

# “What God Has Joined Together ...” Editorial



Fig. 1: Longshot from the air shows spectators lining the streets to celebrate the just-married couple (PBS, News Hour, 21 May 2018, 01:34:21).<sup>1</sup>

On 19 May 2018 the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle flooded the television channels. Millions of spectators around the globe watched the event on screens and more than 100,000 people lined the streets of Windsor, England, to see the newly wed couple (fig.1).<sup>2</sup>

The religious ceremony formed the center of the festivities. It took place in St. George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle, attended by 600 invited guests. While this recent example is extraordinary in terms of public interest and financial cost, traits of this event can also be found in less grand ceremonies held by those of more limited economic means.

Marriage can be understood as a rite of passage that marks a fundamental transformation in a person’s life, legally, politically, and economically, and often

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j51O4lf232w> [accessed 29 June 2018].

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/may/19/a-moment-in-history-royal-wedding-thrills-visitors-from-far-and-wide> [accessed 29 June 2018].

in that person's self-conception, as an individual and in terms of his or her place in society.<sup>3</sup> This transformation combines and blurs various themes. We focus here on the following aspects, which are integral to the articles in this issue: the private and the public, tradition and innovation, the collective and the individual. The media play a crucial role in shaping all of these categories and their relationship. Finally, we consider the connections between marriage and religion, for a wedding is not *per se* religious. In the contemporary European context in particular, a wedding can take the form simply of the signing of a socio-legal contract. But nevertheless – or perhaps exactly therefore – marriages are often staged ritualistically and linked to religious symbols, worldviews, and norms.

## BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

A wedding is often carried out in public, with its audience able to testify to the act or, more specifically in some instances, to the vows made and the signing of the contract. But some dimensions of wedding practices take place in private spaces or in spaces to which access is restricted to chosen guests. We could call these spaces semi-private or, on the flip-side, semi-public, for public and private spaces are by no means dichotomic and strictly separated realms, as we will argue in the case of the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

Swantje Lingenberg considers the distinction between private and public as related to power relations and not an *a priori* attribute. Specific instances, as Lingenberg points out, can define specific distinctions between the public and the private.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the two realms are permeable, as the example of the royal wedding will show, in that the event was broadcast by diverse media formats, including photographs, television shows, radio programs, and smartphones. To speak of semi-private and semi-public spaces highlights the overlap of the two spheres. Media influence the boundaries of these spheres, for they shape the representation and reception practices not only of a royal wedding but also of ordinary people as they tie the knot in hope of a life-long relationship. Thus, for example, at not-royal weddings too, the wedding party gathers for pictures to be taken, the photographer needs to catch every important moment during the wedding day (fig. 2), and photograph books and video films are produced to remember the event. A whole profession, the wedding photogra-

3 Hirsch, 2008, 49–80. Edith Turner and Pamela R. Frese describe the rite of passage of a marriage as follows: “A rite of passage is a vehicle for moving an individual or a group of individuals from one way of being to another through a series of culturally recognized stages. A marriage ceremony moves the bride and groom from being unmarried to being husband and wife. Just as the definition of what marriage is will vary cross-culturally, so will the manner in which the union of marriage is created and recognized. The rite of passage may extend over a long period of time and include great finery and complex symbolism, or there may be no traditional ceremony at all, simply an action conducted in public view.” (Turner/Frese, 2005, 5726).

4 Lingenberg 2015, 176–178.



Fig. 2: The photographers need to catch every important moment during the wedding. Picture by Yves Müller, Zurich 2017.

pher, is founded on the desire to make this day unforgettable, even though for more than half the protagonists the contracts they seal come to an end before “death do them part”.

The television transmission of the royal wedding showed moments of the event taking place in (semi-)private and (semi-)public spaces. We might assume that the invited guests had privileged access to spaces that the spectators in the street could not enter. The picture of the crowds lining the streets proves, however, that such is not entirely the case. The onlookers are stretching out their arms with their smartphones in their hands to catch the moment when the wedding couple drives by in their coach (fig. 3). The smartphone had a dual role: in addition to taking and holding its own image of the famous couple, it also enabled the spectators to watch the television coverage of the wedding. The photograph taken with a smartphone is evidence that its owner has “met” the couple in person and in a clearly public space, that they occupied a single location at a single time. The ability to watch the transmission of the church service and the ceremony also enabled a privileged viewing of some moments, as we will show.



