The regal catwalk: royal weddings and the media promotion of British fashion

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In 2011, Kate Middleton¹ was 'reportedly worth £1 billion to the British economy'.² The huge international interest in her wedding that year to Prince William was greeted as a major opportunity to boost British trade by promoting British fashion both at home and abroad. On 9 March 2012 on ITV's morning television show *Daybreak*, British fashion expert Caryn Franklin said of Middleton, by then dubbed the Duchess of Cambridge, 'she certainly does generate an enormous amount of money for the fashion industry. Anything she wears sells out instantly, and certainly some of her favourite high-street designers have posted record profits'.³ Soon after this *Stylist* magazine reported that the website of the British fashion chain Reiss had crashed for two hours after Middleton was shown wearing their '£175 taupe Shola dress to meet the Obamas'.⁴

The royal family is a central feature of Britain's projected identity and a unique selling point of the national brand created to promote its exports. The relationship between the Windsors and the fashion industry can be seen in a number of British Fashion Council (BFC) initiatives. Following the death of Princess Diana in 1997, the BFC set up the Princess of Wales Charitable Trust in 1998 'in recognition of her loyal support of British fashion designers', to provide British fashion graduates with scholarships to further their fashion education.⁵ In the lead-up to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, London's central shopping thoroughfare 'launched a Great British Fashion Flag Showcase' in which 147 Union Jack flags, 'including 10 dedicated fashion flags' were hung above the major retail stores in Bond Street, Regent Street and Piccadilly, stretching for 1.5 miles.⁶ These 'dedicated fashion flags' were created by high-profile British designers including the House of Alexander McQueen (whose creative director Sarah Burton became 'Designer of the

Year' at the British Fashion Awards 2011 for her work on Middleton's wedding dress) and Stella McCartney (designer of the Team GB kit for the London 2012 Olympic Games, and winner of the BFC 'Designer of the Year' award 2012).⁷ BFC chair Harold Tillman and John Penrose MP, Minister for Tourism and Heritage, were both in attendance at this Jubilee celebration launch, illustrating its significance for British commerce, as well as its role as a national celebration with political undertones.⁸ Fashion exhibitions at Kensington Palace over the years, including the 2013 'Fashion Rules' exhibition, also highlight the historical connection of British fashion to the history and tradition of the royal palaces.⁹ On 16 March 2012 a reception for the British clothing industry was held at Buckingham Palace, hosted by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.¹⁰ These examples show how the British royal family is linked with the business of British fashion, through the work of the BFC, and alongside both the city politics of London and the national politics of Great Britain.

Although fashion film criticism is increasingly becoming more established, it has so far clung closely to fiction film. Fashion has traditionally been seen as a partner of storytelling rather than documentary or live broadcasting, and yet both the latter are also narrative media. Referring to Mary Ann Doane's theories of the 'event', this chapter will consider the fascination with royal fashion and its subsequent use in national promotion campaigns, showing the links between past and present media strategies.¹¹ I will begin by looking at the social and cultural significance of a filmed 'event', before tracing the developments in royal wedding coverage since the beginning of the twentieth century. Working forward to the present day, I will examine the promotional use of live wedding broadcasting and DVD highlight compilations. Throughout these sections, I will consider how the reportage of broadcast television and earlier newsreels employ the storytelling devices that work as brand narratives for the royal family, the British fashion industry and a London-centric Britain. Focusing on selected royal fashion 'moments' throughout history, this chapter asks what these 'moments' mean, and why they acquire such force in popular culture and cultural memory. Among these considerations are the issue of national production advertised as quintessentially British in order to be sold abroad and the contradictions between British tradition, the forward-looking drive of the fashion industry and live broadcasting. Also in question is the peculiar combination of fairy-tale references and a growing accessibility of the British royal family as presented by the media – a necessary element in persuading audiences that a royal lifestyle is achievable through consumption.

In a discussion of British fashion promotion it is important to look at the presentation of fashion 'moments' projected on global media platforms. What comes first? Is an event of intrinsic significance captured on film, or does it become a fashion moment by being filmed? Doane's writing on cinematic time provides a useful approach by reviewing early cinema and its ability to fix moments of time.¹²

The actuality films of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were often recordings of everyday life, of subjects as ordinary as workers leaving at the end of the day in the 1895 Lumière brothers' film *La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon* (*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyons*).¹³ Although narrative soon entered cinema, the initial fascination of the medium came from its simple ability to record movement. In *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Doane discusses the early preoccupation with cinema as a technology capable of 'fixing life and movement, providing their immutable record'.¹⁴ She maintains that 'any moment can be the subject of a photograph; any event can be filmed',¹⁵ but most of them are not. In choosing what to film, the filmmaker decides which moments viewers will be most interested in, or entertained by. This links with the idea of the event, which we can see played out in royal wedding coverage. Doane asserts: 'The act of filming transforms the contingent into an event characterized by its very filmability, reducing its contingency. The event was there to be filmed.'¹⁶ In this way, early actuality films fixed moments of history by privileging them over other, un-filmed moments. These privileged moments would then feed into future cultural memory, acting as our only moving-image record. Not only were these moments fixed in film, they were fixed in history, and in memory.

