

Imke Polland

‘For Better, For Worse’?

Royal Heirs Between Continuity and Change
in Media Representations of
British Royal Weddings (2005–2011)

Ansgar Nünning und Vera Nünning (Hg.)

ELCH

Studies in English Literary and Cultural History

ELK

Studien zur Englischen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft

Band 79

Imke Polland

‘For Better, For Worse’?

Royal Heirs Between Continuity
and Change in Media Representations
of British Royal Weddings (2005–2011)

 Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

Polland, Imke: 'For Better, For Worse'? Royal Heirs
Between Continuity and Change in Media Representations
of British Royal Weddings (2005–2011) / Imke Polland. -
Trier : WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2020
(ELCH ; Band 79)
ISBN 978-3-86821-869-5
Zugl.: Diss., Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, 2019

Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung
der Geschwister Boehringer Ingelheim Stiftung
für Geisteswissenschaften in Ingelheim am Rhein.

Umschlaggestaltung: Brigitta Disseldorf

© WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2020
ISBN 978-3-86821-869-5

Alle Rechte vorbehalten.
Nachdruck oder Vervielfältigung nur mit
ausdrücklicher Genehmigung des Verlags.

WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier
Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier
Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier
Tel.: (0651) 41503, Fax: (0651) 41504
Internet: <http://www.wvttrier.de>
E-Mail: wvt@wvttrier.de
www.facebook.com/wvttrier

Für meine Familie

DANKSAGUNG

“Then one blessed step / and the long walk ended”
Carol Ann Duffy, *Royal Wedding Poem*, 2018

Eine Dissertation zu schreiben heißt, sich auf einen „long walk“ zu begeben. Ich bin froh, auf Wanderschaft gegangen zu sein und dankbar für die Unterstützung, die ich durch meine Wegbegleiter – und vor allem meine Wegbereiter – in den letzten Jahren erfahren durfte.

Mein ganz besonderer Dank gilt meinen beiden Betreuern: Meinem Doktorvater Herrn Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Ansgar Nünning danke ich dafür, dass er mich bei diesem Dauerlauf stets mit Motivation und Inspiration anfeuerte, an mich und mein Projekt geglaubt und mich stets in allen Bereichen gefördert und gefordert hat. Meiner Doktormutter Prof. Dr. Susanne Scholz danke ich dafür, meinem Projekt schon während des Bachelorstudiums den Weg geebnet zu haben. Sie hat mich durch inspirierende Lehre für das Fach und für die Kulturgeschichte der britischen Monarchie begeistert. Danke für die stetige Ermunterung und die hilfreichen Anmerkungen!

Neben meinen Doktoreltern gebührt großer Dank meiner erweiterten Doktorfamilie am GCSC – allen voran Christina Jordan. Meiner IPP-Kohorte XIII und meinen Kolleg_innen Nevena, Simon, Jenny, Katja, Anna, Libby, Silvia, Nico, Max und Paul danke ich für das wertvolle Feedback zur Projektentwicklung und zu meinen ersten Kapitelentwürfen. Besonderer Dank gilt außerdem Dir, Robert, für den produktiven Austausch über einige Kapitel. Darüber hinaus empfinde ich große Dankbarkeit gegenüber meinen „Wanderkarten“ Ann van de Veire und Rose Lawson, zu denen ich stets für Unterstützung abbiegen konnte. Auch dem Kollegium in Frankfurt danke ich herzlich für das Feedback zu meinen „Etappenzielen“.

Dem GCSC bin ich sehr dankbar für die Förderung meines Forschungsprojekts inklusive Archiv- und Konferenzteilnahmen und für die ideelle Unterstützung, die es mir ermöglicht hat, an den Start zu gehen und dabei meine Forscherpersönlichkeit auszubilden. Die ersten Richtungsschilder hierfür stellte die Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes auf. Danke für die Förderung und die vielseitigen Lern- und Austauschmöglichkeiten!