Fig. 3: On the right spectators are extending their arms, smartphones in hand, to catch the moment of the couple's appearance (BBC News, Royal Wedding, Live from Windsor, 19 May 2018, 00:45:56).<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 4: From a high angle, the camera shows the bride and the flower bearers carrying her veil. The view underlines the nature of her walk to the altar, in part unaccompanied, and the threshold between the two spaces occupied by the invited guests: the first part as she walks down the aisle seen by a broader audience, and thus a semi-public space, and the second part seen by members of the royal family, the clergy, the choir, and few chosen guests, and thus a semi-private space (BBC News, Royal Wedding, Live from Windsor, 19 May 2018, 00:04:20).<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 5: As the bride's father was absent, Prince Charles escorted Markle down the aisle and up to the altar, almost as he were granting her official access to this semi-private space of a most privileged family (BBC News, Royal Wedding, Live from Windsor, 19 May 2018, 00:04:45).<sup>7</sup>

The television coverage of the ceremony at St. George's Chapel enabled the viewing of semi-private spaces. The camera view provided privileged access to central moments of the ritual, for example when the bride entered the chapel by herself (fig. 4), when Prince Charles, her future father-in-law, escorted Markle from half way down the main aisle to the altar (fig. 5), or when vows were made during the ceremony within the church (fig. 6).

5 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPJ2\\_nqjNbs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPJ2_nqjNbs) [accessed 29 June 2018].

6 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPJ2\\_nqjNbs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPJ2_nqjNbs) [accessed 29 June 2018].

7 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPJ2\\_nqjNbs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPJ2_nqjNbs) [accessed 29 June 2018].



Fig. 6: The saying of the vows was filmed with medium close-ups of the couple and reverse-shots showing the bride or the groom in close-up (Washington Post, Watch Live: The Royal Wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, 19 May 2018, 08:22:07).<sup>8</sup>



Fig. 7: Prince Harry puts the ring on Markle's finger. Her right hand touches his left hand, as if she is calming him. The scene seems staged in its detail, rehearsed and perfectly performed (Washington Post, Watch Live: The Royal Wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, 19 May 2018, 08:24:12).



Fig. 8: One of the most anticipated moments of the wedding was the kiss of the newly married couple, not their first kiss but their first married kiss. The excitement around this tradition shows the performative power of the ritual and its customs (Washington Post, Watch Live: The Royal Wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, 19 May 2018, 08:52:12).



The exchange of rings, with bride and groom each putting a ring on the finger of the other, could only be seen by those in very advantaged positions within the church, and even then only the couple themselves could view the act as closely as the detail shot by the television coverage that caught this moment for its viewers. This perspective was in effect that of a third but invisible person within the space who could even see all the details of the bride and groom's hands (fig. 7). Additionally, when the newlywed couple presented themselves

<sup>8</sup> Fig. 6–8: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nbFfetIsks> [accessed 29 June 2018].

to the public invited to gather just outside the church and kissed each other (fig. 8), not even family members with front-row places within the church could see the episode from in front (part of the core royal family stood behind the couple). From amongst those actually present, only those invited to be immediately outside the church, many of them equipped with smartphones to photograph the special moment, could enjoy this public moment live.

The television coverage simultaneously disseminated this long-expected moment to people viewing their screens in the streets and at home. For once *they* were the privileged ones – a cellist entertained the guests in St. James’s Chapel until the bridal couple left the church area in their coach, greeting the people gathered in the streets. The nominally privileged guests in the church were unable to enjoy this moment, with no one daring to use a smartphone to watch the live transmission.

In the case of the wedding of Prince Harry and Markle, the media brought new complexity to the representation and reception of this ritual as well as to its production process. The public and private spaces overlapped, allowing a diversity of perspectives that generated and multiplied a complex narrative, which thereby became about more than just one single event in space and time. Lingenberg proposes that public and private spaces are defined by practices accomplished by people.<sup>9</sup> This example demonstrates that the media are part of such practices. In entering private spaces, media practices turn them into public spaces that are then in turn consumed in private spaces, for example from a screen at home or in the streets.

## BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION

The royal wedding of Markle and Prince Harry was received in various media that included television, internet journals, and blogs as an important and novel link between the tradition of the British royal family and an innovative integration of African American culture.<sup>10</sup> For example, the Right Reverend Michael B. Curry, who gave the sermon, quoted Martin Luther King Jr., and the Kingdom Gospel Choir, a gospel choir performed the song “Stand by me” (fig. 9), firstly released in 1961 by the American singer-songwriter Ben E. King. This royal wedding thus is a good example of the interaction of tradition and innovation: it was traditional in form but included creative, even unexpected, ritual aspects. This combination is increasingly common for today’s Western (understood culturally, not geographically) not-royal weddings. A research project undertaken by anthropologist Hilde Schäffler has shown that while contemporary weddings in

<sup>9</sup> Lingenberg 2015, 177.