To explain this Doane offers a commentary on the afterimage that sparks an interesting debate about the use, purpose and effect of promotional film and media built up through time. In this analogy,

an external object annihilates the retinal imprint in order to make room for its own impression. The retina *retains* impressions, but only briefly, long enough to merge with succeeding impressions and make a pure present inaccessible. ... The theory of the afterimage presupposes a temporal aberration, an incessant invasion of the present moment by the past, the inability of the eye to relinquish an impression once it is made and the consequent superimposition of two images.¹⁷

This, I would suggest, is the figurative way promotional media operate through time. The chronological build-up of royal wedding coverage augments itself as

a narrative, meaning that the present material cannot be wholly distinguished from the footage of the past. The cultural memory of these images, brought up time and time again in contemporary footage (early newsreel footage of previous royal weddings is shown as clips in contemporary broadcasts), means that the images exist all together, at the same time. Past royal wedding coverage is as influential to our viewing of today's royal wedding coverage as the contemporary material itself, because it establishes traditions and expectations that today's material consciously draws on for maximum impact.

In the creation of fashion moments such as Kate Middleton's arrival at her wedding to reveal her dress to the world, we see an obsession with the instant, with anticipation and revelation, and with the accessibility of the present. Live coverage has a lot of waiting time to fill, what Doane refers to as 'dead time'. Discussing the early actuality film, she states:

In an actuality, the time that is excluded or elided is constituted as 'dead time' – time which, by definition, is outside of the event, 'uneventful.' But such an explanation assumes that the event is simply 'out there' and dead time a by-product of grasping the event's clear-cut and inherent structure. It would be more accurate, I think, to assume that an understanding of 'dead time' – time in which nothing happens, time which is in some sense 'wasted,' expended without product – is the condition of a conceptualization of the 'event.' From this point of view the documentary event is not so far from the narrative event. The event may take time, but it is packaged as a moment: time is condensed and becomes eminently meaningful.¹⁸

In live television coverage of the 2011 royal wedding, dead time (or the time between 'eventful' happenings) is continuously filled with a discursive focus on the following themes: London as an iconic city, the size of the international audience, anticipation of the bride's wedding dress, revelation of the bride's wedding dress and guest wardrobe choices. Doane goes on to state: 'Although the term *event* implies the fortuitous, the accidental, transience, and unpredictability ... it also can be used to connote a high degree of constructedness, as in notions of a media event or social event.'¹⁹ Royal coverage is made meaningful by its purposeful construction. Despite being documentary/live broadcasting, it is not spontaneous but very much planned, organised and fitted into a storyline. This story is acting as a brand narrative for British export.

In their advice book on advertising, *What's Your Story?*, Ryan Mathews and Watts Wacker ask, 'what's really important to the branders who want to effectively communicate with their customer? ... We think the answer to that

question is a good story.²⁰ In more detail they recommend that 'a brand's story must engage an audience at a human level to be effective'.²¹ This provides a useful way of looking at the increasing sense of royal accessibility conveyed by this body of media texts. Matthews and Wacker also suggest keeping to familiar narratives, to prevent complicating the message: 'Stick to basic plots ... [and] [a]void mixed messaging'.²² Throughout analysis of royal wedding coverage we can see these guidelines in use through the construction of narrative and the use of fairy-tale conventions to engage with audiences and sell the British image. In *Place Branding*, Robert Govers and Frank Go connect the construction of brand stories with the promotion of actual or imaginary locations: 'the narrative of place as it is told and retold in history books, literature, the media and popular culture, with often corresponding heroes, great leaders and great events'.²³ The stories told in these films are stories of royal weddings, but also the stories of London, Britain and British identity.

The newsreel footage of early twentieth-century royal weddings is part of a constructed narrative of British history and the British fashion industry. This story is still being written in the film and media coverage of royalty today. As historical artefacts, this collection of royal wedding coverage forms part of various archives, now held by the British Film Institute (BFI), Pathé and the BBC. In 2011 Pathé digitised a selection of historical royal wedding coverage and made it available as a DVD compilation titled *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.²⁴ This is the DVD from which I am accessing most of the newsreels referred to in this chapter. As archive film, this material needs to be acknowledged not only as the product of a film company, but also as the product of an archive.

