reflecting on the accuracy and objectivity about the Annus Horribilis and Queen Elizabeth II. The thesis also evaluates selected British press. The assessment for the thesis is also provided by reflecting on *The Guardian*, the representative of left-wing newspapers, also *The Independent*, the representative of centrist newspapers, and the *Daily Mail* as the right-wing tabloid newspaper. As mentioned, the public shapes its opinions based on what kind of information people receive, considering the online news is one of the main sources of information (Matthew Smith, 2023).

This work is divided into two sections. First section is the theoretical part, which introduces the British Monarchy in the 21st century. To emphasise that the topic of the bachelor thesis has been very relevant to this day, this part firstly describes a short overview of the current form of the monarchy in the United Kingdom, followed by separate chapter *Significant changes within the British monarchy*. The Royal Family

⁴ That the consumption of the Royal Family theme increase can be noticed from how the series became quickly popular and how many viewers it attracts, which will be described in the chapter Netflix series - The Crown

members are well-known worldwide. With changes within the British monarchy, such as the death of Queen Elizabeth II or Prince Harry and Meghan Markle that left the position of working Royal Family members, the question of the importance of their role and relevance in the British monarchy surfaced. The Royal Family role in the monarchy and these changes were heavily mediated, and therefore they are shortly introduced in a separate chapter, followed by a brief description of the importance of media for the monarchy.

As mentioned before, the media play a significant role in influencing the public, and different platforms offer various points of view. In the chapter *Media*, the thesis describes in greater detail how the media are important for the British Royal Family and what kinds of qualities the media have. Queen Elizabeth II in modern media, as in television and streaming platform YouTube, is briefly introduced in the thesis as a way of seeing progress which helped to engage with the public and to evoke feelings of being close to the monarch. Queen Elizabeth II was the first British monarch to use television to its full extent, starting with having her Coronation broadcast. For some, this gesture symbolized a promise by Her Majesty to keep up with the modern world. The Royal Family's participation on social media such as Facebook and Twitter can be viewed as a confirmation that the promise was fulfilled and that the monarchy became engaged in the digital world. Social media are indicators of one's popularity and a place where people around the world can communicate. These media are also used by firms to promote their image and marketing to keep people interested in them. The Royal Family decided to do the same to reach wider audiences and to connect with the whole world, and to some extent, it can be viewed as their effort to remain popular (Ditter 2013, 11). The Royal Family and their social media usage are introduced in separate chapters.

The second section of the thesis is the practical part that presents a summary and overview of how different media portray Queen Elizabeth II and her *Annus Horribilis*. At first, this part provides a separate chapter with an objective overview of 1992, so it could later compare the information presented by the selected media. The newspapers *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *Daily Mail*, the book by Andrew Morton *The Queen: Her Life* and the Netflix television series *The Crown* are described in separate chapters, focusing on their reflection of *Annus Horribilis* and the portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II. The assessment focuses on whether these media retrospectively portray the late Queen

critically or in a more positive light, indicating to what extent the selected media contributes to the popularity of Queen Elizabeth II. The practical part also focuses on the accuracy of information provided to the reader or watcher in the selected media about the events that formed the Annus Horribilis.

2 Theoretical part

2.1 The British Monarchy in the 21st century

In the United Kingdom, the current form of the monarchy is a constitutional monarchy, which means that the head of the state is the monarch who is not politically engaged in political or executive role. The monarch is a traditional symbol of authority and has a limited executive role. Monarch's role is to fulfil ceremonial and representative duties and be the symbol of the unity of the nation (Heywood 1997, 360). As was already mentioned, in previous centuries, political systems and regimes changed over time, most monarchies disappeared, and new political systems and states arose. Nowadays, people are more inclined towards fast change and as much freedom as possible. Therefore, it is a question of why some monarchies persisted and were not replaced by a republic form of government. The following paragraph will provide a summary regarding the differences and similarities between the functioning of a monarchy and a republic.

Monarchies as a form of government vary in forms and differ in how power is exercised within them. Whether the monarch's power is constitutionally limited or absolute, one key feature they share is legitimacy through inheritance. The sovereign is the head of a nation without the people's consent. His/her power is given by inheritance; therefore, s/he is not elected. A primary contract between citizens and the state is absent. The president rules with the consent of the governed; they are equal before the state and the law. An ordinary citizen can become the president; on the other hand, it is impossible to become a sovereign, a monarch. The monarch represents a sort of deity, a figure in whose hands people place their trust. The similarity that these two political systems have in common is the elected parliament by the citizens of the nation. King or Queen does not rule and the same applies to the position of president (Aziz, Omer 2014, NP). Supporters of the constitutional monarchy might appeal to the arguments of tradition and utility, however, this political system is similar to the republic.

The one monarchy that survived and remains in existence even through times of change is the British Monarchy. There are two main perspectives on how the British Monarchy can be perceived. The first perspective suggests that the British Monarchy stands for an archaic, outdated way of governing (Clancy 2021, 4). From the second perspective, the monarchy can be perceived as a unique phenomenon. The British Monarchy has remained

an important and popular monarchy to this day. According to Philip Ditter, in his book *Mediating the Royal Family*, the British Monarchy, as one of the world's oldest monarchies, stands out even though there are often raised voices against this form of government (2013, 1). However, opinion polls state that the British population still supports the constitutional monarchy. Ditter says this approval is noticeable from the public's response to mediated royal events and matters. The lively participation of the public indicates that the British monarchy still arouses the interest not only of the British population but also of the whole world (2013, 1).

2.1.1 Significant changes within the British Monarchy

Monarchy, as a form of government, remains an important topic even in current debates. Gradually, over time, not only the monarchy but also the Royal Family transformed and developed. Maintaining the position of the monarchy is due to the ability of the Royals to adapt and undergo changes that contributed to the transformation of the current British Monarchy. The following paragraphs will outline and comment on changes such as The Succession to the Crown Act (2013), Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, the Duchess from Sussex, leaving their role as working Royal Family members, the death of Queen Elizabeth II and usage of social media by the Royal Family which helped with presenting this transformation. All of the occasions and events that are named in this chapter were heavily mediated and thus closely monitored by the public. Media played a significant role in portraying the discussed changes regarding the Royal Family. For the British Monarchy, these changes are significant, therefore it is vital to mention them.

One of the significant changes of the 21st century for the Royal family and the whole British nation was The Succession to the Crown Act⁵ (2013). To this date, the rule has always been that the monarch obtains his or her position by inheritance, also that the position is for life, and the male gender was preferred in the line to the throne. The monarch could resign from the position; this act is called abdication. After abdication or death of the monarch, the eldest child of the monarch becomes the heir to the throne. In relation to Queen Elizabeth II's enthronement, King George VI had no son but two daughters, one of whom was Queen Elizabeth II. Therefore, a woman was to sit

⁵ Full extent of The Succession to the Crown Act (2013) can be seen on: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/20/contents/enacted>

on the throne, although a male successor would otherwise have been given priority. These rules were changed in 2013 by The Succession to the Crown Act, which changed the law of succession to the British throne and replaced the preference for a male ruler with absolute primogeniture for individuals in the line of succession born after October of 28th 2011 (The National Archives 2013, NP). The Succession to the Crown Act has been described in the media as a touching gesture done by Queen Elizabeth II, introduced before the birth of Prince George, son of Prince William and Princess Catherine of Wales, in July 2013, to ensure that their eldest child would have an equal right to the throne regardless of gender. The media also described it as a modern gesture for the young generation of the members of the Royal Family. (Frederica Miller, Oliver Pridmore 2022, NP). Nevertheless, it is controversial to say ‘modern gesture’ in the 21st century for younger generations because women participated in political life prior to this century.

The most recent change is the accession of King Charles III to the throne after his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, the longest-reigning British monarch, passed away on September 8, 2022. That was a major change that felt deeply by the whole nation. Queen Elizabeth II was the symbol of the Britain as far as back memory goes. Her passing affected millions of people, and media coverage of this occurrence was exceptional. The Queen’s death and the succession of Charles III yet again opened the topic of the importance of the monarchy, and the opportunity for criticism rose again. However, in May 2023, an Ipsos poll found out that 65% of British people still favour the monarchy, while 25% favour a republic. The supporters of the republic form of government are among the younger generation, and the percentage for the republic is slowly increasing (Ipsos 2023, NP). The Coronation of the new King was watched by over 20 million people in the UK and was covered all over the Internet on different platforms. Furthermore, with the death of the Queen, the campaign called *Make Elizabeth the last*⁶ was remembered, and a new protest arose with the title “Not my King” referring to Charles III. Both campaigns were led by the organisation called *The Republic*, which aims to abolish the monarchy (Tim Adams 2023, NP). And even though there was a protest against the new sovereign, the researcher Matthew Smith for YouGov survey stated that 63% of those polled said that they thought that Charles III would be a good King, and there was an increase in support (Matthew Smith 2022, NP). By the number of people that tuned to watch the Coronation of the new

⁶ Make Elizabeth the last: anti-monarchy campaign of 2022 lead by group Republic

King, we can tell that the public is still interested in the events that are connected with the Royals and monarchy.