<sup>10</sup> Even Wikipedia mentions this link; see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wedding\\_of\\_Prince\\_Harry\\_and\\_Meghan\\_Markle#Reactions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wedding_of_Prince_Harry_and_Meghan_Markle#Reactions) [accessed 11 July 2018].

Fig. 9: Kingdom Gospel Choir performs at the wedding of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry (PBS, News Hour, 21 May 2018, 00:38:50).<sup>11</sup>



Austria (and, we would argue, also in the rest of Europe) are designed by paid wedding planners as idealistic and individualistic rituals, the sequence that is followed in the preparation and the ritual itself is highly standardized, although open to individual adaptations.<sup>12</sup>

Tradition and innovation are manifoldly intertwined. Here we understand tradition as essentially something constructed and passed down from one generation to the next (the Latin *traditio* means transmission) and innovation as something thought of as new to a specific context. In defining tradition and innovation, we stress that the concepts are fluid. Such measurement of time is processual and messy: innovative elements can also be old, and what is at one point innovative can subsequently become traditional. One example of such change – to come back to weddings – is the white bridal gown. Before the 19th century wedding gowns for the rich were mostly colourful, those for the poorer often black (fig. 10). Both groups wore their Sunday best, clothes that were not worn only for the wedding.<sup>13</sup> The white bridal dress was made popular by Queen Victoria,<sup>14</sup> who wore a white-lace court dress at her wedding to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in 1840. That decision was widely debated by her contemporaries, and while not exceptional, it was unusual. Although the queen’s choice in bridal gown subsequently became fashionable, we still commonly find coloured and black wedding dresses worn up until the 1940s (and even later). Today a black bridal gown is seen as innovative and can become a topic for discussion.<sup>15</sup>

11 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j51O4lf232w> [accessed 29 June 2018].

12 Schäßler 2012, 71–101.

13 Beautiful examples of such dresses can be found in Wiswe 1990.

14 See Schäßler 2012, 75 (misleadingly Schäßler speaks of “Princess Victoria”, but Victoria was already queen by the time of her wedding; she reigned from 1837 until her death in 1901).

15 See, for example, a clip from the TV reality soap *Say Yes to the Dress* where the bride wants a black dress, but her mother hates it: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyKxxZeiU\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyKxxZeiU_w) [accessed 3 August 2018].



Fig. 10: Black bridal-gowns were normal in the 19th and early 20th centuries. We see here a rural wedding in Grisons, Switzerland, from the 1940s. The pastor walks in front, followed by the bride and groom with a flower girl, and then the guests. Private collection: Höpflinger.

We have observed in relation to the categorization of the private and the public that the media play a crucial role, and their role is also vital for the interaction of tradition and innovation. Traditions are formed through media communication, but at the same time media can make innovation possible, sometimes even defining something as innovative although it is not as novel as people might think. Again the white wedding dress is a good example: after Queen Victoria's wedding, fashion magazines (popular culture media) began to promote white bride-dresses, but it would be another 100 years before the white wedding gown was accepted all over Europe and in the USA.<sup>16</sup> Today TV series, films, or the internet tell their consumers that the coloured or black wedding dress is innovative, and yet it was common up until the 20th century.

## BETWEEN THE COLLECTIVE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Alongside this discussion of the categories of public and private and of tradition and innovation, we wish also to raise the issue of interaction between collective expectations and individual actions and worldviews. A wedding, even a royal

<sup>16</sup> For differences between the image of the ideal bride promoted by fashion magazines and the dresses of brides in photographs see Wiswe 1990.



