
Repo J, Yrjölä R. ['We're All Princesses Now': Sex, Class and Neoliberal Governmentality in the Rise of Middle-Class Monarchy](#). *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2015, 18(6), 741-760.

Copyright:

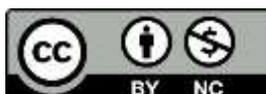
©2015 by SAGE Publications. The original article is published by Sage Publications and available from <http://ecs.sagepub.com/content/18/6/741>

DOI link to article:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367549415572320>

Date deposited:

17/11/2015



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License](#)

“We Are All Princesses Now”: Sex, Class, and Neoliberal Governmentality in the Rise of Middle-Class Monarchy

Jemima Repo and Riina Yrjölä

(2015) *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 18 (6): 741-760

Abstract

This article examines the idea of ‘middle-class monarchy’ emerging in Europe from the internationally publicized marriage of Kate Middleton and Prince William, arguing that European monarchies are becoming reinvested as a part of neoliberal governmentality. Through careful analyses of sexuality, class and race in three major British newspapers, we argue that monarchies are currently deployed as transmitters of instrumental happiness, conceptualized as an individual choice and project achievable through the control of the body and realization of one’s desires. Kate embodies the postfeminist vision of a highly educated, post-liberation woman able to combine the roles of consumer, homemaker and dutiful wife. This contrasts to Princess Charlene of Monaco, whose apparent domestication in an old-fashioned marriage of convenience was pitied globally. Finally, the article examines the *Closer* topless photo scandal as an incident that both challenged and re-sedimented the neoliberal obligations of individual happiness and self-control.

Key words: Monarchy, governmentality, postfeminism, celebrity, happiness, sexuality, class, race, neoliberalism, news media

Introduction

European royals are finding true love and marrying the middle-classes. Or so it would seem, as in the last decade, the Dutch, Spanish, Danish, and Swedish heirs to the throne have married commoners.¹ The most famous commoner spouse is undoubtedly Kate Middleton, who became Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge upon her marriage to Prince William in 2011. During their nine-year courtship, the perceived ambitiousness of her and her parents was frequently derided in the press (Church Gibson 2011: 358). At the same time, the Middleton’s ‘ascent to celebrity’ was also framed through ‘familiar narratives of humble beginnings and ordinariness made good’ (Bennett 2011: 353). Nevertheless,

after the wedding, the marriage of Kate and William in the media became largely seen as a success story re-establishing the popularity of the monarchy. It also sedimented a certain down-to-earth and approachable view of royalty introduced by William's mother, Princess Diana. The Daily Mail's declaration that 'we're all princesses now' reflected this proximity felt between royalty and so-called 'middle-class monarchy' (DM 18.3.2011). Seemingly reaffirming the belief that the achievement of a middle-class marriage and family was a 'primary indicator' (Ahmed 2010: 6) of happiness.

At the same time, the British media has followed closely the marriage of Prince Albert II of Monaco to Charlene Wittstock. When actress Grace Kelly married Prince Rainer III in 1956, she was perceived to bring back a degree of glamour to the House of Grimaldi at a time when Monaco was seen largely as a gambling house for the rich. Since her death in 1982, however, the tumultuous private lives of her children, the marriages, divorces and romantic relationships of Princess Caroline and Princess Stephanie, have dominated the news about Monaco. Much like the Windsors, therefore, the Grimaldis have in the recent decades suffered setbacks owing to the apparent instability and unhappiness of their personal lives.

Much was made of Prince Albert's bachelor status upon his accession to the throne in 2005 at age 47, but even more newsworthy was his admission shortly afterwards that he fathered two children out of wedlock. When his engagement to Charlene was announced in June 2010, hopes were raised: Monaco might finally get a new heir and a happy ending. When their wedding day approached, however, it was widely rumoured in the media that Charlene had second thoughts and had tried to flee three times from Monaco back to her native South Africa. In stark contrast to Kate and William's fairytale-like wedding, Charlene and Albert's wedding harked back to the days when arranged marriages were still the norm in the monarchial system of alliance.

Lacking any significant political power, today's monarchies have a largely ceremonial function and act as symbols of national identity, and historical and cultural continuity (cf. Taylor 2000; Blain & Hugh 2003). However there is a parallel in the British media discourses of Kate and Charlene's newly royal lives that reveals something about the emerging function of royalty in the 2010s. Indeed, while the aforementioned marriages are commonly seen as attempts for monarchies to rehabilitate their public image, bring them closer to 'the people' and thus justify their existence, we argue that the way in which they are discussed in the media represents the extent to which they have come to reproduce the values, demands, and subjectivities of neoliberal governmentality.

In *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, Michel Foucault discussed the shift from the eighteenth century onward in Western societies from a 'deployment of alliance' emphasised kinship ties and the transmission of names and possessions, to a 'deployment of sexuality' more concerned with 'the body that produces and consumes' (Foucault 1990: 107). It is not, Foucault says, that the deployment of sexuality has replaced the deployment of alliance or rendered it useless, but that alliance, especially through the governance of families, has become the means for the transmission of the 'economy of pleasure and intensity of sensations' (1990: 108). There is evidence that today's high-profile European monarchies have also 'come to operate as a social mechanism for producing and regulating the subjective capacities of future citizens and... [the] pathway for the fulfillment of individual wishes and hopes' (Rose 1999: 155). This has been possible by taking on middle-class discourses of happiness, fulfillment and self-cultivation specific to the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Happiness, as Sara Ahmed has argued, has effectively 'become [...] a disciplinary technique' (2010: 8) specific to neoliberal governmentality that seeks to minimize state control and govern indirectly by empowering individuals to govern themselves.