Auch Prof. Dr. Heta Pyrhönen möchte ich besondere Dankesworte aussprechen für das Interesse an meiner Arbeit, die Begeisterung für mein Thema und das wertvolle Feedback. Für das muttersprachliche Lektorat meiner Arbeit und ihre hilfreichen Anmerkungen danke ich herzlich Madeleine LaRue. Herrn Dr. Otto und dem WVT-Team danke ich für die Unterstützung während des Publikationsprozesses. Dem wissenschaftlichen Beirat der Geschwister Boehringer Ingelheim Stiftung danke ich für die finanzielle Förderung der Drucklegung dieser Arbeit.

Meine Familie und mein Partner waren auf diesem Weg wie eine Bank mit Panoramablick am Wegesrand, auf der ich mich ausruhen konnte. Danke meinen geliebten Eltern Renate und Dirk und meinen Schwestern Maike und Frauke sowie Dir, Moritz, für die moralische Unterstützung! Auch den großen Beistand durch meine Patentante Ilse und ihren Mann Gerhard möchte ich an dieser Stelle honorieren. Meine Nichte Frieda ist auf den Tag genau so alt wie mein Dissertationsprojekt und hat in dieser Zeit tatsächlich – und nicht nur metaphorisch – laufen gelernt. Sie hat mich immens motiviert, indem mir ihre Lernprozesse auch die meinen vor Augen führten.

Nun überschreite ich mit diesem Buch eine Ziellinie – aber der Weg bleibt das Ziel!

Gießen, im Juni 2020

Imke Polland

CONTENTS

1. Introduction: For Better or For Worse?	1
1.1 Balancing Acts: Royal Heirs Between Continuity and Change	6
1.2 Royal Marriages: From Political Instruments of Power to World Media Events	16
1.3 Contemporary Royal Reporting: Gendered Discourses and Media Attention	21
2. Refashioning the British Monarchy Through Ritual Media Events: Theoretical and Methodological Frames of Reference	28
2.1 Mapping the Marriages, Selecting the Sources: Media Representations of the Royal Weddings 2005 and 2011.....	29
2.2 Royal Reporting in the Age of World Media Events: Describing the Royal Weddings.....	35
2.2.1 Historical Festival Descriptions and the Example of the Court Circular	36
2.2.2 The Eventfulness of Royal Weddings	40
2.2.3 Royal Weddings as Ritual Media Events.....	50
2.2.4 Summary: Media-Cultural Narratological Approaches to Ritual Media Events – Categories of Analysis	66
2.3 The Refashioning Process of the British Monarchy	69
2.3.1 Royal Weddings and Invented Traditions.....	72
2.3.2 Judicial Reform as a Process of Modernising the Monarchy?.....	83
2.3.3 Rebranding ‘The Firm’: Monarchy as Corporate Heritage Brand.....	86
2.3.4 The Role of Heirs to the Throne for the Process of Refashioning: Soft Power, Celebrity, Values, and Emotions.....	95
3. Charles & Camilla (2005) or the “Triumph of True Love”?	114
3.1 Framing I: The Engagement and Public Reactions.....	114
3.1.1 “Charles to marry Camilla” – First Reactions and the Polyphonic Pre-Structuring of the Newspaper Coverage.....	117
3.1.2 “Queen in All But Name” – A Legal Framework for the Prince’s Second Marriage	124
3.1.3 “The Town Hall Bride” – Elements of Mockery in Royal Reporting on the Wedding	135