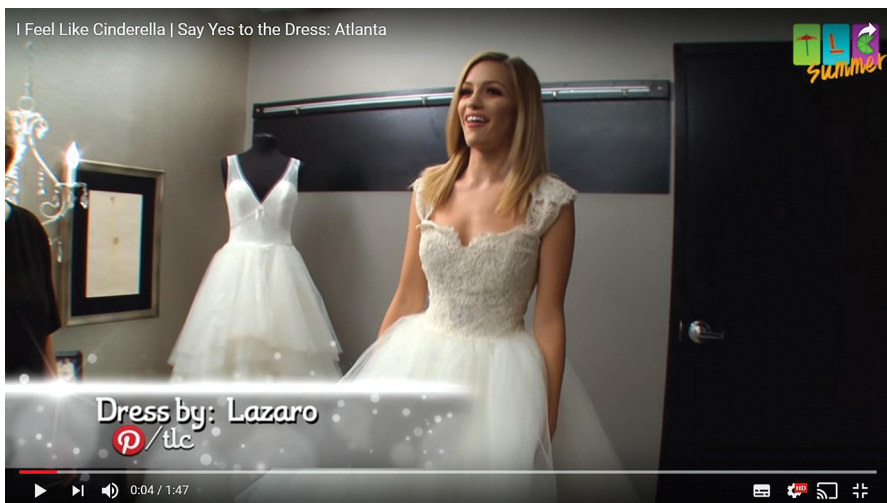


Fig. 11: "I feel like Cinderella" are the words (positively connoted – the reference is to Cinderella as a princess, not as a servant) of the bride on seeing herself in this wedding gown. From *SAY YES TO THE DRESS, Atlanta*, TLC, uploaded 3 August 2018.<sup>17</sup>

one, is a ritual in which two human beings, in this instance Prince Harry and Markle, are socially and symbolically joined together as individual persons. Weddings have a strong sense of the individual: commercials, films, TV series, and internet discussions tell us that a wedding is about two individuals, their hopes, their emotions, their wishes. A wedding should be the best day of their lives, with the perfection of the day often measured in terms of its material staging. For example, that the bridal-gown must be “perfect” for the individual who will wear it is the message of the US reality TV show *SAY YES TO THE DRESS* (fig. 11):<sup>18</sup> this TV format shows willing brides going to buy *their* wedding dresses, telling us their expectations of being a “princess” (here we encounter a connection to a royal wedding as the perfect ritual and to a royal life as a perfect way of being) for one day, and showing us their emotions when they find the “one and only” dress for them. Thereby we are presented with an implicit link between the “one and only” love and the “one and only” dress.

The wedding is personalized mostly through material media, so in the clothes, flowers, menu, cake, and location, for example. But the ritual action and the sequence of the ritual are often regulated according to the contemporary US-Euro-

17 *SAY YES TO THE DRESS*, youtube.com: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_dkXqq\\_cSI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_dkXqq_cSI) [accessed 9 August 2018]

18 This series has been streamed since 2007 on the television network TLC. Each episode is 22 minutes long and normally shows three brides, two looking for their perfect dresses and one at the fitting stage. The series *SAY YES TO THE DRESS CANADA* and *SAY YES TO THE DRESS UK* have followed.

pean context. They follow the idea of the “traditional wedding”, but this so-called tradition has mainly been formed by and communicated through media, especially since the 1950s. Its hallmarks include the assumption that the bride’s father will escort his daughter to the location where the wedding ceremony will take place, he will “give” her to the groom, a spoken element of the ritual will follow, often including vows, rings will be exchanged, music will be played. Eating and drinking are part of the ritual, usually after the ceremony just described, sometimes with music and dance incorporated. In the 1950s this form of wedding was globalized by media such as novels and television. Before the 1950s wedding rituals differed according to the wealth of the bridal pair, religious background, region, context (urban or rural), and circumstance (whether the bride was a virgin or a widow, for example).<sup>19</sup>

Weddings form an idea of the individual but only in light of collective expectations of how a wedding could and should be. Marriage ceremonies are collective events because more than two people are part of them, but they are also collective because they are associated with (and often based on) collective normative ideas of issues such as gender, hierarchy, sexuality, family, and rites of passage. Such collective norms are reproduced by individuals not only in rituals but also in language.

In addition to their functions in joining two persons in a socio-religious or economic contract, the wedding, the bride, and the groom can also become metaphors for collective ideas and norms. The connotations of the wedding metaphor are normally positive, mirroring values such as love, close connection, joy, happiness, even life’s purpose. Again, the media are crucial for the construction and transmission of these norms: the metaphors associated with marriage and weddings are media metaphors. They have been in place since antiquity, as we see in the examples of the story of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius Madaurensis’s *Metamorphoses / The Golden Ass* or in Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (“On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury”).