The proliferation of happiness indexes, self-help books, lifestyle programmes, and positive psychology reflect today's constant demand for subjects to cultivate and actualize autonomous and authentic selves through self-invention, transformation, management, enhancement and improvement (Rose 1999: 230; Ehrenreich 2010). Happiness becomes framed as choice and ability, 'radically disengaged from social relations in general and turned over to the individual himself' (Binkley 2011: 376), which de-politicizes the relations of power from which these demands emerge. This instrumental happiness obliges individuals to view their emotional life on an economic footing, in terms of constraints, interests and investments aimed at shaping their own lives, which in turn arise from the imperative to be happy. For girls and young women in particular, the achievement of happiness is 'weighted towards capacity, success, attainment, enjoyment entitlement, social mobility and participation' (McRobbie 2009: 57). Endless self-measurement and self-perfection, not only professionally but also physically, are produced as the means available to young women achieve happiness and success. Being slender in particular is associated with self-realisation, upward mobility and intellect, whilst obesity, anorexia, bulimia, and self-harm become signs of low self-esteem and failure (McRobbie 2009: 96; Skeggs 1997: 83). To neglect to control one's body is equated with a failure to control one's life, and therefore a failure to embody modern, happy womanhood.

It is these relations and types of 'enterprising', autonomous and innovative subjectivities that characterize the contemporary politics of life in advanced liberal democracies (Rose 1999: 230; Dean

1999), we argue, that rejects fate and destiny and stresses the constant acts of liberation and progress that produces the contemporary discourses of middle-class princesses. Our study is based on articles from three national British newspapers from September 2010 to October 2012 - from the announcement of the engagement of Prince William to Kate Middleton, up to the weeks following the *Closer* privacy lawsuit. This period also encompasses the engagement announcement and wedding of Prince Albert to Charlene Wittstock. In order to discern the dominant narratives across the media, we have selected newspapers with different target audiences; the Daily Mail as a populist conservative tabloid, The Daily Telegraph as a conservative and traditionalist newspaper, and The Guardian a left-leaning one.

The first part of the article revisits the legacy of Princess Diana not as one that challenged an out-of-touch royal family to reform itself, but as one that propelled the royal family's private lives and feelings into the public domain as figures of self-governance (or the lack thereof). We then analyze how the media discussed Kate and William's relationship, as well as Kate's emotional and behavioural attributes. The third part examines how the marriage and private relationship between Prince Albert II and Charlene was covered in contrast to that of Kate and William. The final part analyses the *Closer* topless photo scandal as an incident that both challenged and reaffirmed the neoliberal paradoxes of public/private spheres, happiness, and self-governance.

Diana's Confessions

The marriage of Lady Diana Spencer to Charles, Prince of Wales in 1981 to a large extent broke new ground to not only allow but expect royal marriages to be based on true love. Before them, love was not seen as essential for a successful royal marriage, although Queen Victoria's devotional love for Prince Albert had rendered amorous matches more common. Still in 1936 Edward VIII abdicated in order to marry the woman he loved, the American divorcée Wallis Simpson, and again in 1955 Princess Margaret, faced with constitutional opposition, gave up hope of marrying divorced Group Captain Peter Townsend.

Diana's and Charles's marriage, by contrast, was widely seen as a fairy-tale come true as 'the wedding of the century'. The media and the public were captured by the sentimental tale of a girl who against all odds (although she was the daughter of an earl) married the most eligible European prince. An estimated global TV audience of 750 million tuned in to witness Diana's transformation from an ordinary looking kindergarten assistant to a beautiful princess in a 25ft train of ivory taffeta, who was

carried in a horse-drawn gold gilded carriage to her destined, true love. Whereas before love had been more a question of chance, in an unprecedented way royalty was now expected to marry with the same romantic interests as the rest of the populace.

The celebration of Diana's realisation of an openness necessary for the public to be able to assess the love and happiness of her marriage in the 1990s effected a public discontentment of the royals that declined to do so. In the media it created a stark contrast between the old and out-of-touch royals and the adored 'People's Princess,' who came to epitomize the future of royalty. Diana's approachable, easy-going and lively public persona, her beauty and controversial engagements with causes untypical for royals, had an ever-increasing national and global appeal. After her divorce from Charles, the media glamourized her self-transformation from virgin princess to outspoken and self-improving divorcee by celebrating and idealizing her feminine 'openness' – fluidity, vulnerability, confessional nature, doting motherhood and generosity to worthy charities. These public confessions of self-help and coping promoted a 'desired image of femininity' (Blackman 1999: 4) – a capacity to be autonomous, expressive and independent.

By idealizing a flexible, fluid and adaptable female body/self that transformed in tandem with the opportunities and challenges that life presented (Saukko 2006: 164-6), these media discourses normalised certain locations of white femininity through which the place and meaning of women 'as symbols of motherhood, as markers of feminine beauty, as translators and preservers of bloodlines, as signifiers of national domesticity, as sites for the reproduction of heterosexuality' (Shome 2001: 323) were launched and relationships with racial, sexual, classed, gendered and nationalized 'others' negotiated and guarded. Indeed, it was not just that Diana transformed the norms and roles of royalty (Campbell 1998: 121, 7; McKechnie 2002). Rather, the Diana phenomenon transformed the conditions by which the monarchy existed altogether by rendering it an object of endless observation and demanding it to speak life truths.