One of the severely mediated occasions and a monumental change in the monarchy was the moment Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, stopped being working members of the Royal Family. The whole affair was called Megxit, which is a play of words Meghan and Brexit. Harry and Meghan left the monarchy on 31st March 2020. The couple hinted several reasons of why they departed from the Royal Family, including feeling bullied, pressured, being unhappy, and wanting to break away and become financially independent (Clancy 2021, 234-238). The event was a media hit and split the population based on their opinion of which side to take. However, the British nation showed more support for the monarchy and its working members. Once one of the most favourite Royals, Prince Harry, fell in 12th place in a British poll provided by YouGov with the title “The most popular royalty” (YouGov 2023, NP). Even though the departure caused a big uproar in public, the official website informing on the roles and work of The Duke and Duchess of Sussex states that the couple still serve the Monarchy and that they “deeply believe in the role of The Monarchy, and their commitment to Her Majesty The Queen is unwavering” (Sussexroyal 2020, NP). Currently it is unknown, how the situation might change after Queen Elizabeth II’ death.

As illustrated in the previous paragraphs, the monarchy has been transforming and evolving throughout the years. An essential change that accompanied this transformation was the start of use of social media by the members of the monarchy. As Laura Clancy said: “The royal image has always been mediated, and royal history is a history of representations in different forms.” (Clancy 2021, 63). The media have pursued the Royal Family since the beginning, but “thanks to expanding media forms, we now have more access to the monarchy than ever before.” (Clancy 2021, 64). The 21st century is progressive and massively based on social media consumption, almost everyone owns some form of technology and has access to social media, or even has a social media accounts. Whether it is a phone, a tablets, or a computers, it allows people to quickly access information and news. The Royal Family also went with the times and the members set up official social accounts. Some of the social media sited they created their account on are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Formerly, this was unthinkable since the monarchy was rather cold to the public and was considerably private.

Nevertheless, with the expansion of social media, the Royal family learned how to work them to their advantage. They saw it as an instrument for public awareness and involvement in the activities of members of the Royal Family. The British Monarchy and royals became a worldwide media sensation that is consumed by the public on various platforms. Thanks to the media, people receive firsthand information and quickly know about the news and changes in the Royal Family.

2.1.2 The significance of the Royal Family in the Monarchy

The Royal Family is an integral part of the monarchy and vice versa. In one of the most valuable books by Michael Billig *The Talking of the Royal Family*, one respondent, when asked a question about his feeling about monarchy, answered: “If you’ve not got the Royal Family there, then you’ll not have the British Isles as we know it” (Billig 1991, 34). This statement implies that the Royal Family creates the feeling of a nationalism, and to picture Britain without them would be difficult. Not only does their presence create a feeling of unity, they also have their own significant roles that help the monarchy to function. There are several answers to how the Royal Family supports the monarchy and why it is important for the public to see them. The main examples of their support towards the monarchy are the fulfilment of their Royal duties, the Royals being the representative of the state, and their contribution to the state’s economy, all heavily mediated on the social media sites.

At first, the monarch and the Royal Family members must fulfil their duties towards the monarchy. According to the official royal website⁷, the monarch and members of the family have a significant role. The role they play in the structure of the monarchy has two sides, and so we can speak about two types of roles: traditional roles and less formal roles. Acts of monarch’s power, such as declaring war, dissolving parliament, being the head of the church or commander-in-chief of the armed forces, are considered to be the traditional roles. However, this power is symbolic and ceremonial. On the other hand, this is what the less formal roles are, as given on the official web site of the British Royal Family:

“The Sovereign acts as a focus for national identity, unity and pride; gives a sense of stability and continuity; officially recognises success and excellence; and

⁷ <https://www.royal.uk/>

supports the ideal of voluntary service. Not only in a formal role but also in an informal one, the monarch should be supported by members of the immediate family” (Royal, “The role of the Monarchy”, NP).

Based on this piece of information, we can see that the monarch stands the highest in the formal and traditional position in the nation and her or his power is mostly symbolic. The main supporters of the monarch are and should be the closest members of the Royal Family. They serve their purpose as representatives of the state. The Royals take part in overseas visits to strengthen diplomatic and economic relations. As stated on the official royal website, they generally participate in more than “2000 official trips”. Nonetheless, that is not their only obligation. In addition, they are expected to set the example by providing for the charity sector. “About 3,000 organisations list a member of the Royal Family as patron or president” (Royal, “The role of the Monarchy”, NP). These organisations cover a variety of focuses such as education, mental health or environment. Not only do the Royal Family members support these organisations, but they are also founding their own charities. For example, The Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales focuses on helping early childhood and mental health in their own charity (Royal, “The role of the Monarchy”, NP). All the trips, all the royal participations in charity events are closely documented by the media. People can see them in newspapers, on television, and primarily on social networks published by the accounts of members of the Royal Family themselves. The proof of this is the official website of the Royal Family, that describes the family as a working family and gives snippets from Instagram as an example (Royal, “The role of the Monarchy”, NP). Therefore, the public can see how the Royals are contributing to the monarchy, what their contribution to the monarchy is and how their contribution helps other people. Since most of their activity is monitored by the media, they strengthen the positive image of not only the Royal Family, but the whole British Monarchy.

Another considerable task of the Royal Family is to contribute to the British economy. Thanks to the attractiveness of the royal theme, the Royal Family is economically highly beneficial in the tourism sector. The public is interested in the members and even people from foreign countries are willing to travel and spend money to see their celebrations, residences or almost any occasion regarding them. The same mentions Michael Billing in his book *Talking of the Royal Family*, where he draws attention to the fact that

the Royal Family is crucial for tourism. From his analysis, it is possible to assess that 87% of British families responded that the United Kingdom would not be as attractive for tourists without the Royal Family (Billig 1991,40). The economic benefit derives from their popularity. The income comes from the tickets to royal landmarks, but also from the different varieties of souvenirs, guides and other kinds of goods which are sold at these places. This fact supports the royal collection trust, that looks after the royal collections of art and also manages the visits to royal residences for the public. According to the Royal Collection annual report from years 2019-2020⁸, “the total income was £71,526,000. Total visitor numbers amounted to 3,285,000” (Royal Collection Trust 2020, NP). The Royal family is also a subject for the entertainment industry. They serve as inspiration and act as a remarkable subject for countless films, series, books, and articles. The depiction in the entertainment sphere is also one of the reasons why the population invests in them not only in tourism but also in their free time. The royalty is inherent symbol that drives people’s interest in the UK, and from this popularity the state economy benefit.

Lastly, as Laura Clancy argues in her book *Running the Family Firm*, one of the reasons for the survival of the Royal Family roles is to be exposed to the media, where the picture of them and the monarchy is created. In Clancy’s book, she compares the Royal Family to a firm which invests in propagating their image and in return others invest in them. The Royal Family invests by participating on the media platforms and use them to present themselves in a positive light (Clancy 2021, 15-17). Their numerous social media accounts offer a feeling of intimacy and a glimpse into their lives. By that, the Royals are creating a feeling of participation and unity and therefore carry their duties towards the monarchy. What must be remembered is the fact that what we see is strategically planned and staged. Clancy says that to maintain their power and role, the key is balancing their visibility and invisibility (Clancy 2021, 6-8). What the Royal Family keeps visible are royal marriages, celebrations, newborn royals, and charity visits. The public invest and is interested in these occasions while likeability of the Royal family increases. Therefore, visibility is necessary for achieving legitimacy and maintaining public interest.

⁸ Due to the coronavirus which resulted in lockdown in most of the countries, the thesis focused on year when it was possible to travel abroad.

Even this idea is supported by Queen Elizabeth's II famous motto: "I have to be seen to be believed" (Clancy 2021,88).

On the other hand, Clancy argues that the Royal Family cannot be too visible. The members must also balance their invisibility which is important to keep the mystery around them the population interested and secure their private life. The invisibility is also important in matters that could raise questions about their purpose in the British Monarchy. Their status, wealth or their connection to the global trade power are not themes that the Royal family would likely discuss with the public (Clancy 2021, 57). In summary, the importance of the Royal Family in the Monarchy in the 21st century lies on their duties and image that are primarily represented through the media. Evoking a sense of closeness to the people as well as importance for the monarchy is a key to the relevance in the modern world.

2.1.3 The importance of media for the Monarchy

The British population is not so much drawn to monarchy as an efficient way of government, more so the attention and popularity is drawn to the Royal Family. Similar thinking presents Laura Clancy in her book *Running the family firm*: "It is not the form of government that is popular but members of the Royal Family themselves." (Clancy 2021, 26). The relationship between the Royal Family and the media is one of the reasons why the Royal Family and the British Monarchy are still relevant, supported, maintained, and are popular amongst the people. Olivia Huang argues that The Royal family members use media to strengthen their position and evoke a feeling of participation and unity. The media image is essential and greatly influences how the public perceives the Royal Family. Public support is one of the most critical aspects of the functioning of a monarchy (Huang 2021). The 21st century is marked by the upturn of social media, which helps maintaining the popularity of the Royal Family. What kind of media and why the social media representation is important for public opinion is introduced in the following chapter.

Another reason for the maintenance of the power and role of the Royal Family is due to the ability to adapt and undergo changes, either on their own initiative or due the pressure from the public, and other inevitable circumstances. With changing times and values, the British Monarchy has also been transforming. The monumental changes of the century are listed in the subsection Significant changes within the British Monarchy.

