Fashioning the fashion princess: mediation—transformation—stardom

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Abstract
Is she looking as royal as can be? Dressing the part of a princess? Popular media texts, such as magazines completely devoted to celebrity matters, dealing with reports on who is wearing what at which occasion, provide the empirical outset for this textual study on the representations of the Scandinavian princesses of today: Mary (Denmark), Mette-Marit (Norway), Victoria (Sweden) and Madeleine (Sweden). In this article the princesses are, on a theoretical level, considered stars with their own images, images constructed in a similar way as film stars, with fashion and appearance as the focal point. In popular media texts, such as the Swedish woman’s magazine Svensk Damtidning, the styles of the princesses are scrutinised, compared and evaluated. These mappings are in this way further examined, and the topics surrounding the representations are surveyed. The themes selected for supplementary examination are personal style and Cinderella narrative, as they emerge as intimately interrelated with fashion. The epithet princess, in the sense “what a princess ought to look like”, is given in terms of aestheticised appearance: body, fashion and personal style, is thus discussed and theorised throughout the article. Hence, the purpose of this article is to examine the roll of dress and the matter of appearance concerning the representations of the Scandinavian princesses, relating to the themes of style and consumption, as well as the transformation narratives. How are these royal styles constructed, on a designer level as well on a thematic level?

Keywords: fashion; style; royals; film stars; princesses; Cinderella; magazines; popular culture

Princess Ann: At midnight, I’ll turn into a pumpkin and drive away in my glass slipper.
Joe Bradley: And that will be the end of the fairytale.

The quote is from the film Roman Holiday (William Wyler, 1953), starring Audrey Hepburn as princess Ann and Gregory Peck as the journalist Joe Bradley. The film further alludes to the...
well-known narrative of Cinderella, and more specifically to the Walt Disney film production from 1950. The movie depicts princess Ann, who is on a widely publicised tour visiting a number of European capitals. One night when she is in Rome she sneaks out to experience the city on her own. She meets Bradley and they become friends. The next day she returns to her country’s embassy and her royal duties and responsibilities. *Roman Holiday* became a box-office success, and was also critically acclaimed not least for the actors’ achievements, the costume design and the screenplay.1 The movie also made an impact on the world of fashion due to Edith Head’s costume designs for the new, rising film star Audrey Hepburn.

In *Roman Holiday*, princess Ann is perceived virtually as a film star. She has supporters and admirers, and photographers in pursuit, trying to catch sight of her. According to Richard Dyer,2 when viewing the star phenomena in the twentieth century as an epithet assigned to a person who is not only distinguished for his or her appearances in films, but also for his or her personal life, the understanding of stardom is interrelated with mediation, the circulation of information in different media texts.3 Basically, owing to mediation, information on varying topics concerning the actor—for instance fashion—are circulated and stated, and in a way, mediation creates and reinforces the notion of stardom. In the case of *Roman Holiday*, blurring representations and understandings of Audrey Hepburn as person with representations and understandings of the movie character of Princess Ann, all contribute to the construction of the pseudo-universe of stardom.

From the point of departure of mediation and stardom, this article considers the representations of the Scandinavian princesses of today in relation to fashion, and with a particular focus on Crown Princess Mary of Denmark. The objective is twofold. On a theoretical level, a translation of a star studies approach, familiar from film studies and the works of Richard Dyer and Jackie Stacey, is employed.4 The article explores and amplifies this approach in order to study contemporary royal women as stars, and as such, mediated stardom constitutes the framework. Different media texts, such as articles in magazines, newspapers and on Internet sites, primarily from the Swedish women’s magazine *Svensk Damtidning*5 provide the empirical base for a textual cross reading.6 Since Internet sites make up an important part, both media specificity and period specificity is invoked, as the flow of information is transitory and changes over time.7 This article will then map out the topics surrounding the representations of royal women in these media texts, and the themes personal style and Cinderella narrative will be selected for further examination, as they emerge as intimately interrelated with fashion. Fashion is, in line with Patrizia Calefato, understood as an open system for semiotic reading, and the word style, also pointed out by Calefato, presents a semiotic status, as it is a system of intentional signs.8 Style is thus a construction, a construction with aesthetical ends and with value-laden meanings subjected to various ideals and norms, do’s and don’ts. Style as combinations of signs in the formation of aesthetics, is understood and examined as a connected mode of expression, through the composition of dress and accessories, and as textually represented in magazines, newspapers and on Internet sites.9 The Cinderella narrative refers to the fairytale, embodying a mythical component of transformation. The narrative centres on a young woman living in unfortunate circumstances or whose character traits and competences are neglected or unrecognised, and who unexpectedly receives success and recognition.10 As the Cinderella narrative is well appropriated in popular culture, usages in both literature and film are taken into account. The discussion on transformation further centres on the role of dress and the matter of appearance, loosely following Sarah Street’s notion, viewing dress as textures of transformation.11 Thus, in the same way as costume and accessories are used as means, as readable codes, for signifying and interpreting identities in fiction films, representations of the princesses’ clothing in the different media texts are considered as creating a similar readable structure. In a sense, I would suggest, the media text compiled here creates a kind of “soap opera”, a narrative in itself, open to different readings.