There are problems inherent in framing a discussion of national storytelling through the institution of the archive. Circulation of and access to texts is as important a part of national storytelling as the films themselves. As David Hesmondhalgh writes:

[M]uch of the work of cultural industry companies attempts to match texts to audiences, to find appropriate ways of circulating texts to those audiences and to make audiences aware of the existence of texts. [...] The upshot of these processes is that cultural industry companies keep a much tighter grip on the *circulation* of texts than they do on their production.²⁵

The archives that now hold these films impose a level of censorship on national stories through the selection process determining which films should be digitised and circulated.

Historiographers acknowledge this process in speaking about archives as power structures, created by those with authority and constructed to give an official presentation of the past. As Jacques Derrida observes:

[T]he technical structure of the *archiving* archive ... determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event. This is also our political experience of the so-called news media.²⁶

In this way archives act as storytelling devices, creators of historical narratives. Thus the claim of Michel Foucault that history is not only found in but is written through the archive: '[H]istory, in its traditional form, undertook to "memorize" the *monuments* of the past, [and] transform them into *documents* ... in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*.'²⁷ Looked at from this perspective, the archive presents a constructed narrative of history, subjectively created by institutions in power to tell a particular story.

Doane describes Foucault's vision of time in early cinema as 'offering its spectator an immersion in *other spaces and times*'.²⁸ The material covered in this chapter offers a dual immersion in time to give contemporary viewers the sense of 'being there', transporting viewers back to the day of the 'event'. Geographically, this material allows immersion in another place (the capital city) for non-London audiences. London audiences are also allowed access to a further place, which Mark Cousins refers to as 'Royal London':

Royal London, a space of state occasions governed to the minutest details by pre-ordered codes of protocol of the British establishment. ... Only on prescribed royal and state occasions does Royal London become visible, and it does so not as an architecture but as a processional route which links church (Westminster Abbey) and state (Parliament) with the monarch (Buckingham Palace).²⁹

According to Cousins, London uncovers its identity as a royal place on days of royal celebration. A sense of occasion is implied here, of rare happenings, events, but also of deposits into the national archive of moving images. In this way, such material allows a further immersion into other times and places. Time is used through these moving images to curate a cultural memory and to write a history of places – in this case London and Britain. Those places, along with their brand narrative, are then used to promote trade, in this case fashion, to international markets.

As well as the promotion of London in relation to projected ideals of historical British moments, this media coverage also highlights the links made between British fashion and London. London as a place has a strong presence throughout the wedding footage covered in this chapter, owing to the historical connection between the royal family and London in traditional and tourist images of Buckingham Palace, the Changing of the Guard, carriage processions on the Mall, and weddings, funerals and coronations in St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. This royal panoply is frequently connected to images of British fashion in the iconography of the Swinging Sixties, a brightly coloured Union Jack cityscape that situates the Windsors in the capital city with its leading fashion houses, national fashion weeks and flagship retail stores.

FASHIONING ROYAL NEWS

One of the earliest examples of British royal wedding coverage on screen is the wedding of Princess Mary and Henry George Charles, Viscount Lascelles, in 1922. The DVD *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century* compiles a selection of short British Pathé newsreels covering different aspects of the wedding and its preparations. A newsreel titled 'Princess Mary to Marry an English Nobleman' was released in 1921 to celebrate their engagement. The newsreel frames Viscount Lascelles in an iris shot as a 1920s pin-up, a suggestion of fill lighting giving him a dreamy quality and connecting him with film stars of the time.³⁰ The glamorous portrait of Princess Mary's prospective groom offers an early example of the treatment of British royalty as cinematic celebrities. However, visual access to royal figures was still limited. In the subsequent newsreel of the ceremony in 1922, a great effort has been made to hide the wedding dress from the public.³¹ An annex has been set up in front of the entrance to the Abbey for this purpose, so that the bride can arrive at the Abbey unseen. As the carriage pulls up to the entrance we have only a brief glimpse of the bride's veil through the carriage window before she disappears from sight. When the couple leave the Abbey after the ceremony they again enter the carriage through the annex, meaning that our only views of the pair are images of their heads through the carriage window, taken at a distance and difficult to make out. At the end of the newsreel there is a shot of the couple standing on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. However, it remains at a distance, and shows them only from the waist up. There is no full-length image of the bride in her dress. This distancing of the bride and her apparel from spectators is enhanced by the cinematography,

often using aerial shots of the carriage to preserve the couple's privacy. The use of images that are almost, but not quite, close enough to give a detailed view emphasises the discretion of early royal wedding coverage.

In the Pathé newsreel of the 1934 marriage of Prince George, Duke of Kent, and Princess Marina of Greece, a shot of the crowd shows a spectator brandishing a contraption covered in mirrors to enable him to see what is going on from varying angles.³² This is followed later in the film by shots of others in the crowd holding up mirrors to enhance their view. Contemporary images of spectators at the 2011 royal wedding holding smartphones and digital cameras aloft suggest that, although the technology has changed, the audience's relationship with royal celebrity has not. Both groups seek to access the best image (however fleeting), and to have a sense of ownership over the historical 'moment'.