2.2 Media

As suggested in previous chapters, media play a significant role in maintaining the British monarchy and the popularity of the Royal Family in the UK and worldwide. In the 21st century, almost everyone owns some kind of technology that updates us with the newest information in a matter of seconds. In times when the Internet was not invented, not many people would believe how the bloom of technology and social media would allow such quick access to the Royal family. The media are important for Royal Family because are the sources that shape public opinion. The public can form an opinion on a topic based on the information that they get from a variety of sources, mainly from the media. This claim supports Marion Ridder who states that the public opinion in the early 1950s was mainly influenced by television as the main source of information (Ridder, Joyce Marion 1963,204). With the invention of the Internet and social platforms, people gained a new source of obtaining information via social media and news websites. The information that the public obtains from the modern media influences how people perceive the Royal family. Therefore, it is important for the Royals to be a part of the new media world. Except that not only did the media platforms change, but so did the ways of how the monarchy engaged with the British population (Clancy 2021, 64). By using the social media, the Royal Family members started to be more reachable for the public, creating a feeling of closeness which is essential for the positive image of the Royals and monarchy's survival. The relationship between the media and Royal Family can be viewed as beneficial for both. As Ditter argues, the Royal Family benefits from the media and positive coverage of their image, when unpleasant incidents of the Royal Family presented by media are not considered. He says that the supporters of monarchy spend a tremendous amount of time-consuming information about the Royal Family through various media platforms. (Ditter 2013). This could be a sign that the public is interested in the occasions of the royal members and that their popularity is connected to the media coverage, depiction and representation of the Royal Family.

2.2.1 The Royal Family and their relationship with media

The relationship between the Royal Family and the media could be described as “love-hate” relationship. The Royal Family's negative relationship with the media comes from exploitation of their privacy, covering the scandals of the Royal Family, and the never-ending chase for new information. Not only can the media shed bad light

on their image, but also the Royals must be aware of their behaviour all the time. Teri Finneman and Ryan J. Thomas in their research for an article in Journalism practice called *The British National Press and the 2012 Royal Family Photo Scandals* states that: “Part of the “contract” of being royalty is to uphold a particular standard of behaviour” (Finneman, Thomas 2013, 412). The Royals should not be pictured in a bad light frequently because it would affect the whole nation, who would be instantly questioning their position. The research of Finneman’s and Thomas’s focused on privacy and the publication of scandalous photos in the press. One of their conclusions noted that “victim blaming” plays a notable part in the British press. In that sense, the media says that the Royals are responsible for their own maintenance of privacy, and that their actions bring consequences (Finneman, Thomas 2014, 418-419).

While, the Royals must be aware of their behaviour, the ever-present rumours about their actions and life still must be considered. The reason of why the Royal Family should be aware of this is the fact that the members can quickly address their actions and confute the rumours on their media sites, emphasising and saving their positive image. The rapid spread of disinformation is one of the disadvantages brought up by the evolution of the media. With the growth of the new media forms such as social media, fake news became a part of everyday life. People tend to believe everything they read or see and mostly do not double-check the facts. However, even though this might seem like a major disadvantage, sometimes the rumours can turn out to be advantageous. For example, the Netflix series *The Crown* depicts the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. The series is mainly fiction, but it evokes sympathy with the Royal Family (Clancy 2021,80). Considering this, the media advantages to the British Monarchy and Royal family are more extensive than one could imagine. The media covers their live, events and successes, but also The Royal family can use the media to reach the population on their behalf. In Pat Robins’ article *Media Representations of the British Royal Family as National Family*, he sees the royal celebrations as a part of the strengthening relationship between the Royals and the nation. Such occasions, for example, royal weddings, provide a feeling of pride and utility and are heavily presented in the media, reaching a wide range of the population (Robins 1995, 113-116). These occasions or events picture the Royal Family and the monarchy in a positive light, sustaining the British people and the whole world’s interest in them, while it also greatens the affection of the public for the monarchical institution. This statement is supported by Phillip Ditter who states that the affection towards

the Monarch and monarchy comes from a relationship with the media. He argues that the: “royal status does not automatically cause positive esteem and reputation. It rather depends on the depiction of royalty within the public context, which is mainly brought about by means of adequate media effectiveness” (Ditter 2013, 3). Since the media provides people with the picture of the royals while constantly sharing the pieces of the royal lives, the good or bad, they directly affect the popularity of the Royal Family. Due to that, the media play a considerable part in the creation of the Royal Family members image amongst people. The beneficial outcome of the media for the Royal Family is crucial to their likeability. In Billig’s analysis, most of the families described the Royals as ordinary people with whom they were familiar (Billig,1992). This outcome may be surprising because these families knew the Royal Family mainly from the press. If then, the families had a feeling of familiarity, then with our modern age, this feeling undoubtedly grew. The members of the Royal Family now present themselves on various social platforms and states their opinion more often; therefore, they can influence people’s thoughts about them on their own and be more accessible for the public.

2.2.2 Queen Elizabeth II on television and streaming platform YouTube

Queen Elizabeth II reigned from the year 1952 to her death in 2022. As was previously mentioned, the late Queen Elizabeth II has been presented in the media her whole life and even after her death. She witnessed remarkable technological advances, from television broadcasting to the rise of tabloid newspapers and social media. Not only did the new media offer her the opportunity to influence the engagement with the public, they also seemed helpful in reshaping the royal image. This chapter provides the information on the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, focusing on the event and how it affected the public. To highlight the change of her transformation in the media the chapter moreover covers her depiction on the streaming platform YouTube.

The turning point for the transformation of mediated monarchy was the year 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II that was broadcasted live by BBC on television and held in Westminster Abbey. The Coronation was the first televised live Royal event and became one of the most mediated historical moments to this day. Television was in 1953 uncommon in British households, considering it was relatively new form of the media. That the Coronation was a significant event proves the fact that for this occasion,

numerous people even purchased their first TV set (Clancy 2021, 66- 68). The interest of the public in this ceremony was enormous and had a large effect on the population of the United Kingdom. In his book *The Family Firm: monarchy, mass media and the British public, 1932-53*, Edward Owens describes the effect that the Coronation had on the public. He says:

“The broadcast had the simultaneous effect of stimulating imagined identification with a national community of other television viewers while deepening the shared emotional experience of the Coronation among groups who watched it together.”
(Owens 2019, 352)

Even though the ceremony is mainly associated with Queen Elizabeth II, according to Andrew Morton in his book *The Queen*, Her Majesty herself opposed to the idea of broadcasting the Coronation. He mentions that not only was the Queen against being televised, but her mother, Winston Churchill and the Archbishop of Canterbury agreed with her. There were two reasons for her objections. First of all, she saw the Coronation as a private sacred moment with its tradition, and the second reason for her concern was that she recognised that if something went wrong, millions of people would witness her embarrassment. On the other hand, Winston Churchill believed it would take off the magic and mystery surrounding the Royal family. Only Prince Phillip was in favour of bringing the Coronation to the public as he saw this occasion as a sure way of maintaining the monarchy. Andrew Marr in his book *A History of Modern Britain*, states that it was believed that with Queen Elizabeth II, the new reign would be in the sense of innovation, reborn nation, change and promise of new beginnings (Marr 2017,118-119). BBC reported that an estimated 27 million people in the UK tuned in to watch in this event (Jasmine Andersson & Sean Seddon 2023, NP).

Looking back, the outcome of agreeing to mediate the ceremony via television influenced the public opinion about the Queen Elizabeth II as well as the members of the Royal Family and evoked a feeling of unity. To some extent Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family members had to be aware of the effects of the successful Coronation, considering they continued to use mass and social media on a larger scale. The Coronation was the first royal event broadcasted live, but certainly not the last. From then, the Royal family promoted their events, ceremonies and celebrations via the media. According to Olivia Huang: “the important ceremonial celebrations of the British Royal Family rely

on the power of the television media to become a meaningful way to spread, build and consolidate British social order, norms, values, and national spirit” (Olivia Huang 2021, NP) Television helped to strengthen their position and became a part of the influence on popularity. For the public, it was a new experience and shocking to witness the Royal Family and sacred ceremony in the comfort of their homes. However, this experience has changed over time, and as of now, we take access to royal events for granted. Queen Elizabeth II appeared not only in mass media but also on streaming platforms. Nowadays, Queen Elizabeth II functions as a muse for many books, television series, and movies. She is even used as a marketing strategy in adverts which contains her look-alike. Furthermore, Her Majesty, throughout her time, became a performer herself. Not many would predict that the shy camera Queen, afraid of embarrassment, would appear on screens daily and even become a performer in YouTube videos or skits. One example is the 2022 short video on YouTube released by the Official Royal Family channel to celebrate former Queen Elizabeth’s platinum jubilee to honour her 70-year reign. The title of this video is *Marmalade Sandwich, Your Majesty?* It is a heartwarming content in which the Queen has tea with an animated bear Paddington. The video focuses on the humorous side of Elizabeth II. who keeps her marmalade sandwich in a purse for “later”, and Paddington Bear, wishing her a happy jubilee moment and thanking her for all she has done. Over 17 million people saw this 2 minutes and 27 seconds long video (The Royal Family 2022, 00:01-02:27). Unfortunately, the comments were turned off so it cannot be seen how the public reacted in the comments. Another example is a YouTube video published in 2012 by the channel Olympics titled *James Bond and the Queen London 2012 performance* In the plot of the video James Bond is accompanying the Queen to the Olympic Games. Currently, the video has been seen by more than 66 million people, and the commentary is mostly positive, focusing on the Queen’s outstanding performance and affection and admiration for her (Olympics, 2012).