**LEGACIES OF STARDOM**

Two fashion icons of the latter part of the twentieth century are specifically related to monarchy: Grace Kelly and Lady Diana Spencer.12
Grace Kelly is intimately associated with Dior’s “New Look”, and as a former model that became one of the most popular Hollywood film stars in the 1950s. She ended up marrying Prince Rainier of Monaco in 1956 and leaving Hollywood with a new role to play. Lady Diana Spencer, or Princess Diana, became a fashion icon during the 1980s. When marrying Charles, Prince of Wales, in 1981, her wedding dress designed by Elizabeth and David Emanuel set the trend for the decade: the meringue style. The similarities between Grace and Diana did not end with their fashion credits. Their personal lives: fairytale weddings, unhappy marriages and tragic accidents were all aspects that hit the headlines and received extensive media coverage worldwide.

The scrutiny of the lives of contemporary royal women have not declined since the Grace and Diana eras, instead they enjoy the same celebrity status as film stars, holding a position as national celebrities engaging paparazzi and are in continual recipients of media coverage: in magazines, newspapers and on Internet sites alike. Film stardom, as mentioned earlier, and as defined by Dyer, is obtained when a screen actor’s private life becomes a public matter and the understanding of the fictional performance is blurred with knowledge of that private persona. Even if Dyer’s conception of stardom is used in the context of popular narrative film, it is more loosely applied today, in the context of popular culture, for describing singers, athletes, models and soap actors as well as film actors. Thus, stardom is not only reserved solely for film stars, but it comprises people from different fields. The joining link is the media-based move from the arena of profession/expertise to another, an arena which is centring rather on personality and the private life for the dramatisation of beliefs of who/what that person really is. In writing: “Princess Diana entered into the realm of stardom when knowledge of her unhappy private life could act as a counter to the glamorous public ‘work’.” Christine Geraghty points to the heavy media coverage following Diana’s every step but she also discursively places members of royal families in the celebrity realm of popular culture alongside Victoria Beckham and Paris Hilton. Christine Gledhill calls additional attention to the idea, and asserts that a star can be regarded as “an emblem of national celebrity, founded on the body, fashion and personal style”, which indicates a further emphasis on image. In a sense, images visually refer to style: as the conscious construction of signs; hairdo, make-up, and attire, result in a particular look. A look that is mediated, and further, connected to certain character traits. Therefore when viewing the royal princesses as stars with their own images in Dyer’s terminology—as unique personalities with different styles being constructed in a similar way as the film stars’ images—the continuous availability of information and rumours in newspapers and magazines, on television and the Internet, contribute to build and narrate that star persona. The legacy of fiction is thus still valuable, not to say crucial, since the star image is just that: a well-narrated and constructed persona.