In the period between the separation of Diana and Charles in 1992 and Diana's death in 1997, the more independent, connected, modern and approachable she became through her willingness to talk about her problems and sense of personal inadequacy, including her bulimia, depression, 'crowded' marriage and the deceit and mistreatment she had received from her in-laws, the more popular she became as the 'People's Princess'. Diana took on the role of a public patient, who became increasingly 'incite[d] to speak about' her private problems 'through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail' (Foucault 1990: 18). Her famous Panorama interview with Martin Bashir perhaps

epitomised the disciplinary nature of this relationship which obliged Diana ‘to recognise [her]self in [her] past, in certain events in [her] life’ (Foucault 2006: 270), giving her problems a history through a narrative of causes (such as neglect) and symptoms (such as bulimia). That these confessions were enacted out of her own free will, her speech was also accepted as an account of the truth, and the very act of engaging in this open dialogue was enough to free her of suspicion and responsibility for the problems she described.

This pinned the responsibility for the breakdown of Diana’s marriage firmly on the royal family that had stayed silent and non-divulging. It is no wonder that generally the 1990s is regarded as a period of decline for the British monarchy. References are still made to Queen Elizabeth II’s famous ‘*annus horribilis*’ speech in 1992, at the background of which was the public collapse of the marriages of her sons Prince Charles and the Prince Andrew, and her daughter Princess Anne, as well as a damaging fire in Windsor Castle. At the time, Tom Nairn wrote that the ‘soul has gone’ from the Monarchy, now cast as ‘the living dead’ (2011: xx). Queen Elizabeth’s silence in the days following the death of Princess Diana was seen to have caused further damage to its already ‘tarnished image’ (Benoit and Brinson 1999: 146). The silence of the royal family became the equivalent of not just backwardness, but lifelessness and a failure to take public responsibility for the (private) harm it caused to its members.

Kate Middleton and the Emotional Economy of Family

If Diana and Charles’ private life became one of constant media speculation on a ruined fairy-tale, Kate and William’s love was seen as filled with devotion, loyalty, support and ‘quiet, unostentatious normality’ thanks to the ‘first middle-class Queen’ who would ‘save the monarchy from itself’ (DM 17.11.2010). This ‘normal and level-headed’ togetherness was therefore built with stories and descriptions totally different to that of Diana and Charles’ relationship. As the Daily Mail reported, ‘Kate and William were unmistakably in love’ (DM 17.11.2010). By contrast to Charles and Diana before their wedding, their ‘body language spoke of ‘intimacy and desire’ of ‘two young lovers, comfortable in their skins and with each other’ (DM 21.11.2010). In a relieved tone, the Telegraph wrote that ‘thank heavens, no one is stupid enough to use the word fairy-tale this time round’ (Telegraph 18.11.2010). Compared to Diana, ‘practically a child bride’ who ‘got her notions of love from Barbara Cartland – the very worst place to find them’, Kate and William were almost thirty and ‘good mates as well as lovers’ paving the way for ‘a marriage of equals’ (Telegraph 18.11.2010).

The chances of a successful and happy marriage in the royal family was more than ever measured against the ‘emotional economy of the family’ (Rose 1999: 159). Across all the three newspapers, Kate’s normal family was contrasted Diana’s turbulent and maladjusted childhood, which seemed to confirm that Kate was a much better queen candidate. For the Telegraph, it was in fact ‘the Royal [William] who is getting the superior deal here, marrying a girl from a nice, middle-class family, undamaged by divorce’ like Diana’s was. While Diana was ‘unguided by steady parental example’ (Telegraph 18.11.2010). Kate’s ‘secure and loving childhood’ (DM 20.11.2010) and ‘first-class education’ (DM 20.10.2010) in top public schools provided her with ‘strength’ (Guardian 26.4.2011) and ‘confidence’ (Telegraph 16.10.2012a). Indeed, as the Guardian reported, she was an ‘ordinary, hard-working, athletic and easy-going’ young girl, not a ‘snooty Sloane’ who was ‘on track to be the New Diana’ (Guardian 21.10.2010). Hence it was believed that Kate, as ‘a perfectly normal, attractive, intelligent and sensitive woman, is precisely what the Royal family needs’ (Telegraph 16.11.2010b) and that she no doubt ‘held a clear-eyed view of royal pressures and decided that the pros outweighed the cons’ (Guardian 1.5.2011).

Kate therefore fulfilled the expectations of a modern-day queen consort in a way that would compensate for the affective imbalance left by Diana. Although for some Kate ‘seemed to have little ambition to succeed on her own two feet beyond a part-time job with a fashion company and helping out with her family’s mail order business’ (DM 20.22.2010), those concerns took second place to the much-needed stability and modernity she would bring to the monarchy. According to Guardian, Kate would not be ‘throwing herself down the stairs for husbandly attention or moodily rollerblading through the castle corridors, sobbing to popular ballads. There would be no mischievous posing at the Taj Mahal’ (Guardian 1.5.2011). In the same vein, the Telegraph applauded her ‘decorous and discreet way... [of] being under the spotlight’ (Telegraph 16.11.2010b). Even before the engagement, Kate’s unwavering commitment to William demonstrated over eight long but discreetly conducted years of going out earned her the nickname of ‘Waity Katie’ (DM 2.4.2010). The lack of drama in their relationship was captured by a comment in the Daily Mail according to which ‘William and Kate are in danger of becoming the world’s most boring couple’ (DM 20.10.2010).

Moreover, the Middleton’s stable and ordinary family life was also seen as a positive and healing influence on William who had survived and grown into a well-adjusted man despite the conflicts between his parents. Reportedly ‘traumatized’ by his parents’ dysfunctional marriage, William finally had ‘a family – Kate’s family, that is – that [was] filled with all the ease and loyalty that he never knew at home’ (DM 20.11.2010). William himself was also better equipped for marriage than his

parents. 'William is not his father,' the Daily Mail stated. Compared to his father, the self-centred and cold Prince Charles, William was attentive, thoughtful and caring – a man who even did his own washing up 'unlike his father, who seldom gets his hands dirty beyond dead-heading his roses' (DM 20.11.2011). Despite being a 'child of divorce', William still believed in marriage and went about it more cautiously than his parents. Indeed, 'William and Kate waited until they were ready,' the Telegraph wrote approvingly.