The private and the public, tradition and innovation, the collective and the individual are six categories that can be applied in analysing marriage rituals. They form a heptagon of perspectives, but they also merge into each other. The public is a collective space and tradition is based on collective norms, and weddings also sit between these categories: they are semi-private, semi-traditional, and semi-individual. Wedding rituals thus form a point of intersection at which basic elements of living together coincide. They can be analysed from different angles and perspectives and with a focus on different media. (Audio-)visual media, clothes, music, and texts, for example, all play significant roles in this complex communication process, as the contributions to this issue show.

19 See Caloy 1989 (for the role of the bride); Wiswe 1990 (for the change in bridal gowns); Cohen Grossman 2001 (for diversity in Jewish weddings).



Fig. 12: The religious setting of the royal wedding (PBS, News Hour, 21 May 2018, 00:47:18).<sup>20</sup>

## MARRIAGE AND RELIGION

As a last point in this introduction we want to reflect on the interrelation of marriage and religion, for this multi-layered link is the basis of our approach. A wedding is a social and legal contract between two individuals (and sometimes their families) that in various ways is linked to religion, sometimes more, as in the case of Harry and Meghan (fig. 12), and sometimes less. We note here different levels of interaction: ritual and semantic, emotional, and moral. Empirical observation of these etic-scientific categories shows that they are intertwined.

First, as noted above, weddings can be defined as rites of passage for they mark the individuals' leaving the group composed of singles and joining a new social group. This progression can be indicated by rituals symbolizing barriers that have to be passed or overcome together. For example, at a wedding in Switzerland in 2015 the couple encountered just such a symbolic barrier in the form of a bedsheet held by the two witnesses to the marriage and painted with a heart and their names. The bridal couple had to clip the heart with scissors and then climb through the hole in the sheet together.<sup>21</sup> This is a typical ritual symbolizing entry into a new social status.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j51O4lf232w> [accessed 29 June 2018].

<sup>21</sup> We asked the bride if we might include a picture of this ritual in this article (via Facebook on 8 August 2018), but she refused, explaining that she and her husband had not liked having such games at their wedding and that they did not want the public to see them. Her comment supports a thesis by Hilde Schäffler that proposes that traditional wedding customs and games marking the liminal status of the couple are not welcomed by contemporary couples. Such traditional elements are risky in the sense that they are unexpected (and not planned by the couple) and are perceived as disturbing the “perfect” structure of the wedding. See Schäffler 2012, 190–206.

The concept of the rite of passage was elaborated by Arnold van Gennep and published in 1909.<sup>22</sup> He posited, based on ethnographical material gathered from Switzerland to Madagascar, a comparative structure for rituals of social transition and rituals of separation, a phase of liminality, and integration into the new group. This theory was popularized through the work of Victor Turner in the 1960s and since then has often been used, but also criticized.<sup>23</sup> Ritual studies expert Ronald Grimes argues, for example, that the ritual structure elaborated by van Gennep is too static. Grimes proposes the concept of “ritualizing”, defined as “the process whereby ritual creativity is exercised”.<sup>24</sup> He places more emphasis than van Gennep on the fluidity of ritual. A wedding is, as we have seen, such a fluid rite of passage. It is both private and public, individual and collective, a commonplace event and something extraordinary and – as we argue – religious and secular. Even totally secular weddings are often linked through their ritual structure to religion. They are mostly more than simply the signing of a contract; they include something of a beginning, climax, and end, with music, addresses, vows, religious symbols such as rings that are exchanged, and expressions of “eternal” love. They often remained based on a ritual structure, and that structure is usually such that it connects them with current religious rituals. Linked to this ritual structure is the use of religious semantics in wedding rituals: religious rituals remain the common matrix for weddings, even secular ones: religious experts are asked to perform the ritual; religious symbols such as candles, crosses, and rings are included. Sometimes even a civil marriage ceremony is performed according to the outline of a Christian wedding, with something resembling a sermon given by the registrar and rings exchanged. Alternative religious worldviews can also play an important role on this semantic level, as we see in the example of the neopagan weddings with handfasting rituals that take place in Britain and the United States.<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, and in relation to the ritual and the semantic, weddings involve (or stage) extraordinary emotions. Media such as television, films, and the internet provide models for such emotional expression: the wedding day is staged as the “best day” in the life of bride and groom; (romantic) love is performed and sold as the most important thing in life. As a result something transcendental is involved. The love performed at a wedding is not common or ordinary. The ritual communicates love not as a hormonal condition but as something supernatural, with religious metaphors such as “immortal or eternal love”, “love of the soul”, “greatest happiness of life” used to express the special character of the moment and of the ritual.