The construction and narration of image is consequently dependent on gossip; the veracity is of secondary importance; instead, it is the continual circulation in different media that is a sine qua non. As an example, Svensk Damtidning, as a media site, has, since the 1970s predominantly been devoted to celebrity matters, and more specifically to anything that has to do with the European royal families. An editorial could say, commenting on the new direction of the magazine in 1992: “We want to be like a delicate box of chocolates, where you can choose your favourites and treats.” As such, they are figuratively transforming crude gossip to confectionery luxury, and at the same time, star personae are narrated and reinforced. When viewing the magazine’s content, the reports on who is seeing/marrying/cheating on/divorcing whom, constitute the main body of text. Although, fashion has from time to time hit as the hottest topic, especially when combined with Charlotte (Monaco) Letizia (Spain), Madeleine (Sweden), Marie-Chantal (Greece), Mary (Denmark), Máxima (Holland), Mette-Marit (Norway) or Victoria (Sweden). It is not, however, fashion per se that is the centre of attention in these reports, it is the style: the way in which the women are dressed at parties, weddings and premières that is important. In other words: how well they embody the epithet princess in the sense “what a princess ought to look like” in terms of aestheticised appearance: body, fashion and personal style.
Personal style is one of the most prominent themes in the various media texts examined spotlighting the European princesses, and these style reports generate a particular notion of fashion: fashion as a royal duty. As these women are representing themselves and the royal families, while (most of the time) being considered as popular and well thought of symbols for each respective country, they are expected to look right for every occasion and maintain a public persona. Referring to the media reception, the verdicts announced in tabloids, magazines and on blog spots, success appears to in an exceptional extent measured according to style. In the public (media) eye there is no room for fashion bloopers. On Svensk Damtidning’s website there is a particular entry called “Royal blogs”, where the princesses’ appearances at royal functions are commented on and the outfits are accordingly evaluated. For instance Victoria’s trip to India (autumn 2008) was considered a triumph as she managed to look great at every event during the stay, whereas Mette-Marit’s visit to Ireland (autumn 2008) was a disaster, as her appearance was completely wrong. It was especially Mette-Marit’s evening dress that was heavily criticised, and was described as a curtain-like frock. In a similar way to Svensk Damtidning, Australian newspapers commented on Mary’s new role as a princess as a matter of fashion, and concluded that clothes and style became an important element of her work—in performing her duties. As such, the connections between the notion of duty and the significance of appearance are repeatedly reinforced.

In Svensk Damtidning the fashion topic is further subdivided into styles, and the evaluations of personal style become a matter of great detail and mapping. For instance, Mary is considered the most stylish and well dressed of the Scandinavian princesses, with full control over her own appearance. The texts explain that Mary’s look—which they consider as very elegant—is created by Danish designers such as Malene Birger and Day Birger et Mikkelsen, and international houses such as Chanel, Prada and Hugo Boss. Great attention is paid to detail as well, as they map out the colour palette as put together to suite Mary’s complexion, hair and eye colour; a scale of lilac, nougat and oyster white composes the day-wear wardrobe, but for evening-wear red is often the colour of choice. In comparison with Mary’s success as becoming a national fashion icon, the Scandinavian princesses Victoria, Madeleine and Mette-Marit are considered as not quite there yet. According to Svensk Damtidning, Mette-Marit might well be placed next to Mary in her appreciation of fashion, but she occasionally commits some faux pas style wise. Mette-Marit’s signature look accentuates the neckline, as turtlenecks and buttoned up outfits are recurring. In the words of Svensk Damtidning, Mette-Marit’s expensive and sober look created by garments from Fendi, Prada and Valentino, caused Norwegian journalists to appoint her “Norway’s Grace Kelly”. One can also read that Victoria never really has been interested in fashion until recently, unlike her sister Madeleine who has always been conscious about fashion and appearance. It is, however, settled that Victoria prefers Swedish designers like Lars Wallin and Pär Engsheden for evenings, and Max Mara and Day Birger et Mikkelsen for day-wear. Her style is described as representative, stylish and strict, all in the scale of bright colours to match her light complexion, her brown hair and eyes. Her evening gowns have consequently a classic cut and are modestly low-necked, which, according to Svensk Damtidning, is a style very much suitable for a crown princess. Madeleine, on the contrary, is understood to favour designs by Gucci and Missoni, and in Svensk Damtidning Madeleine’s preference for pastel colours is also acknowledged. It is stated that it is a colour scale set to correspond to her complexion, blond hair and blue eyes. They further point out that Madeleine, in contrast to her sister, has an all-year-round tan and chooses dresses cut to show more skin and with low décolletage—like the gown she co-designed with Pär Engsheden and wore at the Nobel Prize ceremony in 2002.