As part of its coverage of the 1935 wedding of Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester to Lady Alice Scott, another Pathé newsreel offers an early example of media-constructed anticipation about a royal wedding dress.³³ The film employs a present-tense commentary, but one which has been recorded after the ceremony, narrating it in the style later adopted for a live broadcast. The commentator states: 'And now, everyone is waiting for the bride. Here she is!'³⁴ At this point the bride looks at the camera, giving a quick smile and a nod before getting into the car, suggesting the acknowledgement of her public persona and celebrity status. The inclusion of this shot in the edited film, together with the commentary, is an early example of the media's attempt to engage viewers in the day's event. With this unusually (for the time) intimate insight, the impression is of a unique occasion, one that is special enough to break down the usual barriers between the royal family and the general public to allow a nationwide celebration.

One abiding trope evident at this time is the commentator's remark on the scale of the international audience. He declares: 'All London, in fact, all the world, rejoices in the happiness of our royal family. ... This crowd is only a minute part of the great public all over the Empire who will today be wishing joy to the bride and bridegroom.'³⁵ Significantly cashing in on this export opportunity is a Pathé fashion film made to supplement the coverage of the day.³⁶ It shows a mannequin modelling outfits that Lady Alice has packed for her honeymoon, describing the clothes and naming the designer, British royal couturier Norman Hartnell. Again, present-tense commentary is used to convince the audience that they are experiencing a royal fashion show firsthand, an event that brings consumers and British fashion commodities closer together.

23 The wedding dress of Lady Alice Scott, British Pathé 1935. *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century* DVD (British Pathé, 2011).

The relationship between the royal family and the British fashion industry has been set in place prior to the Second World War, ready to be resumed once the war is over.

The late 1940s saw heightened interest in Princess Elizabeth as heir to the British throne. Mendes and De La Haye note that her wedding in 1947

attracted widespread media attention and led to a flurry of clothes shopping in establishment circles. Her embroidered gown, by Norman Hartnell, was not ration-free and required 100 coupons. The dress was much admired and so efficient was the Seventh Avenue copying network that a replica was ready eight weeks before the wedding, though in the interests of international harmony it was not put on sale until the day itself.³⁷

A collection of short newsreels was made surrounding Princess Elizabeth's wedding to Prince Philip. In Pathé newsreel footage titled 'The Princess Weds' we see visual references to iconic London landmarks such as Big Ben.³⁸ The bridal gown is also a subject of interest: 'Inside the Palace, the cameras were able to capture the exquisite workmanship of the bridal gown.'³⁹ Although this commentary contains none of the speculation of contemporary coverage, another short film made by British Pathé focused on its making. 'Wedding Dress Silk

Made in Essex' is part of a DVD collection released by the Royal Collection titled *Happy and Glorious: The Royal Wedding (1947) and The Coronation (1953) from Original Newsreels*.⁴⁰ It follows the progress of the Princess's wedding dress from the weaving of its fabric:

At Braintree in Essex, Peggy Lyn will prepare the silk and threads which will be used for Princess Elizabeth's wedding dress. ... Greatest secrecy covers the preparations, and the final design will not be ready for public viewing until the November wedding day. ... The Princess's gown will set a new fashion for brides. Orders for the design will crowd in from many countries.⁴¹

Use of the future tense in this commentary creates excitement, building the event up in advance. Filming in a textile factory forges an association for the viewer between the royal wedding dress and British manufacturing, connecting an important national event with images of national industry. The accessibility of the royal family through fashion becomes stronger in this period, as the postwar continuation of rationing motivates images of national unity. Despite her choice of royal couturier Norman Hartnell, Princess Elizabeth needed to be seen saving ration coupons for her wedding dress in the same way as other British brides in order to create a feeling of solidarity and shared experience. Her saving was emphasised in press reports of the time, to persuade viewers that the Princess was just like them.⁴² The impression of accessible fashion was also enhanced in the 1940s when Hartnell began to design ready-to-wear collections for the benefit of women who aspired to follow the royal style but could not afford the *haute couture* price-tags. However, as Andrew Marr explains, frugality had its limits:

Already, towards the end of 1947 and despite a torrent of reforming social legislation, people were becoming weary of the shortages and red tape Labour was coming to represent. As preparations for the wedding gathered speed, it began to be clear that outside the eager platoons of the socialists, there was little enthusiasm for a puritanical, frugal event. The country wanted colour and it wanted fun. And that, after all, is the job of the monarchy.⁴³

The opposition between solidarity and morale-boosting spectacle was clearly one that needed carefully balancing at this economically unstable time.