3.1.4	“A 30-year Love Affair that Survived Scandal and Scorn” – The Couple’s Relationship and the Shadows of Royal History	143
3.1.5	“Diamonds, Velvet and Domestic Bliss” – Fashion Reporting on the Royal Bride	153
3.1.6	“Vox Pop: Yes to Marriage, No to King Charles” – Mediating and Constructing Public Opinion	159
3.1.7	Summary: Preparing the ‘Big Day’ – Newspapers as ‘Masters of Ceremonies’	167
3.2	The Wedding Day: The Television Coverage of Charles and Camilla’s Wedding	171
3.2.1	“Welcome to Three and a Half Hours of History in the Making” – Structuring the Broadcast of the Royal Wedding	173
3.2.2	“We’re Here to Bring You Every Moment, Live” – The Role of Temporality in the Live Broadcasting of the Royal Wedding	181
3.2.3	“We Have Cameras All Over Windsor” – The Televised Wedding and the Transformation of (Its) Sites	186
3.2.4	“The Most Extraordinary Royal Event I think I’ve Ever Witnessed” – Narrating the Royal Wedding on TV	194
3.2.5	“He Will Now Have a Princess Consort at His Side” – Agents on the Stage of the Ritual Media Event	204
3.3	Framing II: “Older Folks Wed With Little Ceremony and Some Pomp” – The Post-Wedding Newspaper Coverage	206
4.	William & Catherine (2011): A Modern Couple, a Modern Monarchy?...	216
4.1	Framing I: The Announcement of a Long-Awaited Engagement	216
4.1.1	“We Got There in the End Darling!” – Introducing the Bride, Negotiating the Meaning of the Royal Wedding	218
4.1.2	“Pomp, Pageantry and History for Abbey’s 15th Royal Union” – The Venue and Its Reminders of Lessons to Be Learned from (Royal) History	226
4.1.3	“Why Kate Is the Great Unknown” – The Royal Bride and Discussions of Her ‘Added Value’ for the Monarchy	231
4.1.4	“Could Our First Middle-Class Queen Save the Monarchy from Itself?” – Class and Family Background as Central Themes of the Coverage	240
4.1.5	“The £5bn Wedding” – Calculating the Monarchy’s Value and Providing an Account of the State of the Nation?	245
4.1.6	“Greatest Show on Air” – Preparing the Wedding Day and (Pre-)Assessing the Wedding Coverage	250

4.2	The Wedding Day: The Television Coverage of “a Glorious Pageant, a National Celebration, and a Royal Love Story”	258
4.2.1	“From Bucklebury to Buckingham Palace” – Covering the Multi-Sited Media Event.....	259
4.2.2	“Just a Great Showcase for Our Country” – Fashioning Britain’s Image in the World	264
4.2.3	“The Web and the Twitter Sphere Have Been Buzzing” – Intermedial Discourse and the Role of Social Media in the Royal Wedding Coverage	275
4.2.4	“Goodness, Look at This” – Voyeuristic Elements of Watching the Vows and Crowds at the Royal Wedding	282
4.2.5	“We Are Going to Leave You with Some of the Best Pictures” – Visual Summaries as a Generic Feature of the Ritual Media Event	289
4.3	“People’s Fairy Tale” – The Newspapers’ Recapitulation of the Wedding Day and the Imagination of the (Royal) Future.....	291
5.	Conclusion: To Have and to Hold from This Day Forward?	301
5.1	Functions of Royal Weddings as Ritual Media Events in the 21st Century.....	306
5.2	Outlook: Trajectories for Studying the (British) Monarchy in the 21st Century	311
6.	Works Cited	315
6.1	Literature	315
6.2	Newspaper Articles.....	333
6.3	Speeches and Interviews	340
6.4	Films	341
6.5	Plays and Novels.....	341

1. INTRODUCTION: FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?

In 2018, one of Queen Elizabeth II's grandchildren married a so-called 'commoner' in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. The guest list included foreign royalty, religious figures, and high-ranking celebrities – singers, actors, supermodels. Witnessed by audiences on site and in front of TV sets at home, the couple exchanged rings, vowed that they would take each other as husband and wife “to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse”, and kissed for the cameras. The ceremony was televised internationally and broadcast on the royal family's YouTube channel and Facebook page. The event had its own online discussion thread using a hashtag created for people to join in the conversation about the wedding on social media. Crowds lined the streets of Windsor to applaud the couple as they made their way to the wedding reception in a horse-drawn carriage. The event I am describing here refers to the most recent marriage celebration in the British royal family, which took place on 12 October 2018: the marriage of Princess Eugenie to Jack Brooksbank.