Not only the Scandinavian princesses’ but also all the European princesses’ styles are repeatedly scrutinised, evaluated and compared. For instance, the Grace Kelly legacy is further explored, and is regarded as in a straight line being descended to Charlotte Casiragli, daughter of Caroline of Monaco and hence Grace Kelly’s granddaughter. In Svensk Damtidning Kelly is identified as Charlotte’s fashion icon, but
Charlotte’s way of dressing is also compared with and associated to her mother Caroline’s look, both of them being “CC-girls”; that is, favouring the Coco Chanel style.\(^{31}\) Máxima, Crown Princess of Holland, is found to fully apply a Chanel preference, and her style is described as very sophisticated, with the sole exception of her weakness for crazy hats.\(^{32}\) These exhaustive descriptions mediated by *Svensk Damtidning* draw attention to the construction of personal style itself; that every component is carefully chosen, and as such the styles can be tracked down in its fragments.

These mediated mappings of the princesses’ styles, the locating of attires, also affirm a procedure similar to the practice of constructing a personal style for film stars: creating an image through fashion, hair and make-up, as well as through the mediated texts and photos relating to the individual in question.\(^{33}\) This practice, however, is dependent on expertise, and is to a great extent the work of stylists. For instance, when *Svensk Damtidning* continues the image making and the story of Mary’s fashion sense, they reveal that Mary, in order to plan her look and to avoid fashion mistakes, meets with her stylist Anja Camilla Alajdi every Monday for arranging the forthcoming week’s outfits; combinations of clothing, jewellery, handbags, gloves and shoes.\(^{34}\) Moreover, it is stated that these meetings also are set to minimise repeating combinations since Mary is frequently photographed and these photos reoccur in different media contexts,\(^{35}\) implying that wearing the same garment twice at public events is a big “fashion no-no” within the framework of royal style.\(^{36}\) Since the princesses’ styles are evaluated based on the looks that are displayed in the media, at all times appearing in something new does, in terms of being a royal fashion icon, translate to always having to wear something new but with every garment reinforcing the same personal style. Mary is considered to have accomplished this in a short period of time, in other words, successfully composing a style that is diverse enough but yet coherent, and which seems to appeal to both her supporters and to fashion people.\(^{37}\) It is, however, a practice intended to give an impression of seamlessness, designed to disguise the work of the stylist, and with the actual amount spent on fashion concealed. But the veil is thin.

In many of the media texts the amount of money spent on designer outfits by these princesses is a spectacular, not to say a notorious, matter. Conspicuous consumption, and the connotations of spending as a female trait of excess and irresponsibility, is nevertheless very much applicable to princesses as well as to every-day women.\(^{38}\) In the summer of 2007 Mary’s devotion to shoes hit the Danish headlines. Media outlets in Sweden, for example *Expressen*, picked up the news.\(^{39}\) According to *Expressen* and the referred Danish magazines, Mary bought designer shoes for more than 60,000 DKK (8,000 Euros) within an hour. Her wardrobe is said to contain around 1,000 pairs of shoes, and Danish journalists talked about her heading for Imelda Marcos’ record of 1,220 pairs. Mary’s stylist, however, moderated the numbers to a 100 pair.\(^{40}\) The implication of the perceived impeccable and much written about royal looks is that it must remain a secret how much the lovely Manolo Blahnik shoes cost. In the case of Mary the paradox is continuous; she is considered the best-dressed princess, a fashion icon, and as royal as can be, provided that the construction of style is not unveiled in figures.\(^{41}\) Her celebrity status and star persona does, however, increase with the reports on every new pair of Christian Louboutins added to the wardrobe.