Laura Clancy says that the people’s participation in the Coronation changed because of the promise of the unique closeness that television emphasised. She also states that: “Of course, all royal representation sells monarchy” (Clancy 2021,79). The same could be applied to her appearance in YouTube videos. Both the television and streaming platform YouTube promoted Queen Elizabeth II. The decision to broadcast her Coronation brought a promise of a new age and more engagement with the public.

The YouTube videos prove that these hopes became true. It gave the public access to see the Queen's other side and her openness to participate in modern media concepts for everyone to see. The focus on her humorous side influenced her likeability. The reaction of the public can be seen through the positive comments and the interest in the late Queen in the number of viewers. Queen Elizabeth continued to use the power of media and use it as a tool for engagement with the public and representation of self-image, which is crucial for the popularity and maintenance of the British Monarchy and the Royal Family.

2.2.3 The Royal Family and social media (Facebook, Twitter)

In the past, the Royal Family was presented publicly by printed news and radio. With the invention of the television, the Internet and various media platforms, they became active participants in television and later on social media. In today's society, social media play a significant role in everyday life. They allow people to communicate, socialise and obtain pieces of information within a matter of seconds. These platforms are made for a broad audience and encourage the public to engage with each other online. Most people use these platforms to communicate and share their pictures, opinions, activities, and beliefs. It is also a quick way to promote, market and advertise products or events (Lutkewich 2021, NP).

The range of the usage of social media is enormous. These networks serve as a marketplace where breaking news, rumours and media hypes spread. According to Vivian Roese's study, social media are a powerful tool that changes the world's connection, helps the visibility of human behaviour and empowers people to become media themselves. Social media creates content that can go viral or media hyped. It can be anything from a picture to a video shared or viewed online by a wide audience. Vivian says that the media hype can be caused by triggering deep emotions in public, whether negative or positive reactions such as anger or sympathy. In her study, she found out that these feelings caused by social media can evoke, for example, pride in belonging to some group or feelings of happiness (Vivian 2018, 314-316). As was mentioned, the televised Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was a tool for evoking feelings of nationality, to obtain popularity, and to maintain the monarchy. With social media, the Royal Family can do the same more quickly. Sustain their popularity and evoke positive feelings by publishing content which portrays them favourably is now easier more than ever. The Royals

promote their events, activities on social media and keep the public interested and participating in their everyday life. Following the live broadcast of the Coronation, Queen Elizabeth II and the other members of the Royal Family realised the importance of media, and with time they became a part of social media. The royal accounts can be found on every popular social media platform. Among the first accounts that the British Royal Family launched were the accounts on Facebook and Twitter. The official Facebook account of Queen Elizabeth II launched in 2010 under the *username British Monarchy*. The justification given by the royal household on why the account was created was that it is an efficient way to reach millions of people worldwide with information, images and videos about the British Royal Family (Ditter 2013, 37-45). According to Ditter, this justification suggests that the British Royal Family devotes more time to media consumption, which increasingly influences users daily routines, ways of thinking and reasoning, obtaining information, and perceptions (2013, 38). Whether the Royal Family is popular is decided by the public. It is crucial for the Royal Family to be likeable for the maintenance of the Monarchy. Therefore, the usage of social media can help to stay popular in the public eye. These days, the official account of the Royal Family on Facebook is under the username “*The Royal Family*” and has 6,6 million followers. The page itself does not obtain detailed information about the Royal Family members. The site informs viewers to visit their official website for the latest and detailed information. The posts mainly contain information on the events and activities of working Royal Family members, which offers an invitation for people to interact with them. The public can comment or show support by the like button. However, the public must control what type of comment they make because of this page’s terms. The Royal Family account policy is: “We would like this page to be enjoyable for all, so please note that any offensive or inappropriate comments will be deleted, and the user may be blocked” (The Royal Family on Facebook, 2023).

On the same basis, with 5,7 million followers, the same username, “*@the Royal Family*”, with the identical content as on the Facebook account, their Twitter account launched in 2009. The account shares information about events, engagements and occasions through “tweeting”. The piece of information is often short and accompanied by emoticons (The Royal Family on Twitter, 2023). The main difference between Facebook and Twitter is that replies to tweets cannot be deleted. Therefore, the public have more freedom to comment on Twitter than on Facebook. On Twitter, it is also easier

to go viral. For example, the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, was tweeted over 6 million of people in one day, according to social media monitoring French firm Visibrain (Agence France-Presse 2018, NP).

Twitter is an efficient way how to keep public interested in the Royal Family. According to Ditter, the Royal Family is not accessible to most people in real life. If the Royal Family members wants to be more reachable for the public and remain supported, they have to provide these types of the media and offer a basis for identification. By maintaining a Twitter account, the Royal Family provides the public with a glimpse into their lives and activities; therefore, they became more personal and familiar (Ditter 2013, 38). What must be considered that these accounts are not run personally by the British Royal Family members, and individually they do not contribute to them. It is the Royal Communication which takes care of the responsibility for managing the course of these networks (Clancy 2021, 26). Therefore, they cannot be viewed as a personal publication by the Royal Family members and their authenticity can be questioned.

3 Practical part

The practical part of the thesis provides a reflection and a summary of how the selected media differ in their portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II and of the series of events that constituted Annus Horribilis. For the assessment concerning the situation, several diverse media were selected: newspapers, namely *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *Daily Mail* (based on their differing political orientation), the book *The Queen* by Andrew Morton, and the Netflix series *The Crown*. The aim of this part of the thesis is to assess whether these media provide an objective or subjective depiction of Her Majesty's demeanour and actions. Different media types were chosen for the assessment with an assumption that they differ in how they provide information to the public about the Royal Family. The thesis proceeds from an assumption that journalistic high-quality sources will provide a more objective depiction due to their aim to dispassionately describe the information to the reader. On the other hand, with the selected media, that cover the life of Queen Elizabeth II, for the dramatisation or incline to depict her in a favourable way, it is assumed that these media will provide a subjective perspective as they have the tendency to emphasise feelings or emotions rather than facts.

One of the moments when the media and the British Royal Family collided was the year 1992, named by Queen Elizabeth II as "Annus Horribilis". First, the thesis provides an overview of the information on what happened throughout the year 1992 and then proceeds, based on that description, to compare and reflect on the selected media's assessment. It will seek to answer whether the media offer an objective or subjective view. The evaluation of the selected media will examine the following criteria: what type of information is selected, what information is emphasised to the reader or watcher, whether and how the media express their view on the situation, and what language the selected media use. For comparison, there is a separate chapter which outlines how Queen Elizabeth II herself reflected on the events of Annus Horribilis in her speech. This is to provide further comparison with the other resources. Ultimately, the thesis will consider whether Queen Elizabeth II had been depicted positively and whether such portrayal is beneficial for the Royal Family, as was argued in the theoretical part.

The year 1992, which the Queen described as her "Annus Horribilis", was chosen as a focal point of this thesis for several reasons. The media depicted the Queen

and the Royal family with heightened criticism throughout that year because of the scandals they were involved in, and also because of their reactions to the scandals. This criticism attracted the public's interest and opened a discussion about the position of the Royal Family. Not only did the Royals come to a head with the media, but the media were criticised by the public too, due to their questionable methods of obtaining information. Queen Elizabeth II had rarely addressed private matters of the Royal Family before the Annus Horribilis. However, she made an exception in her speech, marking the 40th anniversary on the throne and expressed her view on the scandals, their depiction, as well as the response of the public (McGill Model United Nations Conference, NP).

Because of the public dissatisfaction with the behaviour of the Royal Family members regarding the scandals that occurred in 1992, and the negative media representation of these, this thesis will now discuss the representation of events in today's media. Concerning what the media retrospectively offer to the reader, the following paragraphs will ponder what types of information are emphasised to the reader or watcher, and whether the depiction is to make the reader to feel compassion. According to G. F. Mathewson, consumers seek information through media in an effort to make social or political decisions or for entertainment (1972, 212). Indeed, the information offered by the media helps the public create and shape opinions. Edward L. Bernays, who assumes the same, stating that previously, public opinion was shaped or changed by tribal chiefs, religious leaders or sovereigns. However, that changed overtime, and to sway public opinion can be attempted by everyone (1928, 959). This poses a risk, especially in an era when propaganda can be broadcast easily and reach broad audiences through digital media. According to Malcom Coxall in his book *Human Manipulation*, the media are used to manipulate people and can function as a tool of propaganda, providing arguments and specific images on topics which are in favour of particular beliefs and interests (Coxall 2013). Because humans are curious, the media provides all sorts of information in a manner from which they may benefit. The Royal family has been depicted in various ways, allowing UK society to consume information about them which represents different points of view. The practical part will now summarise the image of Queen Elizabeth II the different media helped to co-create in relation to Annus Horribilis.