22 Van Gennep 1975.

23 See Turner 1969; Houseman/Severi 1998, 170.

24 Grimes 1995, 60.

25 See, from an emic perspective, Kaldera/Schwartzstein 2003.



Thirdly, religion remains the driving factor for the moral character of weddings: the whiteness of the dress symbolizing purity (and virginity), the rings symbolizing eternity, the vows before a powerful entity (a god or a state), the meaningful flowers, for example, are all visual and semantic aspects of this moral concern. Additionally, the worldview associated with marriage continues to be religiously affected: the ideal is to remain (sexually and morally) true to one's partner. Infidelity, like lack of affection, is a reason for the couple to decouple. The success of the married couple is measured against the normative concept of the Holy Family, often as communicated by the media: the wedding is an emotional ritual on the path to becoming a similarly holy family.<sup>26</sup>

A final summary of these thoughts: we argue that weddings are related to religion on various levels, with some connections more apparent than others. Media play an important role in forming and communicating these connections: in the cultural West, "we" have an understanding of the wedding event and the nature of the holy family that comes from novels, images, and films. We want to see the bride in white because brides on television and in films wear white. We know that we have to be true to our partner because media, from advertisements to novels, tell us that such is our responsibility. We adopt the staging of the marriage ritual and have an idea of how a "real" or "good" wedding ritual (both are normative categories) might look from broadcast events such as the wedding of Prince Harry and Markle, but also from fictitious weddings portrayed in movies and on the internet.

## THE ARTICLES IN THE CURRENT ISSUE

The current issue starts with two articles on audio-visual media. The first contribution focusses on classical Hollywood cinema and the second discusses the American television series *GREY'S ANATOMY* (US, ABC, 2005–). Adopting a philosophical approach, Toufic El-Khoury shows how the "comedy of remarriage", a term Stanley Cavell assigned in his study of classical Hollywood comedies, belongs to a specific school of thought. In his article "Marriage and its Representations in Classical Hollywood Comedy (1934–1945). Stanley Cavell, the Concept of Skepticism and Kierkegaard's Legacy", he discusses the black-and-white Hollywood feature film *THE AWFUL TRUTH* (Leo McCarey, US 1937) as a case study that elucidates inconsistencies in the concepts of marriage and love. In their article "Anatomy of a Wedding: Examining Religiosity, Feminism, and Weddings in *GREY'S ANATOMY*", Sharon Lauricella and Hannah M. Scott examine the diversity of wedding practices in that series. They identify a tension in the program's portrayal of traditional heterosexual weddings and its progressive inclusion of

26 For the concept of the Holy Family and the role of the media see Fritz 2018.

a lesbian ceremony. These depictions reflect the challenges of navigating expectations and personal objectives associated with performing as a woman in contemporary culture. Next, a historical approach to wedding practices analyses the *charivari*, a noisy and, for the couple who are to marry, offensive procession in the period from the mid-18th to mid-19th century in the region of Bern in Switzerland. In “Charivari or the Historicising of a Question. The Irrelevance of Romantic Love for the Audio-Visual Performance of Marriage in Bern in the 18th and 19th Centuries”, Arno Haldemann interprets this parade as in effect an audio-visual and violent expression against nonconformist marriages in line with collective attitudes and local custom.

Weddings are performed as ritual, but they can also be used as strong religious metaphors. In his article “Bridal Mysticism, Virtual Marriage and Masculinity in the Moravian Hymnbook *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch*”, Benedikt Bauer explores marriage as a metaphor for mystical piety in the Moravian Church. With a gender-focused analysis of the Moravian hymnbook, he discusses lyrical-level constructions of masculinity in relation to bridal mysticism, heteronormative structures, and a specific religious worldview.

In the open section Vuk Uskokovic’s essay shows how ways of representation that break with convention allow for new ways of thinking, using as his model the films of New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard. In a second step his deliberations in *Revisiting the Relevance of Conceptualism of Godard’s Film* are transferred to academic language and publication conventions in general. The author postulates that Godard’s intuitive practices and his deconstruction of reigning standards could be applied to science as well. Godard’s artistic work challenged the canon; according to Uskokovic such a strategy could be enriching in science too.

The contribution to the open section has parallels with the discussion of wedding practices. Conventions are prevalent in the ritual of the wedding, often deeply rooted in religious tradition as it affects gender, clothing, music, or the ritual itself. These conventions can be repeated, contested, transgressed, and transformed, which opens up a broad, challenging, and multi-faceted field of study.

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