In sum, Kate's stable and loving family background was repeatedly compared to that of Diana, and it was consistently assumed that this rendered her an ideal bride for the future heir to the throne. She would bring the normal, middle-class 'emotional economy' (Rose 1999: 159) into the royal family, curing it of the dysfunctional pattern that was exposed during the Diana years. Consequently, the primary measure of successful marriage would not only be in the fulfillment of duty, but happiness, for only by being happy would Kate and William be able to conduct their respective duties.

Instrumental Happiness and Self-care: The Making of a 'Modern Princess'

Kate's acceptance as William's bride was by no means a straightforward affair. As discussed above, the press admired Kate's discrete behavior throughout the nine years they dated prior to their marriage, but also scorned her lack of a 'proper' job. Kate's normal upbringing rendered the commoner status of her and her family an asset to backward royal life, but the Middleton's were also disparaged as pretentious social climbers (Church Gibson 2011: 358). By the time Kate Middleton became the Duchess of Cambridge, however, a Guardian commentator paused to comment how '[the story photographers tell about] Kate Middleton was very different to that of other celebrities. Each picture is framed to highlight hope. It's eerie. In every one, the sky is blue' (Guardian 25.6.2012). The Daily Mail's premonition, that Kate understood that 'respect is hard-earned, not automatically given' (DM 17.10.2010) seemed to be confirmed. After the engagement was announced, any doubts of the value of 'Waity Katie' and her middle-class family's affectations were set aside and media accounts began to produce narratives of exactly how Kate achieved such perfection and why she deserved the public's admiration.

The Guardian may have criticised the press media image of a blissfully happy Kate, but the Daily Mail and the Telegraph nonetheless constructed Kate as a perfect neoliberal subject making full use of her natural gifts of charm and intelligence. As an 'intelligent and efficient perfectionist' (DM 17.11.2010) her private manners were reported to be a 'stark contrast with the grasping, fame-hungry

celebrities' of today (DM 27.7.2011). Her family too were no longer looked down upon as social climbers, but celebrated as an example of a perfectly self-sufficient and happy family that possesses 'sufficient guile, talent, charm and determination and can migrate from penniless obscurity to the heart of the world's most famous royal family in the space of a few generations' (DM 23.4.2011).

In the media reports Kate became the middle-class neoliberal subject par excellence, whose skills, education, possessions and position were detached from class privilege and attributed instead to the hard work and commitment of her and her family. Indeed, Kate was depicted as an almost superhumanly versatile figure capable of self-mastery. She apparently was able to juggle several lives with qualified ease; she could still be 'her old shopping self in West London, mooching around Topshop in Kensington High Street and going to her favourite hairdresser, Richard Ward, in Sloane Square' or be a domestic goddesses as a 'military housewife in windy Anglesey' (DM 3.10.2011). She was 'like any other housewife', 'equally at ease in these aisles [of Waitrose], settling into her new life as a housewife, donning a comfy cardigan and heading out to the supermarket for supplies while the husband's out from under her feet' (DM 6.5.2011). Kate was the personification of postfeminist achievement, mobilising a 'female managerial capacity and choice [that] remakes domesticity around these qualities' (Negra 2010: 118), accomplishing the fine balance between enterprise and housewifery, leisure and work, and guilt-free consumerism and a conservative sexual division of labour.

Several feminist scholars have noted how postfeminist discourse frequently links achievement, hard work and success to beauty, excessive consumption and self-care (Negra 2010: 120; Whelehan 2010: 156). Kate became yet another example of this mechanism at work. On the one hand, looks alone were not enough. The Daily Mail wrote that 'it will take more than just great looks to be a princess' (DM 20.11.2011). To become a proper princess, Kate had to prepare herself 'for hard work' and get herself 'a proper job or meaningful role' inside the royal family (DM 2.10.2010) as well as demonstrate 'whether she had Diana's genuine desire to give something back' (DM 20.10.2010). On the other hand, she had to take care of herself by acquiring 'dignified behaviour and looks' (DM 23.4.2011) and an 'understated aplomb' (DM 2.5.2011) style described also as 'the relaxed girl-next-door charm' (DM 16.9.2011) that was championed by various mid-market High Street brands.

As Tom Nairn argues, female royal attire 'has to create "niceness", acceptability – an asexual charm free from the sharp edge of real fashion' (Nairn 2011: 30). The approval of Kate's attire derived not from its niceness, however, but its respectability that according to Beverley Skeggs relates with the

middle-classes ‘through associations with restraint, repression, reasonableness, modesty and denial’ (Skeggs 2004: 99). Kate managed to project a penchant for high-street brands (signifying economic restraint) as well as an ability to dress in a way that was nonetheless ‘classic, stylish and a tad conservative’ (Telegraph 16.11.2010) (suggesting sensibleness and humility). Kate was not a typical ‘sneering... style-setter’ who dressed ‘edgily’ (Telegraph 16.11.2010) in ‘expensive and often uncomfortable and ridiculous clothes’ (DM 16.9.2011) nor should she be. She was a modern woman who rejected both the extravagance and impracticality of past royals and the excess of fashionistas for the happy comfort, convenience, and prudence of a simple and classic, and most of all respectable wardrobe.