3.1 Annus Horribilis

The year 1992, denoted as Annus Horribilis, is characterised by the unfortunate events and scandals of the British Royal Family. Numerous scandals that occurred shook the foundation of the monarchy (Clancy 2021, 182). This is important to consider in relation to the topic of this thesis because one might assume that the Royal Family strives to protect their good reputation. It is so as such constitutes the basis of public opinion and, consequently, it helps the Royal Family to retain popularity. It is necessary to provide an overview of the series of events which are understood as the nub of Annus Horribilis, as the practical part aims to compare their description in the selected media.

The expression Annus Horribilis, i.e. “horrible year”, was used by Queen Elizabeth II in her speech delivered on the occasion of her Ruby Jubilee at Guildhall. In her speech, she said: “1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure. In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, it has turned out to be an *annus horribilis*” (ITN Archive 2022, 2:30). The fact that Annus Horribilis was, indeed, a significant year for the country is suggested by the intense media interest which was renewed in the 21st century. The importance can be deduced from the name Queen Elizabeth II used to describe the year in her speech, and from the aforementioned fact that she rarely addressed family matters in public.

Annus Horribilis was to a great extent characterised by the three divorces of Queen Elizabeth’s children. The Queen’s second son Prince Andrew, Duke of York, divorced his wife Sarah Ferguson; Princess Anne separated from Captain Mark Phillips, and the current King, Charles III divorced Diana, Princess of Wales. The reflections of the respective divorces were also partly characterised by the publication of intimate photographs and personal conversations⁹. The publication of Princess Diana’s book *Diana: Her true story*, in which she revealed details of her problematic marriage and information about the affair of her husband with his now-wife Camilla Parker Bowles, complicated the situation further and is included in the events that formed Annus Horribilis. Another event of Annus Horribilis was the fire in one of the Queen’s official residences, the Windsor Castle. This event caused public dissatisfaction as public funds

⁹ The media firstly published intimate pictures of Sarah Ferguson and her friend John Bryan and the publication of recordings of intimate conversations between Diana and James Gilbey surfaced (Clancy 2021, 182).

were used to restore the damages the fire caused, resulting in the taxation of Her Majesty and Royal Family members. (Clancy 2021,182). Not only the Royal family was criticised in relation to this event, but also the press itself. The reason for the critique of the press was the questionable methods used, such as wire taping of private phone conversations, that were later published (McGill Model United Nations Conference, NP). Despite the poor image of the Royals caused by the scandals, the country still has a monarchy. The Royal Family managed to revive their image and strengthened their position thanks to media marketing royal events and celebrations. Media helped calm people's emotions and promoted a national image. This suggests that the support for monarchy primarily comes from "efficient and skilled use of media" (Huang 2021, NP).

Considering that the monarchy stands on traditions, trying to sustain a good image, 1992 was indeed one of the worst years for the British monarchy and the Royal Family. As a Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family members were constantly mediated and criticised throughout the year. Because of these affairs, the relationship between the media and them was apparent more than ever before. The reason that could explain why the monarchy was at that time threatened and the image of the Royal Family was damaged lies in the ever-present negative coverage by the media, but also in the betrayal of the rules by the Royal Family and the disturbance to set their family life as a role example for the public.

Lastly, what is also essential for the assessment of the events of Annus Horribilis in the selected media is to mention how Queen Elizabeth II. herself addressed these family matters in her speech.

Her speech focuses mainly on expressing gratitude for the support of the public in these times for Her and the Royal Family and acknowledgement that these scandals affected the people. The thesis does not argue that Her Majesty's gratitude was not sincere; however, it can be seen as a way to maintain popularity and create a positive image, as described in the theoretical part, which argues that the Royal Family's popularity depends on their representation and depiction in the media. Her acknowledgement of the Royal Family situation is provided in the part of the speech in which Her Majesty states: "I suspect that there are very few people or institutions unaffected by these last months of worldwide turmoil and uncertainty" (ITN Archive 2022, 2:58). She addressed criticism of their role as inevitable and expected with the statement:

“There can be no doubt, of course, that criticism is good for people and institutions that are part of public life. No institution - City, Monarchy, whatever - should expect to be free from the scrutiny of those who give it their loyalty and support, not to mention those who don't” (ITN Archive 2022, 6:20).

However, she also desired more fair treatment from the press and compassion by saying: “I sometimes wonder how future generations will judge the events of this tumultuous year. I dare say that history will take a slightly more moderate view than that of some contemporary commentators” (ITN Archive 2022, 4:50). Queen Elizabeth II also emphasised the unity of the nation and pleaded for understanding which can be seen as an attempt to influence the public opinion. This is illustrated in the part of the speech in which she says: “But we are all part of the same fabric of our national society and that scrutiny, by one part of another, can be just as effective if it is made with a touch of gentleness, good humour and understanding” (ITN Archive 2022, 6:40). Overall, the speech by Queen Elizabeth II. acknowledged mistakes and thanked the public for their support.

3.2 Newspapers

From the British newspapers that covered this topic, the thesis discusses three newspapers which were selected based on their political profile. This is because it can be assumed that the way they present information for the readers depends on their political profile. The first of the newspapers is the British daily newspaper *The Guardian*, which is considered an example of 'quality press' with a centre-left political orientation. The second selected is *The Independent* deemed to represent the apolitical press. From the right-wing tabloid newspapers, the thesis evaluates *Daily Mail*, which is considered to be the most read media by British society (Matthew Smith, 2017, NP). The thesis assumes that the selected newspapers, that are considered to be of higher quality, will offer the readers more accurate information and unbiased opinion that allow them to form an unbiased perspective. These newspapers were also selected as they are one of the most-read newspapers in the United Kingdom. As argued in the theoretical part, people are partly forming opinions based on the information that is provided by the media, so it is important to mention the approximate number of people who are reading these types of newspapers to deduce the number of people who can identify with the content of these media.

According to Jigsaw research which focuses on news consumption in the UK in 2022, *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* are the most-read digital titles. *The Guardian* is also, according to the research of 2022, one of the most trustworthy newspapers (Ofcom 2022, NP). Katharine Viner, editor-in-chief, for the Guardian Media Group, which owns *The Guardian* states that this organisation provides: "global news organisation that delivers fearless, investigative journalism - giving a voice to the powerless and holding power to account" (Viner, NP). The data from Ipsos, in April of 2023, say that monthly browsers of The Guardian web news in the UK were 21,5 million. The number of browsers of the *MailOnline* is significantly bigger. It is a tabloid which reports biased opinions in favour of the Monarchy and Royal Family members. *MailOnline* was reported to be visited online by about 24,8 million UK browsers monthly in the April of 2023 (Ipsos,2023). To provide an answer to a question on why the *Daily Mail* is more popular than *The Guardian*, whether it is less difficult for the reader to read, or they are more fond of the way of how the information is given, this thesis would have to analyse more sources.

3.2.1 The Guardian

The Guardian covered Annus Horribilis in the form of an analysis in May 2012. The headline of the article is: “How the Royal Family bounced back from its Annus horribilis” with the subtitle “After the turmoil of the 1990s, the Queen can take satisfaction that she has steered the monarchy to calmer waters”. It was written by the writer for *The Guardian* Caroline Davies.

As the title suggests, it is more of an analysis of how Queen Elizabeth II and the monarchy sustained their power. This article was published before the Queen’s Diamond jubilee, which marks the 60th year on the throne; therefore, it is a reflection after 20 years. This can catch the reader’s attention by asking the question of what happened in the year and what changed for the better. The article does not contain emotionally charged words. It provides readers with expert opinions, causing a feeling one is reading an objective article. In comparison with the information described in the previous chapter Annus Horribilis the article provides the reader with accurate information, presenting a primary look at events that lead the Queen to call the 1992 Annus Horribilis.

From the brief description of what happened, two scandals are more depicted than the others. First, the scandals that surrounded the current King Charles III. and Diana, Princess of Wales. The article provides the reader with negative remarks, such as that after these scandals, they possibly could not represent role models of family life. In addition, with the publication of intimate conversations with their lovers, the Royals were publicly humiliated. The second scandal mentioned was the fire at Windsor Castle, that led to the taxation of royals—reminding the reader of these two events negatively and provoking the question of their family life, values and wealth. Nonetheless, these incidents are covered in less than four small paragraphs and work like a context for the display of changes that led to today’s monarchy. Suggesting that: “The rude health of the monarchy today perhaps owes much to those dark days of the 1990s” (Caroline Davies, 2012). Snippets of Her Majesty’s speech are also concluded mainly in regard to the Queen’s wish for fair treatment by the media. The article is mainly focusing on the fact that the monarchy survived even after numerous scandals and public dissatisfaction. Throughout the whole article, readers can find countless quotations from professionals such as constitutional expert Vernon Bogdanor or historian Dr Frank Prochaska discussing changes in the monarchy and the reasons for its survival. This could

possibly influence the reader's perception on what type of information the article provides and could be depicted as news based on verified opinions and facts.