These detailed and time consuming fashion mappings and evaluations in *Svensk Damtidning* and other similar media texts—stating favourite designers, listing shoe brands, and estimating fashion accounts—emerge as seeking to present fashion luxury as a noble treat from that box of chocolates mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, however distinct these princesses’ styles are made to appear in the mappings, they are all fetched from the hearts of the prestigious French and Italian fashion houses, and from time to time, and to different degrees, supplemented with national fashion design. The point is, the garments are acquired from the same places, but in the hands of the princesses and their stylists they are put together to create different looks, corresponding to each woman’s outlined coherent style. In a sense, the construction of a distinctive style that is supposed to linger over time, contradict the usual concepts of fashion as ephemeral, and, as pointed out by Elizabeth Wilson, as defined by change-ability.\(^{42}\) Thus, it is not fashion per se that is at stake here. Instead, a distinct and uniform style...
that defies the ephemeral, emphasise the wearer. The notion of obtaining a royal, and personal style thus seem to be defined by the wearer, overshadowing the work of the stylists; and Mary’s style is therefore ‘royal’ in the sense that she is a member of the Danish royal family, and ‘personal’ in the sense that there is coherence in designs, colours and accessories. Theoretically these fashion mappings contribute, to a great extent, to both classifying and estimating the princesses’ personal styles, and reinforcing and constructing their public personae, projecting a sense of identity through fashion. The mediation of appearances taken by itself gives the prerequisites: pointing to style as duty as determined through the camera eye, and success in the occupation by looking right at every occasion. The verdicts concerning body, fashion and personal style that are handed out through different media texts, emphasise, I would argue, the media reception as the third party in doing royal style: through the attribution.

**THE FAIRYTALE CONNECTION**

Another frequently occurring theme in these media texts, as an ongoing dramatisation practice, re-narrates the well-known story about the young woman of the people who falls in love with a prince. The continuous repetition of this theme establishes a fairytale connection, primarily to the story of Cinderella. The Cinderella theme of obtaining a royal title by marriage, familiar from the Disney production, is, as mentioned earlier, evident with regard to the iconic Grace and Diana, starlet Mary, and maybe more so in the case of Mette-Marit with her waitress background. This narrative strategy is, however, explicitly constructed along gender lines echoing nineteenth century female ideals of passiveness, for instance: “Young girls only dream about a handsome prince riding into their lives to sweep them off their feet”, as one Australian journalist commented on the forthcoming royal wedding between Mary and Frederik. She continues: “But for Tasmanian real estate agent Mary Donaldson, that fantasy will become reality this month when she weds Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark—and as the fairytales have it—lives happily ever after”.

However, the Cinderella narrative seems to require not only a handsome prince to fall in love with, but furthermore, an almost magical transformation is acquired. In the media texts, the transformation into a princess occurs equally through codes of dress and body ideals, as presented and exemplified in the above article, in which Mary is described as bright and sporty, but it is emphasised that “she was an awkward-looking teenager, with fizzy hair and a chunky figure—hardly the vision of beauty likely to attract the ardent of a globetrotting prince”. The reaffirmation and concretisation of the male gaze premise, by the emphasis on binary oppositions, brings on ideas of today’s beauty ideals; symmetrical facial features, slender figure and shiny hair. Mary, more or less described as mousy in the article, appears to be far from this ideal, but nevertheless fits neatly in to the Cinderella theme and notions on transformation and female rites of passage. The alteration of the body emerges as one mandatory aspect of the idea of transformation, and in the case of Mary, Svensk Damtidning pays attention to her loss of weight, pointing out that she had lost 15 kg (33 lb) since the move to Denmark, and her new life as a princess begun. By underlining Mary’s new, transformed, and slender body as a realisation, an outward, bodily feature of the notion of what a princess ought to look like is created and confirmed.

Still, the narration of Mary’s story goes further, pointing to another aspect of the Cinderella theme: the importance of inner virtues. In the article mentioned above the story continues: “But Frederik is not any prince. The Crown Prince of Denmark harks from the land of Hans Christian Andersen, where mermaids capture the hearts of humans and ugly ducklings turn into beautiful swans. If anyone was equipped to spot Mary’s charm, it was he”. The ugly duckling comparison is completed when adding Mary’s inner virtues, her natural friendliness and down-to-earth manner, to the list of character traits. The emphasis on charm and inner virtues, as the rewarding traits in the end, connect to, and are reminiscent of, not only Cinderella, but to the main female characters in for instance a Jane Austen novel. Austen used mainly females as main characters in her writings, and dealt with themes like the difference between appearance and reality: between the deceptiveness of surface and the acknowledgement of inner virtues. In the classic novels, like Jane Austen’s, the girl who
is Cinderella material is a good girl with wit, but in order to be recognised, and fully noticed, an additional eye-opener referring to visual appearance and style seems to be needed.