Kate’s clothing was not the only aspect of her appearance that was under scrutiny. She also had to be prepared to care for her health and body. As the wedding approached, the media commented on her ‘alarmingly thin’ (DM 9.3.2011) appearance whilst drawing parallels to the pressures that contributed to the development of Diana’s bulimia during her honeymoon. The Daily Mail advised Kate that ‘the last thing you want to do is to end up like Diana on her wedding day’ (DM 9.3.2011). After the wedding, the media continued to monitor her weight and constantly speculated on a much-expected pregnancy. In March 2012, the media still commented on her ‘pencil-thin appearance’ and its possible causes; ‘separation from William or her childlessness’ (Guardian 20.3.2012). Kate’s body was therefore another signifier of the status of her emotional life, and a measure of her ability to control it.

Paradoxically, staying thin also signified skilful self-mastery. The Guardian criticised *Cosmopolitan*’s reporting of Kate’s ‘Dukan diet’ of ‘seven days of pure protein and later to “celebration meals” a week’, the resulting message to readers being that ‘if women don’t look like Beyoncé or Kate Middleton, their flat stomachs a testament to their stamina then, it seems, they are not working hard enough’ (Guardian 10.6.2012). Kate, it seems, either had superhuman quantities of self-control, or lacked it. In a world where a woman’s body constitutes ‘the external signal that tells others that she cares’ and where ‘her labour and investments into her body are... descriptors of the self’ (Skeggs 1997: 83), being thin or too thin was a careful endeavour to attain self-control and self-realisation, or a sign of failing to do so.

Charlene Wittstock’s Normative Unhappiness

In 2011, just three months after Kate's and William's wedding, another royal wedding took place in Monaco when Prince Albert married Charlene Wittstock, a South African Olympic swimmer. It was an event that according to Daily Mail 'many thought would never happen' (DM 28.6.2011) given the 52-year old Albert's multiple affairs with world-famous supermodels and actresses, and produced two illegitimate children – a daughter with an American real-estate agent and a son with Togoan air-hostess.

Thus when Albert's engagement to thirty-two-year old Charlene was announced in June 2010, there was no mention of transcendental love. Rather than the deep compassionate solidarity and friendship shared by Kate and William, Charlene and Albert's engagement was seen to represent a rational choice, a deed which had to be done. As the Daily Mail wrote: 'Albert has never settled down in the past, but knows that the time is now right to produce the next ruler of Monaco' (DM 24.6.2010). The Guardian more explicitly explained the financial and juridical necessities for the marriage; 'The stability of the prince's family,' it explained 'is crucial for Monaco's numerous banks and its financial sector which craves security, not social unrest' (Guardian 26.6.2011). Moreover, if Albert did not produce a legitimate heir, Monaco would return to French control.

The marriage was therefore framed as utilitarian and instrumental - a necessary alliance to provide an heir and secure Monaco's future. In this unhappy existence, Charlene's role was to be the future mother of Albert's legitimate heir. Compared to her British counterpart Kate who was celebrated for her 'intelligence' and 'efficiency' (DM 27.7.2011), it was Charlene's beauty and style that defined her worth.

Portrayed as an 'impressive-looking creature', a 'lively blonde glamazon' with 'broad shoulders and an athletic figure', 'fine features, wide eyes, and high cheekbones and [...] elegant chignons and well-cut frocks' (DM 28.6.2011), Charlene had the looks, body, health and style with which to carry out her roles as consort and mother to the heir. Akin to the passive and domesticated heroines of the past, who patiently prepared for marriage, also she was reported to have waited for three years in Monaco for the proposal 'with no formal status or career' (DM 28.6.2010). 'Making no false claims about her background' in this 'the sunny principality once famous for its shady characters, a miniature royal world that is as much Dynasty as dynastic' the Daily Mail (DM. 18.3.2011) reported, Charlene's own career turned few heads. Instead of being a modern self-sufficient and self-making worldly woman, she was a Grace Kelly mini-me, an insecure woman 'following in Princess Grace's footsteps' who 'had forged a link between Monaco and the movie world' (DM 31.10.2010, DM 28.6.2011). Hence

as a woman without her own ambitions or aspirations, her future innovation would be create a strong bond between Monaco and the fashion community’ (DM 28.6.2011) in this archaic principality of wealth of privilege.

Effectively Charlene seemed to lack any will-power of self-actualization, a perception that was amplified by her uncertainty about how to dress and talk, inability to speak French or to bond with Monaco high society (she only had two friends in Monaco) (Guardian 26.6.2011; DM 28.6.2011). Depicted as ‘being terrified of becoming a laughing stock in the palace circles by showing up in over-the-top outfits’, Giorgio Armani and Karl Lagerfeld were reported to have ‘taken her under their wings’. In short, rather than an intelligent and enterprising young woman like her counterpart Kate, Charlene was like a Stepford Wife: ‘a fun-loving eco-minded sportswoman and humanitarian’ (DM 28.6.2011) who spent her days hiking, swimming, looking beautiful, and championing Albert’s various charitable causes.

It came as a shock to the media when just couple of days before the wedding the media informed that Charlene had tried to escape to South Africa three times after learning that Albert had yet again fathered an illegitimate child. Noting the domesticated woman subject striving to break free from the constraints of patriarchy, the Daily Mail observed Albert’s inability to ‘keep a grip of his fiancée.’ Charlene’s father, in turn, became her representatives in the media. The palace also firmly denied the rumours as an attempt ‘to seriously damage the Sovereign’s image and by consequence that of Miss Wittstock and to cause serious prejudice to a happy event’ (Telegraph 29.6.2011). The next day Charlene’s father insisted that his daughter remained ‘very happy’ with her decision to marry Albert, ‘a very easy-going and humble’ man who had helped his daughter to ‘grow accustomed to her new life’ (Telegraph 30.6.2011). Charlene had not bolted, he insisted, but had merely taken her mother to Paris to get shoes and a hat for the wedding.

