

The royal marriage and the media (Apr 2011) by Dave Porter

The house of Windsor is a divided house. At least as far as the press is concerned, that is. In typically irrational and schizoid fashion, the media has of late served up a royal villain ♦ Prince Andrew, or HBH (His Buffoon Highness) ♦ and a royal model couple, William and Kate side by side. Their starkly-contrasting treatment is illuminating for what it says about both the media and the state of royalty in 21st century Britain. Royalty are loved and loathed in equal measure: praised for their charity work, damned for their sponging, mocked for being out of touch with ordinary people, fawned over for being heraldic scions who carry on the great line of Albion. For any Republican, the media's treatment of royalty could have you evincing sympathy for this battled and belittled clan. The message seems to be: you can carry on being figureheads of the state as long as we can carry on holding you up to ridicule whenever it takes our fancy. Money is the grubby equation which links all this. Andrew is castigated for profligate use of public funds in toadying up to dictators and dodgy businessmen (they're never dodgy business women, are they?); while at the same time you can't move in any supermarket without being glared at by the royal stamp of approval for William and Kate's wedding on some trite trinket. As a country in economic desuetude, the forthcoming wedding is beginning to look suspiciously like a Treasury-backed ploy to get us all spending again and boost consumer confidence. The list of royally-endorsed products is endearingly diverse and reveals us Brits to be true entrepreneurs ♦ even condoms figure in the list. The sentiment seems to be: if we have to pay for the ting, we might as well make some money out of it. A perfect marriage of late capitalism and ate royalty, perhaps. For the dissenters, they must console themselves with a royal wedding sick bag and a low chorus of leftie resentment. It is hard to find any criticism of the wedding or the institution of royalty itself in the mainstream press, the Morning Star excepted. The media's need is desperate to latch onto a couple like William and Kate who on the surface seem to be like any other young couple planning for their wedding is disconcerting. The demands upon them are impossible: be like us but just not as vulgar; create a lavish spectacle of a wedding to distract attention from the weeping state of the economy but don't go overboard and make us all resentful. I suspect that in this the media is actually a true reflection of many people's attitude toward the monarchy. They've been with us so long it would seem churlish to get rid of them now, like an elderly aunt in the corner of the room who doesn't take up too much room but has quite a large inheritance. Of course, all this is a coy distraction from some uncomfortable truths about the royal family: the Queen is the largest (subsidised) single landowner in the UK, with nearly 500,000 acres of land under her belt and with Charles and the Duke of Westminster close behind. Depressingly, various dukes and countesses make up the rest of the Top 10. There is not much scrutiny of this, though, to go along with the souvenir edition of your favourite red top. With the toppling of various royal lines in the Arab world, and the seedy link to our own branch which Andrew has unflatteringly revealed, maybe it's time for a spring revolution of our own.

Some background

readings</h3><p>William's Old University Friend Jules: the third person in this royal marriage, Guardian 18 Nov 2011</p><p>Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton</p><p>Royal wedding: One third of councils have no applications for royal wedding street party, Telegraph 29 March 2011</p><p> </p>

href="http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/royal-wedding/8411768/Royal-wedding-One-third-of-councils-have-no-applications-for-royal-wedding-street-party.html" target="_blank" title="Royal Wedding">Royal wedding: One third of councils have no applications for royal wedding street party, Telegraph 29 March 2011</p><p> </p>