One of the most significant changes to British royal wedding coverage occurs with Pathé's coverage of Princess Margaret's wedding to fashion photographer Anthony Armstrong-Jones in 1960.⁴⁴ 'May Wedding' is the first example of Pathé

royal wedding coverage that is presented in colour – in this case, Technicolor. This in itself is significant – Pathé are using a new cinematic technique to present the news. As well as being shot in Technicolor, the film is much more cinematic in terms of its structure, narrative and (what can arguably be called) performance. The opening titles are designed like those of a fictional film of the day, with pink roses in the background, romantic music and ornate typography. The commentary is much more emotional than the sombre efforts for previous weddings and in this sense sounds much more ‘acted’, a theatrical quality furthered through its narration by British stage and screen actor Michael Redgrave. But it is the evocative nature of the constructed narrative of the film that really sets it apart from its predecessors.

Poetic recitation throughout the film of the lines ‘Sing a Song of London’ and ‘May Wedding’ is not required for journalistic purposes. Such emotive techniques are designed to enhance the audience’s responses, pointing forward to the more subtle use of live speculation in 2011 to intensify interest in the ‘event’. ‘London’ is repeated frequently throughout this poetic narration, connecting it to romance and patriotism. Reference to the city as ‘the heart of the world’ speaks to the country’s still cherished imperial identity and its new push for export markets.⁴⁵

THE FAIRY-TALE PRINCESS

Lady Diana Spencer, later to become Diana, Princess of Wales, has often been cited as a British fashion icon. Diana’s dress, designed by David and Elizabeth Emanuel, is described by biographer Nicholas Courtney as an

apt creation with its blend of the theatrical and the romantic. Made of ivory pure silk taffeta with an over-layer of pearl-encrusted lace, the dress had a bodice with a low frilled neck-line and full sleeves gathered at the elbow. In keeping with tradition, the bride wore something old – the Carrickmacross lace that made up the panels had once belonged to Queen Mary and had now been dyed a slightly lighter shade of ivory than the dress; something new – the dress itself; something borrowed – her mother’s diamond earrings and the Spencer tiara and something blue – a tiny blue bow had been stitched into the waist band. ... The silk shoes had a central heart motif made of nearly 150 pearls and 500 sequins.⁴⁶

The blend of traditional wedding lore and aristocratic finery described here condenses the royal wedding narrative played out in the media. The borrowed

lace connects the dress with a narrative of British history, tying the various strands and chapters of the British brand together. Despite the more contemporary approach to designers, the dress is constructed as a spectacle to dazzle audiences, rather than as an attainable model for the audience's imitation. The design links the royal family with the wedding traditions observed by many of its viewers, while at the same time distancing Diana as special in its excess of precious elements and handcrafted details. Courtney goes on to highlight further relatable elements of the day:

Just like any other family wedding, the bridegroom's mother came down the aisle with the bride's father and the bride's mother with the Duke of Edinburgh. [...] Another fun touch, to show that it was a family wedding and not a state occasion, was the helium-filled balloons emblazoned with Prince of Wales's Feathers and the sign, 'Just Married' with hearts, written in lipstick on a piece of old cardboard on the back of the landau that took them to Waterloo Station.⁴⁷

In making these points, the media is setting up the wedding dress as representative not only of regal fashion, but of a national industry. Diana's dress is presented as the centrepiece of the event, a showcase for the contemporary artistry of British fashion, while the lace once worn by Prince Charles's great-grandmother affirms the continuity of the British monarchy and – by extension – the British state. Although there was live television commentary on the day (an earlier version of what we saw in 2011), the Pathé newsreel commentary is still in the form of edited highlights, presented in present-tense commentary. And here, the newsreel of 'The Wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer', the commentary makes the fairy-tale narrative explicit:

The world gets its first full glimpse of the fairytale princess, demure behind her veil, and the wedding dress that has been a carefully guarded secret, resplendent ivory silk taffeta, trimmed with antique lace and a long, long train, all 25 feet hand-embroidered. As bewitching and romantic a bride as ever touched the heart of the world.⁴⁸

The fairy-tale princess is traditionally an aspirational figure, whose life and status is transformed by a powerful man. Diana's arrival into public consciousness as an unknown *ingénue*, much younger than her husband, taps into the Cinderella fantasy of an unregarded girl whose beauty wins the love of a handsome prince. The now conventional assertion that the dress 'has been a carefully

guarded secret' again creates an aura of excitement and curiosity about an event watched by a worldwide audience of over 750 million viewers – 'the most popular programme ever broadcast' at that time.⁴⁹ In turn, the focus on Diana's wardrobe set up a discussion of her fashions that continued throughout the rest of her life and long after.