Titled now as ‘the bolted bride’ (DM 1.7.2011), Charlene also denied the rumours as ‘categorical lies’, insisting that the photographs of her and Albert in love and getting married ‘will speak louder than any vicious gossip and empty rumours’ (DM 2.7.2011). However, the happiness of their marriage remained a subject of constant media speculation. Especially after the ‘very uneasy’ wedding kiss, Charlene’s ‘tense’ and ‘tearful’ looks during the wedding, and Prince Albert’s failure to comfort his bride brought back memories of Prince Charles’ public indifference to Diana (e.g. Daily Telegraph 2.7.2011; DM 4.7.2011; DM 1.7.2011; Guardian 9.7.2011). As the Guardian reported ‘it had been impossible not to note that the couple had looked painfully serious throughout the formalities’,

concluding that ‘the apparent fairy-tale seemed to veer from its Cinderella narrative into Rapunzel territory’ (Guardian 5.7.2011), or a ‘Brothers Grimm’s version of fairy-tale romance’ (Guardian 9.7.2011). When the media found out that the newlyweds had stayed in different hotels during their ‘publically labelled’ honeymoon, speculation re-emerged that their marriage being just a ‘business arrangement’ or ‘pregnancy pact’ (DM 13.7.2011) to produce a legitimate heir with Albert before the couple could go their separate ways.

For the staff at the Guardian, ‘being Princess of Taxexileiana wasn’t really sufficient compensation for being married to that lecherous sack of potatoes who labours under name of Prince Albert’ (Guardian 7.8.2012). The antiquated marriage practices of Monaco had ignored if not destroyed Charlene’s happiness. ‘The event may have recognised her as special enough to be a princess, but had it recognised her need for personal happiness?’ the Guardian asked, and wondered whether Charlene would become ‘be subsumed into the myth of the “curse of the rock”, in which the love lives of the Grimaldis are said to be fated with pain and suffering’ (Guardian 9.7.2011). Charlene’s unhappiness now took mythical proportions.

Charlene, lacking the capacities and potentialities of a post-liberated woman, it is possible to argue that she became the embodiment of the ‘problem that has no name’ (Friedan 2010: 9) – that is – a 1950s domesticated and subservient womanhood. Anything but the ‘empowered, assertive, pleasure-seeking, ‘have-it-all’ woman of sexual and financial agency’ (Chen 2013: 2) that defines postfeminist subjectivity, Charlene was more like the marooned and unhappy suburban housewife: a lonely, insecure and depressed woman who was dependent on husband’s money and her father’s protection. In this day and age, the Guardian wrote, ‘marrying into a super-rich family should not be regarded as a fair exchange for a woman being treated like chattel (Guardian 5.7.2011). Charlene, virtually enslaved in a dysfunctional and loveless marriage filled with loneliness, gossip, and lies that knew no boundaries, contrasted to Kate, whose blossoming existence was the linchpin of a world where female empowerment meant conspicuous consumption and blissful domesticity.

Losing Control and Getting *Closer*: Kate’s Topless Holiday Photos

On 13 September 2012, the French magazine *Closer* published grainy photographs of the Duchess of Cambridge sunbathing topless on holiday at the privately-owned Château d’Autet in France. Clarence House issued a statement saying that ‘the incident is reminiscent of the worst excesses of the press and paparazzi during the life of Diana, Princess of Wales’ (Clarence House 14.9.2012). Four days

later, the Duke and Duchess, who were touring the Far East, filed a criminal case against the magazine. The next day further circulation of the photographs in France was forbidden, though photographs were nonetheless published later in Ireland and Denmark, but not in the United Kingdom.

Press reports focused heavily on the extent to which Kate was to blame for the blow to her marital bliss through her own loss of discipline. Several articles defended the press, declaring that for the famous there was no such thing as privacy and that Kate's private life, her body and her emotions were available for public consumption by default owing to her celebrity status. 'The price of fame,' as the Telegraph wrote, 'is loss of freedom' (Telegraph 22.9.2012). The newspapers also reported other public figures, all male, blaming the Duchess for the incident. For example, long-serving Labour MP Austin Mitchell stated that 'Those who don't want to be photographed shouldn't strip off' (Telegraph 20.9.2012) and Donald Trump tweeted that 'Kate Middleton is great – but she shouldn't be sunbathing in the nude – only herself to blame' (DM 19.9.2012). Kate's topless pictures thus exposed not only her breasts, but also a lack of controlled, clear-headed thinking. Topless sunbathing in public became an act of indecency, not an expression of progressive and liberated womanhood, as it could have been alternately interpreted. By exposing her breasts Kate had 'put herself in a position where she loses her dignity' (DM 14.9.2012b) and thereby lost some of her personal virtue or respectability.

Reproducing the view that respectable femininity must remain untarnished by sexuality, the Daily Mail wrote that 'the Duchess does deserve privacy... but women shouldn't go topless in the first place, anywhere, ever!' (DM 19.9.2012). Another article purported that 'there is something blatantly exhibitionist, but also smug and superior' about 'flaunt[ing]' her breasts. This sentiment was repeated two days later in an article with survey results claiming that 'Just 14 per cent of British women sunbathe without their bikini tops on' (DM 21.9.2012). Speaking for the public, as it were, the headline declared 'We would NEVER go topless like Kate!' (DM 21.9.2012). All the sudden Kate was an irresponsible, overtly sexual, vulgar, unthinking and even immoral woman – the opposite of the respectable and self-controlling subject deserving of happiness. If the happiness of the Cambridges was affected, Kate was personally responsible.