Yet this description could easily have applied to another event, Prince Harry's wedding to Meghan Markle, which had taken place earlier in the same year, on 19 May. But why are readers of the above more likely to think of Harry's wedding instead of Eugenie's, and what does this reveal about the perception of royal weddings? My tripartite answer is that Prince Harry had for a long time – until the birth of his brother William's first child, Prince George, in 2013 – been third in line to the British throne. Hence, from his birth, the importance of his position was mirrored by the high degree of media interest in him. Princess Eugenie, by contrast, has never been in the public eye as much as her cousin, also because of her more remote position in the line of succession (being only sixth in line before the birth of Prince George).¹ The difference in public awareness thus has to do with an individual's status as heir to the throne. Moreover, the brief description of the wedding features reveals how much these events – no matter how different in scale – are actually based on formulaic elements. The ritual components pertain not only to the ceremony and liturgy, but also to their media representations at large. The aforementioned comparison shows that the functions of royal weddings extend beyond their relevance to the couple itself because these occasions are staged and celebrated as media events and attract large audiences both on site and at home.

The inferences drawn from this example allow me to further deduce some of the premises of this study: royal reporting, meaning all news media reporting that focuses on the royal family and royal events, constructs and perpetuates schematic reporting. As the monarchy is thus placed under constant public scrutiny, it has to demonstrate that it is neither redundant nor too out-of-step with contemporary society. The heirs to the throne, in particular, play a decisive role in this context. On the one hand, they can

¹ In addition to that, the fact that Lady Diana Spencer was Harry's mother greatly influenced the public interest that surrounded him.

embody a changing understanding of modern monarchy and work to constantly keep it up to date. On the other hand, they personify the very continuity of the institution. By symbolically representing such stability, the monarchy holds an important position within the (self-)conceptions of the British nation.

At first glance, it might seem that studying the British monarchy in our day and age needs justification, as the powers of the crown are not relevant any longer because they have become ceremonial. The royal prerogative guaranteed by the British constitution, however, still factually renders the crown's position a very political one. The potential activation of the monarch's executive powers provides endless ground for speculation and makes the institution highly relevant in contemporary times. This became clear, for example, when the queen's 2018 Christmas broadcast on the theme of compromise, respect, and mutual understanding was interpreted as a reference to Brexit. The following January, an editorial in *The Guardian* warned against precariously politicising the monarch's position, because "[i]nvariably, when parliament looks incapable of navigating through a crisis, the power vested in the crown becomes relevant" ("The Guardian View on the Queen and Brexit" 2019: n. pag.). Notwithstanding its controversial primacy in the British political system, the monarchy plays an important role in times of crises, such as the looming break-up of what looks like an increasingly (dis-)United Kingdom.² But it is not only through the conventional and only hypothetically deployable political power that the monarchy maintains its relevance. Rather, it is the widespread popularity and support for the institution as well as people's emotional engagement with royalty that render it culturally significant. The royals' public performances during ritual media events, such as the royal weddings, are of interest to a large part of the British public (discourse). These royal media events thus play a role for Britons' self-perception of their monarchy and their nation – they affect the cultural imaginary and national consciousness of Britain.

In the following, I use the phrase from the marriage liturgy 'for better or for worse' to raise the three central sets of questions posed in this study. First, the couple's promise to stick together 'for better, for worse' figuratively becomes a dogma for royalty's relationship to the public. This is in line with the popular reasoning for the continued existence of the monarchy, which holds that the ancient institution has endured turbulence, weathered criticism, and continued to serve the people for better or for worse. Moreover, the one marrying into the royal family makes this promise not only to his or her spouse on a personal level, but also to the people on a public level. To join the royal family nowadays means joining a globally successful brand and a working enter-

² Political theorist Tom Nairn explains the monarchy's unique role within British nationalism. He writes that a "personalized and totemic symbolism was needed to maintain the a-national nationalism of a multi-national (and for long imperial) entity; and 'the Crown' could effectively translate identity on to that 'higher plane' required by a country (heartland England) which has since the 17th century existed out of itself as much as in" (2011 [1988]: 11).