CONTEMPORARY ROYAL WEDDINGS

The 2011 royal wedding was broadcast live in Britain on BBC and ITV. Viewed by 'around a third of the world's population',⁵⁰ the coverage stretched from early in the morning until well into the afternoon, adding up to almost eight hours of live broadcast on each channel. The first element of British fashion promotion running throughout this coverage is that of London as an iconic fashion city. The 2011 BBC broadcast opens not with images of the prospective bride and groom, but with iconic images of London, encompassing the London Eye, Big Ben, St Paul's and Westminster.⁵¹ The numerous shots of crowds waving Union Jack flags along the Mall – a trope that has persisted since the very first Pathé newsreel mentioned in this chapter – locates the celebration as a specifically British event. As Andrew Marr later observed:

It was filmic. The richly coloured uniforms of the male Windsors and the glamorous, British-made dresses of the bride and her new family added to the Harry Potter effect of swooping television shots in the gothic, leafy and stained-glass illuminated Abbey.⁵²

These opening images of London work further to cement the event within the capital consumer city. Numerous references are also made throughout the coverage to Savile Row, linking fashion with a specific London fashion street. The link between fashion, London and politics is accentuated in the BBC coverage in an interview with Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, who is told by BBC presenter Fiona Bruce that he looks very smart in his morning suit. He replies, 'This comes from, I'm delighted to say, from Moss Bros in Fenchurch Street, and I'm indebted to Pam of Moss Bros in Fenchurch Street for her hard work to get me as smart as she could.'⁵³ Moss Johnson is a high-street chain that rents formal menswear. By mentioning an affordable London outfitter Johnson jokes that he is one of the people. This reference also makes the point that London fashion is accessible to all, not only those who can afford bespoke tailoring.

24 The wedding dress of Kate Middleton, 2011. *The Royal Wedding* DVD (Formative Productions, 2011).

For the first half of live television coverage on both channels, dead time is filled with speculation about the bride's wedding dress and its designer. She – Sarah Burton of Alexander McQueen – is not identified until Kate Middleton steps out of the car at Westminster Abbey at approximately 11 a.m. The constant repetition of the dress question, coupled with the enthusiastic and excited responses of the guests on screen, is reminiscent of 'Wedding Dress Silk Made in Essex', building an interest in the dress that may not have existed pre-coverage. When its designer is finally named, the use of spontaneous (yet surely scripted) live commentary allows this identity to be delivered in a mode of revelation, adding to the excitement of Middleton's arrival at the Abbey as a national fashion moment. Thus created, it is available for endless rescreenings, part of the event but also justifiable as a moment in its own right. The immediacy of this information is also highlighted, with the global public contributing to the coverage with tweets and emails read out on screen. Later, when Middleton departs for her honeymoon in a blue Zara dress priced at £49.99, the promotion of accessible royal fashion culminates in Zara's selling out of duplicate dresses within hours.⁵⁴

This royal reporting has an even more emphatic Cinderella theme than that of Diana's wedding, owing to Kate's status as a 'commoner'. A daughter of first-generation party-favours millionaires becoming a princess is tied into her combination of couture and ready-to-wear, concluding an aspirational message

of social transformation. Marr captures this feeling when he writes: 'Girls in the crowd waving signs reading "Harry's mine" were (mostly) joking but could go home afterwards and feel the joke was not absurd.'⁵⁵ Cue ITV commentator Philip Schofield's observation of the bridal gown: 'So if you imagined a fairy-tale princess and her dress, is that the picture you had in your mind? I think perhaps it might have been.'⁵⁶ The 2011 ITV1 coverage takes time to focus on the Britishness of the wedding dress's manufacture, as well as its design: 'the dress epitomises timeless British craftsmanship by drawing together talented and skilled workmanship from across the United Kingdom.'⁵⁷ Live promotion has the added bonus of seeming less like promotion because it feels spontaneous, but it raises the question as to whether we are so inundated by advertising in our daily lives that we simply stop noticing it.

Both the ITV and BBC 2011 live wedding broadcasts contain a running commentary on the wardrobe decisions of significant guests as they enter the Abbey. Mother of the bride Carol Middleton wears a dress designed by the fashion house of the London designer Catherine Walker. The live commentaries on ITV and BBC both highlight the fact that Catherine Walker was a favourite of Princess Diana and dub the choice both astute and appropriate. On ITV1 Celia Walden (fashion and society writer for the *Telegraph*) describes it as a 'quintessentially British choice'.⁵⁸ Similarly, the wife of the British Prime Minister, Samantha Cameron – herself ex-creative director and current consultant for the British accessories firm Smythson – is wearing Burberry. As Paula Reed, style director of *Grazia* magazine, announces on BBC: 'Of course she's flying the flag – that's one of our biggest and most successful fashion houses. It looks fantastic on her.'⁵⁹

There are at least three DVD compilations of highlights from the wedding (BBC, ITV and Formative Productions), all about three hours in length. Despite their limited airing time, the compilations find time to include key fashion 'moments' in their commentaries, therefore classing them as 'eventful'. All three DVDs include at least one fashion reference, some of them choosing to make it a focus of the whole DVD. The BBC Souvenir DVD includes only Middleton's arrival at the Abbey, revealing both the dress and its designer to the world, but its inclusion in the highlights places this moment at the same level as official moments in the event's schedule and routine, emphasising its national significance.⁶⁰