This does not mean that no one defended Kate's right to privacy. On the first day the news broke, some Telegraph articles also called for the press to 'Stop hounding the Duchess of Cambridge' (15.9.2012). A Daily Mail journalist praised Kate's self-restraint as the scandal unfolded noting, 'it is sometimes easy to forget that the Duchess of Cambridge wasn't born into royal life, such is the

composure with which she fulfills her new role. Her coolness... was truly remarkable' (DM 14.9.2012c). The sense of fortitude and self-discipline of the targeted woman who refused to be victimised was only to be applauded, as if victimisation, like happiness, was a choice to be made free from social structures and power relations.

The media furore surrounding Kate's topless photos took a notably different tone from the debate about the pictures of a naked Prince Harry playing strip billiards with a group of women in Las Vegas published just a month earlier. There was no discussion of the violation of Prince Harry's bodily integrity or his lack of self-discipline. The questions of privacy and propriety took a second seat to the broader and explicitly political question of press regulation, which had been a highly visible topic all year due to the Leveson Inquiry into press ethics. Prominent politicians took part in the ensuing discussion. For example, former deputy prime minister Lord Prescott reportedly said that the Sun's publication of the pictures 'proved that self-regulation of the press is dead' (Guardian 24.8.2012). The incident was dismissed by the Daily Mail as a youthful masculine frolic: Harry 'is single, and his whole demeanor, his *raison d'être*, is to a little bit wild. He has a stressful job that means he has to be able to let off steam occasionally' (DM 19.9.2012). By contrast for Kate 'it goes without saying that... a degree of modesty anywhere outside her own master suite with the drapes drawn is strictly non-negotiable' (DM 19.9.2012). The double standard set for royal men and women meant that Harry's nude frolic was shrugged off with a 'boys will be boys' dictum of acceptance, but that Kate's topless sunbathing was seen as fundamentally indecent and reckless.

The Guardian's responses to the *Closer* scandal stood out as more critical reflections of the discourses produced by the British media. One author parodied the media's sexualisation of Kate's body; 'Have you seen the pictures? You should. I am reliably informed that they show not one but two equally-sized lumps of human fat and tissue arranged across the chest area of a 30-year-old woman who is married to a man who might, one day, become king' (Guardian 21.9.2012). The Guardian also noted the hypocrisy of the British press. While the exposure of Kate's breasts was seen as outrageous, at the same time Kate was pictured in the Solomon Islands meeting people and 'gigg[ing] on seeing the naked breasts of ceremonial dancers' (Guardian 18.9.2012). The postcolonial irony was not lost for the newspaper, for whom Kate's 'laughter-struck response to Oceanian nakedness looks like that of a Victorian missionary's wife who had never seen such profane effulgence before' (Guardian 18.9.2012). As in the colonial past, Kate's progressive 'frontier' white womanhood that enabled her to become 'a representative of her race, class and nation' (Boisseau, 2004: 5) on the global and national stages, became constituted through values of respectability, temperance and purity. For Kate

to reveal her breasts and hence an untamed and feral sexuality, was equivalent to reducing herself to the standing of the dark colonial savage woman, much like a Hottentotte Venus (Schiebinger 2008: 168). The requirement to conceal feminine sexuality was therefore bound inextricably to her status as a white colonial-class woman.

The Guardian went further to ask why photos of breasts are any less intrusive than the constant speculation of her potential pregnancy. ‘Last week, while the French slobbered over Kate's breasts, a genteel British media made do with studying her womb’ (Guardian 16.9.2012). Attacking Clarence House’s statement according to which the publication of the photos ‘sets the clock back fifteen years’, the Guardian remarked that ‘no palace functionary has complained that the obsession with her impregnation sets the clock back 500 years’ (Guardian 16.9.2012). This begs the question of why the speculation of Kate’s sex life is any more permissible than taking photographs of her breasts whilst on holiday. It exposes that behind the celebration of the middle-class royal female is a neoliberal, postcolonial, and postfeminist discourse that rekindles a 1950s domesticated femininity, repackaged in the discourse of emancipation and free choice that acquits any role of patriarchy, sexism, and racism in its production. The discourse of emancipation legitimised the constant surveillance of Kate’s body, as well as the personal blame piled on her when she oversteps the norms of respectable white, middle-class femininity and sexuality.

The Guardian made a further link between the *Closer* scandal and the phenomenon of internet voyeurism directed at naked female bodies: ‘Kate is not alone. Young women everywhere – famous and non-famous – are increasingly becoming victims of voyeurism in our internet age’ (Guardian 22.9.2012). The article interviewed US law professor Mary Anne Franks, who argued that the connection between Kate and ‘revenge porn’ and ‘creep websites’, where men post photos of women caught unawares, was that ‘they all feature the same fetishisation of non-consensual sexual activity with women who either you don’t have any access to, or have been denied future access to’ (Guardian 22.9.2012). In these websites and for the men maintaining them, female bodies, especially breasts, ‘are public property, fair game – to be claimed, admired and mocked’ (Guardian 22.9.2012). By identifying the problem in a broader sexist internet and social media culture, the Guardian’s articles provided critical counter-narratives to the stories of the conservative press. Some of these blamed Kate for her loss of control as a woman who, rather than recognising the realities of her new public position, egotistically exhibited her breasts for anyone to see. By contrast, others defended her right of privacy and applauded her self-discipline in the face of emotional turmoil. The Guardian, however, did not focus its efforts on the critique of either Kate or the conduct of the French press, but questioned

the broader institutional and cultural contexts (i.e. royalty, sexism, colonialism) in which the publication of topless photos came to be so scandalous. The supposedly new mutually loving, relaxed and open royal family in fact proved to be reliant on the delicate reproduction of neoliberal subjectivities that, once shaken by scandal, revealed the tensions in sex, race, and class inherent to the idea of the modern middle-class princess.