According to the article, monarchy used to be cold and distant, but now it is a: "utilitarian institution, to be judged by what it contributes to public service and community feeling" (Caroline Davies, 2012, NP). The article suggests that the main reason for the monarchy's survival is adaptation, evolution and social service. Connecting with the public and quickly answering their needs is something that changed for the better after the year of 'Annus Horribilis'. The article as well as the theoretical part of this thesis emphasise the role of social media as it is seen as one of the reasons why monarchy maintains its position. This can be seen in the following quotation:

"Facebook, Twitter, YouTube are all part of the apparatus employed now not just at Buckingham Palace, but also across Green Park at St James's Palace, where the future of the monarchy resides. Here is where the main focus now lies for a family committed to survival" (Caroline Davies, 2012, NP).

In the article, the reader receives both negative and positive depictions of Queen Elizabeth II. Her Majesty is described in the article as someone who can be satisfied with herself saying: "The Queen can take pleasure in the knowledge that, for the moment at least, she has steered it to safer anchorage in calmer waters" (Caroline Davies, 2012, NP). Her perception was as a sovereign capable of change who was committed to the monarchy's survival. Her description is mostly as someone who could maintain the monarchy, the popularity and the position even after the Annus Horribilis. From the negative side, the article proposes that she can be portrayed as a Queen who hoped not to pay taxes but offered to pay them after the public dissatisfaction with the using the public funds on the restoration of Windsor Castle stating that: "One thing that [the Queen] mistakenly tried to hang on to was her tax exemption" (Caroline Davies, 2012, NP). She is compared and said to be similar to George V, viewing them as old-fashioned and conventional but acting quickly in regard to public relations. The article ends on a positive note by addressing that those 20 years after her Ruby Jubilee, she has shown her qualities and achievements in full light, and the Diamond Jubilee was not celebrating only Her Majesty but also the monarchy's survival.

The article analyses how the Monarchy kept its position and the Royal Family changed its values and became more accessible to the public after the incidents of 1992. It lists the events of Annus Horribilis accurately but shortly, mainly focusing on changes after the incidents, such as changing the law of succession and emphasising the position of monarchy that survived and evolved mainly because of readjustment to new values and approaches. The article shows both positive and negative depictions of Queen Elizabeth II. It encourages the reader to think about how she restored her image in public opinion prior to her Diamond Jubilee. The outcome for the reader is neutral as it is both critical and positive at the same time.

3.2.2 The Independent

The Independent published the article: “The Queen’s ’annus horribilis’ ” with the subtitle “1992 was a difficult year for the monarch and her family”. It was written by Laura Elston on 09 September 2022, one day after the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The article does not contain emotionally charged words; however, it provides readers with personal opinions on the speech of Queen Elizabeth II about the year 1992, which is the main focus of the article.

The information given throughout the article are basic information about the events of 1992 and information on where the speech was delivered, what was said and where the term “annus horribilis” came from. The article calls the year perhaps the “lowest point in the Queen’s reign”. Then it lists scandals that characterised Annus Horribilis briefly, mainly informing about the divorces and flames in Windsor Castle, informing the reader that because of this series of events, “public opinion turned against the Royals”.

The main focus of the article is on presenting Queen Elizabeth II’s speech. It subjectively describes the speech and then cites its central points. According to the article, the Queen acknowledged that: “the Monarchy should not be above criticism” and that her Majesty “effectively pleaded for a fairer hearing from press and public with a pledge to work for change while maintaining the institution’s stability and continuity” (Elston 2022, NP). The article notes her speech as a “frank and personal message”. The article portrays her speech positively, as a way of Queen Elizabeth II understanding the situation.

Sections of the speech selected for this article can be divided into three. The first snippet was selected to inform the reader about the speech of Queen Elizabeth II in which she

claims the year 1992 to be her *annus horribilis*. The next and most prominent part of her speech was cited, with the focus on criticism and its good purpose. The article says, “The Queen claimed that constructive criticism could and should act as an engine for change in any institution” (Elston 2022, NP). The article then presents the segments of speeches where Queen Elizabeth II emphasises how criticism should be expected from those who support the Monarchy.

The last chosen segment from the speech focuses on forgiveness and understanding. The article calls this selected part “open plea for understanding” (Elston 2022, NP). The article works with the parts of the speech where The Queen emphasises the meaning of unity and her hope that the future generations will react with more understanding and perhaps wisdom. The article ends by quoting a part of the speech that says: “He who has never failed to reach perfection has a right to be the harshest critic.” (Elston 2022, NP).

The article reflected the speech of Queen Elizabeth II more than on the series of events which formed *Annus Horribilis*. The selected parts of the speech targeted the acceptance of criticism, understanding, and plea for more comparison made by Queen Elizabeth. The reader can get a positive image of The Queen, mainly because of the chosen parts of the speech, and ending on the note that no one is perfect. Also as, the article replicates the segments of the speech where Queen Elizabeth II put emphasis on forgiveness, then the readers can form their opinions entirely on their own.

3.2.3 Mail Online

In 2020, Daily Online reported on *Annus Horribilis* with the title “The Queen blamed HERSELF for her 1992 ‘annus horribilis’: Monarch asked ‘where did I go wrong’ in the year of Prince Charles and Prince Andrew’s marriage breakdown and Windsor Castle blaze” written by Raven Saunt. The article and title itself contain emotionally charged words which can evoke a feeling that the given information will be biased. The article does not contain any parts of the speech delivered by Queen Elizabeth II, however, presents one short sentence about the Queen’s feelings by saying: “The Queen herself is reported to have said to a friend, “Where did I go wrong?” (Saunt 2020, NP). This question itself is also used in the title of the article so the reader is provided with the emphasis on the feelings of Her Majesty blaming herself which can be seen as a way to influence public opinion.

The article is formed from a short overview of incidents in Annus Horribilis, not describing them all. It is supported with pictures, offering a visual presentation. The sentences accompanied by pictures of the Royal Family are short and with assessment of the explicit events they offer little amount of information. Under the title, the reader can notice four bullet points, the first two inform the reader about the divorces of the then Prince Charles and Prince Andrew. The following bullet point is about the fire at Windsor Castle. However, the third bullet point emphasises the Queen's feelings cited: "Royal biographer Penny Juror said that the Queen "feels and hurts as we all do" (Saunt 2020, NP). This is evoking feelings of sympathy for Queen Elizabeth II. and avoids including the information about public dissatisfaction or problematic behaviour.

The article at the beginning starts with the same sentence as the title and is followed by three incidents of Annus Horribilis. Most of the information is being repeated. The reader is not provided with many details and the selected events which formed Annus Horribilis are only briefly described with words that show understanding for these situations and their causes. For example the fire of Windsor Castle is accompanied by a piece of information on why the fire occurred, leaving out the information about taxation and public anger. As next, the article shares the information about the divorce of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson. The article states that the cause for their divorce was as follows: "It was thought to have been triggered by the demands of his naval career – which meant the couple saw each other for just 40 days a year" (Saunt 2020, NP). That can be seen as a valid reason for divorce, however the article could mention the question of infidelity which the couple faced after publication of scandalous photos. Lastly, the split of the current King Charles III and the late Diana, Princess of Wales, is briefly mentioned. The reader is given information about how the couple spent holidays in separate rooms and the depiction of Prince Charles as an heir to the throne. Although, the reader should not expect information about marital infidelity and information about Diana's book.

Readers can get a positive depiction of Queen Elizabeth II. as it is not providing any negative comments on series of events of Annus Horribilis and it concentrates on the understanding and compassion for Her Majesty. She is described as a person who blames herself for the Royal Family matters. The information about Annus Horribilis

is not fully presented, not all scandals are listed, and even the speech is left out. The main pieces of information that caused public anger were left out, such as using public funds to restore Windsor Castle. This can be seen as a way to manipulate the public opinion and offer only information that works for the Royal Family's favour. As previously argued Daily Mail is a right-wing tabloid, so we can assume that the provided information does not need to be presented objectively. In summary, it is mainly a report on the Queen's feelings, and a short introduction of what happened in the year 1992. Readers can even share the article on different media platforms and comment in the comment section. The article has 186 comments for now. Best-rated comment with 870 likes is as follows:

“The Queen has served our Country to the best of her abilities during her almost 70-year reign. She can't blame herself for the shortcomings and mistakes of others in the family. They really should have behaved better” (Anonymous 2020, NP).

This comment can be seen as proof that the title and given information can evoke a feeling of sympathy and impulse to defend Queen Elizabeth II. By the number of likes, it seems that the author is not the only one who thinks that Her Majesty cannot be blamed for family members' mistakes.

3.3 Andrew Morton – The Queen

Andrew Morton is one of the best-known royal biographers. He is primarily known for his bestselling biography *Diana: Her True Story* (1993). The publication of this work became a part of Annus Horribilis due to revealing Princess Diana's life struggles regarding her marriage and mental health. Therefore, it is interesting how the author covered the life of Queen Elizabeth II and Annus Horribilis, in which he had co-participated, years later.

Morton described his book *The Queen* as a “biography of a remarkable woman.” (Morton 2022, 407). A biography is a non-fiction work that should offer an objective description of a person's life. The author should navigate the readers through the subjects' life from early childhood through adulthood and into the rest of their life. The main point is for the author to inform the reader about the subject's life story. The reason for elaborating on what biography is important in this chapter as it can be argued that the book *The Queen* by Andrew Morton is not this genre, even if the author himself claims to be (Blurb, “Autobiography vs. Biography vs. Memoir”, NP).