The Formative Productions souvenir DVD focuses the majority of its commentary on fashion, and comes with a fashion guide booklet.⁶¹ The chronology

of the wedding day is altered from the beginning, starting with the couple's Buckingham Palace balcony kiss after the ceremony. Its distancing from the event allows it to be more critical. As well as praise for British designers there are also scathing remarks on guests' wardrobe choices, added for entertainment value. Less news, more gossip column, the commentary points out that film director Guy Ritchie's coat is unbuttoned, although 'The Queen has let it be known ... she rather likes morning coats to be buttoned.'⁶² Socialite Tara Palmer-Tomkinson's dress is deemed inappropriate as it 'really is off the shoulder', unlike the dress of former Harry girlfriend Chelsea Davey, which is only 'almost off the shoulder'.⁶³ As we are informed, 'almost is acceptable, off the shoulder is absolutely not, in particular for Westminster Abbey'.⁶⁴ Samantha Cameron is also criticised for going 'hatless', while the hat-wearing Miriam Clegg, wife of the Deputy Prime Minister, is said to have 'played it safe'.⁶⁵ Despite its critical tone, this DVD still falls under the promotional banner. The commentator declares: 'I defy any woman to say that a man doesn't look very handsome in a morning coat, especially if it's cut by Savile Row.'⁶⁶ The Mayfair headquarters of London's elite tailors, Savile Row is mentioned again here in the description of brother of the bride James Middleton's suit.

The British manufacture of Kate Middleton's dress is also highlighted in the Formative Productions DVD, with more detail than in the ITV live commentary:

It's very interesting ... to look at the details that as much of it was made in England as possible. The lace work on the bodice and on the hem is made by the Royal School of Needlework and apparently Sarah Burton set up a design studio next door to the Royal School of Needlework in Hampton Court Palace and a lot of the fittings were executed there because obviously the designer of the dress had to be kept top secret.⁶⁷

Again, this coverage is setting itself up within the tradition of British film and media coverage to promote Britain not only as a fashion centre, but also as a manufacturing nation, a centre of craftsmanship endorsed by royal appointment.

The historical relationship drawn out in the media between royalty and fashion was established long before 2011. Dazzled by its afterimage, we not only accept but expect it. British media tradition has created the popular desire for a fashion-based royal events commentary that means if it is not included, we are disappointed. We are, in essence, waiting for the adverts. Commercial promotion has become entertainment, and, even more concerningly, news. Audience anticipation has been built up through the cross-generational use of tropes from

the 1920s to the present day, giving British media coverage of royal weddings a standard formula that develops, but doesn't change.

More striking in the live coverage of the 2011 royal wedding is the use of dead time to allow more broadcasting space for a discussion of British fashion. However, one could also argue that the commentary focuses on seemingly frivolous fashion moments to give a feeling of immediacy and accessibility, both to the time of the event itself and to its royal figures. This was an early technique to make royal coverage feel as live as possible, at a time when live broadcasting was not an option. In the 2011 coverage, it is the use of fashion that permits audience identification with the royal family. But the opposite is also true, that the fashion elements of the day have become privileged as exceptional moments, not only fashion 'moments', but 'events' in themselves.

The history of screen media's reports of royal weddings brings together a number of different aspects of Britishness that all cluster around the theme of fashion, namely industry, commerce, craftsmanship, pageantry, tradition, innovation and international importance. It is as though each is attempting to hold together the past and present within Britain, with fashion as the tie that binds them. Fashion paradoxically both looks back and refreshes. In the 2011 coverage of the royal wedding there is much talk of a new generation of royalty, embodied by the modern relationship of William and Kate. They met at university and lived together before marriage. Minibuses conveyed their lesser relations from the Palace to the Abbey. Their wedding was viewed world-wide on contemporary social media sites, smartphones and tablets. It is as though the royal family were undergoing a makeover in the British media – a new look – a phenomenon fundamental to fashion itself.

NOTES

- 1 Catherine Middleton, now formally titled the Duchess of Cambridge, is often referred to in celebrity style by her familiar name 'Kate' in magazines and on television. Both the BBC and ITV live television coverage of the 2011 Royal Wedding called her 'Kate'.
- 2 'Why we all want to believe in Kate', *Stylist* (18 April 2012), p. 45.
- 3 Caryn Franklin on *Daybreak* (ITV 1, 9 March 2012).
- 4 'Why we all want to believe in Kate', p. 46.
- 5 British Fashion Council, 'BFC Princess of Wales Charitable Trust' (no date given), www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1615&ArticleID=1383.
- 6 British Fashion Council, 'Great British fashion flags' (1 May 2012), www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/news_detail.aspx?ID=416.

- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Historic Royal Palaces, 'Fashion Rules exhibition – royal glamour at Kensington Palace', Historic Royal Palaces (no date given), www.hrp.org.uk/KensingtonPalace/stories/palacehighlights/FashionRules/default.aspx.
- 10 Julia Neel, 'British clothing industry reception', *Vogue* (17 March 2010), www.vogue.co.uk/spy/celebrity-photos/2010/03/17/clothing-industry-reception-at-buckingham-palace.
- 11 Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Referred to *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 76. Emphasis as in original.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 159–60.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 140. Emphasis as in original.
- 20 Ryan Matthews and Watts Wacker, *What's Your Story?* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2008), p. 136.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 Robert Govers and Frank Go, *Place Branding: Glocal, Virtual and Physical Identities, Constructed, Imagined and Experienced* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 20.
- 24 *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century* (British Pathé; Cherry Red Records Limited Trading as Strike Force Entertainment, 2011), DVD.
- 25 David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries* (London: Sage, 2nd edn, 2007), p. 6. Emphasis as in original.
- 26 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 16–17. Emphasis as in original.
- 27 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Alan M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 8. Emphasis as in original.
- 28 Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, p. 3. Emphasis as in original.
- 29 Mark Cousins, 'From royal London to celebrity space', in Mandy Merck (ed.), *After Diana: Irreverent Elegies* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 77–8.
- 30 'Princess Mary to marry an English nobleman' [Princess Mary weds Henry Charles George, Viscount Lascelles], British Pathé, 1921. Accessed on *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.
- 31 'Wedding of HRH Princess Mary and Viscount Lascelles, D.S.O at Westminster Abbey', [Princess Mary weds Henry Charles George, Viscount Lascelles], British Pathé, 1922. Accessed on *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.
- 32 'The Royal wedding' [Prince George, Duke of Kent weds Princess Marina of Greece], British Pathé, 1934. Accessed on *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.

- 33 'The Royal wedding' [Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester weds Lady Alice Scott], British Pathé, 1935. Accessed on *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 Fashion Film Supplement to the Wedding of Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester and Lady Alice Scott [Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester weds Lady Alice Scott], British Pathé, 1935. Accessed on *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.
- 37 Valerie Mendes and Amy De La Haye, *Fashion since 1900* (London: Thames & Hudson, new edn, 2010), pp. 140–1.
- 38 'The Princess weds' [Princess Elizabeth weds Philip Mountbatten, Duke of Edinburgh], British Pathé, 1947. Accessed on *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 'Wedding dress silk made in Essex', 1947. Accessed on *Happy and Glorious: The Royal Wedding (1947) and The Coronation (1953) from Original Newsreels* (London: The Royal Collection, 2007), DVD.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 Drusilla Beyfus, 'Royal wedding dresses', *The Royal Wedding Official Souvenir and Programme* (London: The Royal Jubilee Trusts, 1981), p. 18.
- 43 Andrew Marr, *The Diamond Queen: Elizabeth II and Her People* (London: Macmillan, 2011), p. 110.
- 44 'May Wedding' [Princess Margaret weds Anthony Armstrong-Jones], British Pathé, 1960. Accessed on *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 Nicholas Courtney, *Diana Princess of Wales* (London: Park Lane Press, 1982), p. 40.
- 47 *Ibid.*, pp. 45–7.
- 48 'The Wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer 29 July 1981 St Paul's Cathedral' [Prince Charles weds Lady Diana Spencer], British Pathé, 1981. Accessed on *British Royal Weddings of the 20th Century*.
- 49 'Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer's wedding 29 July 1981', BBC, www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/prince_charles_and_lady_diana_spencers_wedding.
- 50 Marr, *The Diamond Queen*, pp. 363–4.
- 51 *The Royal Wedding: H R H Prince William & Catherine Middleton 29th April 2011* (BBC1, 29 April 2011), live coverage.
- 52 Marr, *The Diamond Queen*, p. 364.
- 53 *The Royal Wedding*, BBC.
- 54 'Why we all want to believe in Kate', p. 46.
- 55 Marr, *The Diamond Queen*, p. 368.
- 56 *The Royal Wedding* (ITV1, 29 April 2011), live coverage.
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 *The Royal Wedding*, BBC.
- 60 *The Royal Wedding – William and Catherine* (BBC, 2011), DVD.

- 61 *The Royal Wedding: William and Kate 29th April 2011*, Collectors Edition double DVD set (Formative Productions, 2011), DVD.
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 *Ibid.*
- 65 *Ibid.*
- 66 *Ibid.*
- 67 *Ibid.* The Royal School of Needlework is a charity that provides courses in hand embroidery for all abilities. The school describes itself as ‘the International Centre of Excellence for the Art of Hand Embroidery’, www.royal-needlework.org.uk/content/10/about_the_royal_school_of_needlework.

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