Conclusion

The Windsors have come to inhabit the contradictory discourses of middle-classness and tradition not by marrying middle-class persons as such, but by becoming engaged in the reproduction of neoliberal governmentality. By assuming certain sexed, classed, and raced technologies of the self at the heart of neoliberal governmentality, such as carefully regulated consumption, self-control and readiness in the face of contingency, and demanding constant self-inspection and self-improvement, the duties of modern royalty are now to transmit the obligation and fulfillment of a responsible and accountable life where one must constantly survey, adapt and reinvigorate oneself. These, the building blocks of happiness in a neoliberal era, now also apply to the relics of the old systems of alliance and governance.

The postfeminist discourse is central to the legitimation of one form of domesticated princesshood and invalidation of another. Kate, as a well-educated, intelligent, modern woman who likes to shop on the high street as much as she enjoys decorating, was applauded for her respectable appearance, patience and discretion in entering an alliance that would ‘modernise’ and emotionally stabilise the royal family by infusing it with everyday bourgeois values, habits and feelings. Despite Charlene’s education and achievements as an Olympic swimmer in her own right, and that much like Kate her main purpose is to produce the next heir to the throne, she was nonetheless seen as a traditionally subjugated woman from a past era, lacking agency, autonomy and security.

The view of Kate as an ideal female neoliberal subject was by no means self-evident, nor a mere representation. The topless photo scandal exposed the demand for Kate to constantly discipline her body and behavior, lest she display any conspicuous sexuality that would degrade her to the level of lower classes or inferior races. In a very concrete way, therefore, the performance of a cosy, loving, relaxed, yet respectably behaved bourgeois royal family both resulted from and is reinforced by sex, race, and class-infused neoliberal doctrines of happiness, self-governance and self-mastery.

Notes

¹ Despite the seeming novelty of royalty marrying members of the middle-class, European royals have married commoners in the past. Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, better known as the Queen Mother, was a commoner when she married the future George V. In the past half-century, also King Harald V of Norway, King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, King Philippe of Belgium, Norway's Crown Prince Haakon, Filipe, Prince of Asturias, heir to the Spanish throne, Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark, Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden all married commoners.

References

Ahmed, Sara (2010) *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press: Durham and London.

Bennett, James (2011) 'Celebrity Forum Introduction: The Royal Wedding' *Celebrity Studies* 2 (3): 353-354.

Benoit William L. and Susan L. Brinson (1999) 'Queen Elizabeth's Image Repair Discourse: Insensitive Royal or Compassionate Queen?' *Public Relations Review* 25 (2): 145-156.

Binkley, Sam (2011) 'Happiness, Positive Psychology and the Program of Neoliberal Governmentality' *Subjectivity* 4 (4): 371-394.

Blackman, Lisa (1999) 'An Extraordinary Life: The Legacy of an Ambivalence' *New Formations* 36: 111-24.

Blain, Neil and O'Donnell Hugh (2003) *Media, Monarchy and Power*. Intellect: Bristol.

Campbell, Beatrix (1998) *Diana, Princess of Wales: How Sexual Politics Shook the Monarchy*. The Women's Press Ltd: London.

Chen, Eva (2013) 'Neoliberalism and Popular Women's Culture: Rethinking Choice, Freedom, and Agency' *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16 (4): 440-452.

Church Gibson, Pamela (2011) 'New Patters of Emulation: Kate, Pippa and Cheryl' *Celebrity Studies* 2 (3): 358-360.

Dean, Michel (1999) *Governmentality*. Sage: London.

Ehrenreich, Barbara (2010) *Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America*. Metropolitan Books: New York.

Friedan, Betty (2010) *The Feminine Mystique*. Penguin: London.

Foucault, Michel (1990) *The History of Sexuality: Volume One. The Will to Knowledge*. Penguin: London and New York.

Foucault, Michel (2006) *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973-74*. Palgrave Macmillan: London.

McKenchi, Kara (2002) Taking Liberties with the Monarch: The Royal Biopic in the 1990s' in Monk, Claire and Sergeant, Amy (eds) *British Historical Cinema*. London: Routledge, 217-36.

McRobbie, Angela (2009) *The Aftermath of Feminism*. Sage: London.

Nairn, Tom (2011) *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy*. Verso: London and New York.

Negra, Diane (2009) *What a Girl Wants?: Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism*. Routledge: London.

Rose, Nikolas (1999) *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. Free Association Books: London and New York.

Saukko, Paula (2006) 'Rereading Media and Eating Disorders: Karen Carpenter, Princess Diana, and Healthy Female Self' in *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23:2, 152-169.

Taylor, John A. (2000) *Diana, Self-interest, and British National Identity*. Praeger Publishers: Westport.

Schiebinger, Londa (2008) *Nature's Body: Gender and the Making of Modern Science*. Rutgers University Pres: New Brunswick.

Shome, Raka (2001) 'White Femininity and the Discourse of the Nation: Re/membering Princess Diana' *Feminist Media Studies*, 1:3, 323-42

Skeggs, Beverley (1997) *Formations of Class & Gender*. Sage: London.

Skeggs, Beverley (2004) *Class, Self, Culture*. Routledge: London.

Whelehan, Imelda (2010) 'Remaking Feminism: Or Why Is Postfeminism So Boring?' *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 9 (3): 155-172.