Queen Elizabeth II did not participate in writing this biography like Diana, Princess of Wales, did. Morton more so heavily relied on secondary sources. The lack of accuracy is mainly why the thesis assumes that Morton did not provide an objective description, as accuracy is the main aspect of biography. The accuracy would probably be achieved if Queen Elizabeth II participated in creation of this book, and the descriptions of the personal views and feelings of Her Majesty were avoided. The book covers Elizabeth's life through key events, highlighting the aspects of her personality and character, such as her love for horses and dogs. Readers can notice the author's personal feelings and thoughts throughout the book.

Morton leads the book in a positive tone that can already be found in the first sentence of chapter one, saying: - “For those of us fortunate enough to have met Her Majesty the Queen, it is a moment we are unlikely to forget.” (Morton 2022, 9). Moreover, he continues to keep the positive note until the end of the book, finishing with the statement: “Much loved and immensely popular, she will go down in history as perhaps our greatest ever Queen” (Morton 2022, 348).

3.3.1 Chapter 11: One's Annus Horribilis

The year 1992 is presented in chapter eleven, called "One's Annus Horribilis". The events of Annus Horribilis are described accurately, in detail and chronological order. The reader is informed about every single scandal and is followed by Queen's Elizabeth attitude to that matter. The Queen's personal feelings and her attempts to calm the situation are primarily what the chapter is trying to show to the reader. The chapter also provides how Morton viewed Queen Elizabeth II character, citing: "Though she was small and unimposing in stature, she exuded a sense of majesty" or as a "presence with a sense of humour" (Morton 2022, 264). It is an indicator that Morton will provide a positive description of Queen Elizabeth II.

Morton starts to describe Annus Horribilis with a suggestion that Queen Elizabeth II. had a "full-scale royal rebellion on her hands" (Morton 2022, 265). Starting with the incidents that resulted in three divorces of Queen Elizabeth's children, the scandals and behaviour of the Duchess of York and Diana, Princess of Wales, are taken into consideration. Morton firstly described the information with emotionally charged words and in subjective manner, then proceeded to present The Queen's outlook on the situations.

Her children's dissatisfaction with the marriages are described accurately in through a storytelling format. According to Morton, both of the couples took turns to speak with the Queen regarding their marital problems, resulting in attempts by the Queen and her advisors to manage the unhappy situations behind the scenes stating that: "They acted as a wrestling tag team, each one taking a turn to bend her ear" (Morton 2022, 265).

Morton says that the Queen's position in these situations was keeping hope for both Prince Andrew and Sarah, Duchess of York and then Prince Charles and Diana, Princess of Wales, as well as for their reconciliation. The Queen was simultaneously worried about the impact of the royal's actions on the Monarchy. In these situations, he claims that not only did the Queen worry about the well-being of the Royal Family members, but also about her grandchildren (Morton 2022, 282-283). To a reader, her fears indicate that caring for her family and her nation is a part of her character. The chapter lacks a negative depiction of the Queen as the author mostly blames the members of the British Royal family for their actions. He describes Queen Elizabeth as someone unable to "face down members of her extended family, even if they were demonstrably wrong" (Morton 2022, 266).

The divorce of Princess Anne and her husband is only briefly described, and the Queen's perception is not included, it is only described as "more bad news for The Queen" (Morton 2022, 269). The reason for this short illustration of the scandal is that the author focuses more throughout the chapter on the relationship of Princess Diana and Prince Charles, in which the public was more invested and which is mediated even today. Morton says that: "Her Majesty became the reluctant referee between the warring parties" (Morton 2022, 269).

What is too briefly described is the publication and impact of the book *Diana: Her True Story*, even though Andrew Morton was the author himself. He argues that Queen Elizabeth II was "unprepared for such a detailed and public exposition" (Morton 2022, 271). The stress is put on the fact that after this publication, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip tried to manage this situation and insisted on for the couple to try again and put effort into their marriage, reassuring Princess Diana that both of them supported her. Morton proves this by quoting Prince Phillip's letter to Diana, in which he disapproved of Prince Charles's choice of Camilla Parker Bowles. Considering the incident that involved the publication of scandalous photos of the Duchess of York with John Bryan, Queen Elizabeth II was depicted in the situation as "cold, ice-cold as she listed the transgression she had done to the institution to which the sovereign had devoted her life" and as "deeply upset on behalf of her son" (Morton 2022, 273).

The last event of Annus Horribilis, which is noted is the fire at the Windsor Castle. According to Morton: "The Queen suffered the greatest physical catastrophe of her reign" (Morton 2022, 276). Morton displays Queen Elizabeth's feelings of sorrow and states that this occasion left the Queen "devastated, shocked beyond words and tears" (Morton 2022, 276).

The speech of Queen Elizabeth II, regarding the year 1992, is briefly described, in which according to Morton she "sadly" reflected on events of the year 1992. Morton describes that in this period, monarchy "faced an existential crisis, and public dissatisfaction grew" (Morton 2022, 275). Nevertheless, he states that: "The Queen always appreciated that the monarchy survived by the consent of the people. She fully recognised that, after a bruising few years, now was the time to regroup." (Morton 2022, 291).

Andrew Morton shows Queen Elizabeth II in a positive perspective. His descriptions of the series of events which characterised Annus Horribilis are accurate, however the depictions are accompanied by personal feelings of Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family members, which provide readers with more personal views. The lack of criticism is mainly due to the author's subjective look on the situations. Thanks to that and the author's empathy with the Queen, the other Royal Family members and their behaviour is depicted more negatively, resulting in Queen Elizabeth's "worries". The chapter is supplemented with statements from those who were in touch with the Royal Family to support his views and authenticity of the portrayal of the feelings of Queen Elizabeth II. Morton creates her image of a capable Sovereign and a caring person who tried to fix the marital problems of three of her children and tried to restore the Royal Family's image in these bad times. Throughout the chapter, the reader can feel compassion for Queen Elizabeth II as the author focuses on how she felt in these situations in which, according to Morton, she "couldn't catch a break" (Morton 2022, 276). And as a "Queen who served Monarchy dutifully" (Morton 2022, 288).

3.4 Netflix series *The Crown*

The historical drama television series *The Crown*, broadcasted on Netflix, covers the life of Queen Elizabeth II and the political situations of her reign. The series provides viewers with an intimate take on the actions, conversations and personal feelings of the Monarch and the Royal Family members, which characters develop throughout the drama. The series' creator is Peter Morgan, who developed this drama from his previous work, mainly from his play *The Audience* (2013). Currently, five seasons of the award-winning drama are available for the subscribers of the streaming platform Netflix. After the Queen Elizabeth II death the sixth season was temporarily suspended out of respect. Following her death, Peter Morgan described the series as love letters to Queen Elizabeth II (Bamigboye 2022, NP).

The Crown is planned for six seasons, each containing ten episodes. The episodes are set as individual stories that are retelling key events of the life of Queen Elizabeth II. Real-life events inspired the series; however, Peter Morgan said that it was not his intention to depict historical events accurately. Nevertheless, he worked with historians to provide the audience with a certain degree of accuracy (Shreejit Nair 2018, NP). In *The Crown*, the Queen is depicted as a sovereign, a wife and a mother. Viewers cannot rely on every single piece of information as it is not entirely accurate, regardless of the fact that it is based on true life events. Without deeper knowledge viewers cannot distinguish between what is true and what is dramatised. Queen Elizabeth II never publicly spoke about the series; however, according to a royal source: "the queen realises that many who watch *The Crown* take it as an accurate portrayal of the Royal Family, and she cannot change that" (Dan Barna 2018, NP).

That the series became popular is supported by the proximate number of viewers which streamed *The Crown*. The first season, starting with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip's wedding in 1947 was released on the 4th of November 2016 and became immediately popular. In 2020, BBC reported that 73 million households worldwide have tuned in to watch *The Crown* since its release (BBC 2020, NP). Season five was on Netflix's Top 10's English TV chart as number one, attracting 1.1 million viewers in the UK on its release day and was in the top ten in 88 countries (BreAnna Bell 2022, NP). It is important to mention these numbers because they refer to how quickly the series became popular, which can be seen as a way of interest of the public about the life

of the Royal Family. The increase in popularity and viewership of the series rose even more after the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

After the death of Her Majesty in 2022, the viewership of *The Crown* in the UK increased. Given this fact, it is noticeable that the public took the series as a source of information. It is a popular series, so this occurrence likely engaged more viewers. The series is one of a kind since not many authors of today's shows focus on depicting the life of a head of a state to such an extent. It is complex but also empathetic. To elucidate what the reasons that the viewership increased after the death of Queen Elizabeth II were, this thesis would have to include, for example, a survey or more complex research to offer an answer.

3.4.1 Season 5 Episode 4: Annus Horribilis

The fact that Annus Horribilis became a significant event also proves that the series devoted an entire episode to this topic. Episode four of season five, called "Annus Horribilis" is an emotionally heavy episode which presents the events of 1992 dramatised. The episode includes Queen Elizabeth II who is informed about the scandals which formed the Annus Horribilis by the other Royal Family members. The episode informs the viewer about the incidents of the year 1992 accurately in a sense; however, the whole picture is constructed through conversations between the Royal family members and Queen Elizabeth II who is portrayed by Olivia Colman. It cannot be taken as authentic or truthful, given the fact that no one was a witness to such conversations in real life or even reported on such occasions. The individual events, regarding the series of events of Annus Horribilis and Queen's reactions to the situations, reflect the character of Queen Elizabeth II in three different roles: as sovereign, a mother and a sister. This three-view depiction allows the audience to create an opinion of her character from several different angles. The detailed description of these roles in the series of Her Majesty is assessed below. As a mother and the sovereign the depiction can be seen in a way that the characters substituting her children discuss and inform Her Majesty about their unhappy marriages and divorces. The three divorces are presented in a conversation between Her Majesty, Prince Andrew, Princess Anne and Prince Charles. The three conversations are portrayed in a similar style. The characters playing the royal children discuss their marital problems with their mother and argue against the system marking it as cruel.

The character of Queen Elizabeth II disapproves of divorces, in all three discussions. This can be seen in fulfilling her duty as the sovereign. As she states, “I took an oath to maintain the laws of God. And God’s law is that marriage is for life” (‘The Crown’ S05E04, 29:30). One conversation is more impactful than the others, which is the one of Prince Charles, who dramatically implies that as a mother, she would be put in jail by social services. The reason for his harsh comment and anger is that his mother, the Queen, is forbidding his desire of divorce. In the episode, the Queen reflects on how he is the heir to the throne and states: “Being happily married is a preference, rather than a requirement” (‘The Crown’ S05E04, 29:45).

To a viewer, the character of the Queen is cold, strict and afraid of how these scandals will affect her position as the sovereign. This can be seen in her conversation with her daughter Princess Ann who wants to remarry in the episode. The character of Queen Elizabeth II. reminds her that: “Your mother is a Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and remarriage is not only frowned upon, it is forbidden” (‘The Crown’ S05E04, 23:12). The main aim of the episode is put on the feelings of how her children describe how the system of monarchy is cruel to them. All three children describe the monarchy in their own way, starting with the character of Prince Andrew who says: “No one with any character, originality, spark, wit, and flare has a place in this system” (‘The Crown’ S05E04, 15:26). Then, Prince Charles negatively says: “We got our modern monarchy all right. Just not in a way we hoped” (‘The Crown’ S05E04, 30:40).

In these conversations the depiction of the Queen as a mother shows a strict woman with her children, trying to prevent them from divorce. After these scenes, the character of the Queen begins to wonder, in conversation with her priest, if the cause is parental failure: “It begins to look like a parental failure of the gravest kind” (‘The Crown’ S05E04, 30:50). At the same time, this scene functions as a turning point for the depiction of her image where the character of the Queen who starts to blame herself.

The positive and the negative side of The Queen is emphasised throughout the scenes, portraying the fire at the Windsor Castle. The fire at Windsor Castle is presented in the way that the Queen sadly wanders through the ruins hugging Prince Phillip while crying. This dramatic depiction gives the viewer a sad portrait and evokes the feelings of sympathy. For the dramatic effect, the character of Princess Margaret blames her sister

for denying her love and suggests that Elizabeth's children also could hold grudges against the Queen. This is shown in the conversations between the sisters, in which Princess Margaret implies that the fire at Windsor Castle could have been set up intentionally saying: "You do not think I have a reason to burn down my sister's home?" ('The Crown' S05E04, 39:21).

The perspective on the Queen's feelings towards the series of events of Annus Horribilis can be viewed in her conversation with the Queen Mother, who is trying to convince the Queen not to give her speech as the people will forget about the scandals. The character of Queen Elizabeth II implies that it was the worst year of her reign, but she is glad people know about the fact that she is only made "from flesh and blood" ('The Crown' S05E04, 44:30). The character of Queen Elizabeth II continues: "And that perhaps I have- we have fallen short in our duty as a family, and owe them an apology" ('The Crown' S05E04, 44:37). This conversation emphasises that the character of the Queen acknowledges the situation, wants to apologise, allowing people to see that she is only another human who make mistakes. This idea is supported at the end of the episode when Queen Elizabeth II speaks with her sister Princess Margaret. The character of Princess Margaret says: "for the record, no one blames you", to which the character of Queen Elizabeth replies: "On the contrary, everyone blames me all of the time. And you are right to" ('The Crown' S05E04, 48:56). This emphasises to the audience that the character of Queen Elizabeth blames herself and mutters that the system is only beneficial to her but not to her family.

The episode also contains the Queen's speech which is mostly fabricated. The speech is focused on Elizabeth partly admitting her culpability in these accidents as she states: "Perhaps I have more to reflect on than most" ('The Crown' S05E04, 46:30). Almost the entire speech is inaccurate and, for most parts, rewritten. In the episode, her speech is a sentimental tribute and an apology to her family. In the fabricated speech, she calls her attention to how her family was a source of strength and support, and how she is aware of the sacrifices they have made, describing them as her "sun and water" ('The Crown' S05E04, 47:30). This is not the part of the real speech made by Queen Elizabeth II in 1992, which was focused on appreciations of the supporters.

This episode draws the attention to feelings, and viewers receive positive and negative depictions of the character Queen Elizabeth II. In the beginning, the Queen is depicted

as strict towards her children, trying to prevent them from their divorces. This changes quickly and she becomes someone who is only human admitting her wrongs. The fabricated speech is the primary source of the Queen's redemption, and the viewer is provided with sad visuals, such as her crying and looking devastated. The episode ends on a positive note in which she exchanges a heartfelt conversation with her sister. The episode provides a negative perspective on the monarchy as her children argue against it. However, at the end of the episode, Princess Margaret warns that the system is also cruel to her sister, the Queen. "But that is the job. Let's face it" replies the Queen ('The Crown' S05E04, 49:05). The episode towards the end only depicts the Queen positively, as someone who has the weight of her whole family and nation on her shoulders.

4 Conclusion

The British Royal Family is a worldwide known family. The events concerning the Royal Family sparks public interest and are often displayed in different media types. Thanks to the Internet and the emergence of various media platforms, the public can easily access information about the Royal Family, whether for knowledge, entertainment or out of their own curiosity. Furthermore, people can be influenced by the type of information they receive. There are strong reasons why the British Royal Family and the monarchy remain popular and are supported by many, despite voices calling for abolition of them and the monarchy. This thesis argues that one of the reasons for the popularity of the Royal Family in the UK is due to the media, which works to their advantage and is used for strengthening their position.

The character of this work is descriptive, and its subject is the portrayal of the Royal Family and a view of their role in the media. The theoretical part of the thesis introduced the role of the Royal Family in the Monarchy and its changes that were crucial in forming their image in the media, maintaining the topic relevant. In the course of the work, the thesis provided a description of how modern media are beneficial for the popularity of the British Royal family to analyse the depiction of their image in the practical part by the selected media.

The thesis introduced the media image of the British Royal Family in the 21st century with the aim of evaluating the media portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II. Due to the topic narrowing, the practical part of the thesis focused on the depiction of Queen Elizabeth II in a series of events which characterised *Annus Horribilis* retrospectively through the selected media consumed in the UK. It mainly focused on what kind of image and information the selected media provide for the public. The thesis assessed the amount of information, the accuracy and the examination of the description of Queen Elizabeth II to deduce whether the media provide an objective or subjective stance, which partially influences public opinion.

By assessment of the portrayal throughout different media types, which differ in how they inform the public, the thesis could reflect on in which direction the reader or watcher could be influenced regarding the image of Queen Elizabeth II. One of the conclusions is that her portrayal is primarily positive and she is viewed as a capable sovereign

who sustained her position even through the tough times. Two of the five selected sources used in the practical part provided negative and positive descriptions of Queen Elizabeth II, leaving the public to form an opinion on their own. The first case is the newspaper *The Guardian*, which mainly focused on how the monarchy and Royal Family could maintain their position to this day; however, the article ended on a positive note depicting the Queen as an efficient ruler. The second source that also provided a negative depiction was the TV series *The Crown*. The series depicted Her Majesty as a strict mother. However, it was suggested by these media that the Royal Family is a victim of the political system. All five selected media have contained a positive image of Queen Elizabeth II which was caused by not providing all information or information with emotional context. Another cause for positive depiction were the emphasised feelings of sympathy and understanding by the media for the late Queen Elizabeth II, which were subjectively described. The thesis provided quotations from each type of the selected media to exemplify the opinions which were emphasised to the reader or watcher. As the second conclusion, it can be seen that the media play a significant part in creating a positive and popular image of Queen Elizabeth II in the eye of the public.

The results of the assessment and the thesis itself could be enhanced if more types of the media were selected or if a higher number of events of the British Royal Family was described and evaluated in more detail. This would provide more complex information on the depiction of Queen Elizabeth II and the thesis could analyse the behaviour of the broader media scale. However, due to the limited scope of work and time, the thesis focused only on one event. The year 1992 was indeed a bad year for the British Royal Family as it was a year in which they faced criticism continuously. The media took part in the critique and navigated public opinion through the negative coverage the events that formed *Annus Horribilis*. Then Queen Elizabeth II, in her speech, hoped for fairer coverage and more compassion from the media. This hope in this thesis can be seen as partially fulfilled because the selected media provided more understanding with hindsight.

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