Recognition as a correlation between surface appearance and inner virtues, as strong motives in female rites of passage narratives, is in the twentieth century reoccurring in popular film productions such as the classic _Sabrina_ (Billy Wilder, 1954) starring Audrey Hepburn. In _Sabrina_ and similar movies the fairytale connection is further visually and explicitly established through fashion. In _Sabrina_, the Cinderella narrative centres on Sabrina Fairchild (Audrey Hepburn), as a shy and awkward looking girl hopelessly in love with one of her employers. As no one notices her she decides to move to Paris only to return as a confident and sophisticated woman dressed in French high fashion. The duckling-to-swan transformation occurs through the textures of dress, with the post-Parisian wardrobe made by couture designer Hubert de Givenchy. In _Sabrina_, self-confidence as well as being seen for who you are, is linked to fashion know-how and a nice looking wardrobe: correlating surface appearance and inner virtues.

The same fashion theme and rite of passage as in _Sabrina_ is visible in later popular Cinderella productions such as _Pretty Woman_ (Garry Marshall, 1990) and _Maid in Manhattan_ (Wayne Wang, 2004). In these films, the inner virtues of the female protagonists are visualised through external beauty, and in each case the transformation from unseen to seen can be pinned down to a particular dress—for Vivian Ward (Julia Roberts) in _Pretty Woman_ it is a red meringue evening dress similar to the ones Diana wore in the 1980s; and for Marisa Ventura (Jennifer Lopez) in _Maid in Manhattan_ it is a high fashion beige, draped strapless gown. In these narratives, fashion works as textures of transformation, as an eye-opener for the people around them, as prejudice and class issues overshadow their previous opinions. As the true nature of the women is visualised through dress, an outward transformation for letting the person inside shine through and become fully appreciated is applied.

This filmic fashion transformation as a narrative seems to have found its way out of the frame and into other popular media contexts. A fashion transformation similar to those of the film characters mentioned earlier might well be attributed to Mary; and this happened in _Vogue_. The 2004 December issue of Australian _Vogue_ featured Mary dressed in Chanel and Prada; both as cover girl and in an extensive fashion spread. Australian newspapers reported: “The _Vogue_ cover marked the culmination of an amazing transformation, which made an anonymous, laid-back Australian career woman the Crown Princess of Denmark and an international style icon.” The outfit that contributed to this final transformation was the purple Hugo Boss satin silk dress. The dress served as a narrative mean for externalising her true nature: as a princess. The _Vogue_ issue thus emphasises the _Sabrina_-shift from unseen to seen in a very textural, material sense.

The storytelling, the Cinderella narrative applied in these popular media texts, I would argue, demands the transformation: a transformation that does not break off when the clock strikes 12. In the fiction film this transformation theme works in converging the outer and inner character traits: with self-confidence strengthened, health restored and looks improved, wit and true nature become noted and fully appreciated, and in addition, the aspirations of, for instance, emancipation and romance are realised in the end. In the media texts examined, this narrative is further recycled and applied in order to make the life of Mary in particular fit into a fairytale: so, to become the princess she is at heart she needs to appear like a princess. Thus, her semi-ordinary background is used to her advantage, it is narrated and modified; her bodily and stylish transformation is highlighted, thereupon creating and attributing her the most princess-like of all the Scandinavian princesses.

**CONCLUSIONS IN STYLE**

Once upon a time in a land maybe not that far away the legacy of stardom as interrelated with mediation—travelling from Hollywood studios to Scandinavian royal castles—appears to be continual. Stardom, as dependent on gossip, outlines the private life as a public matter, manifesting itself in different media texts, and, in the words of _Svensk Damtidning_, present the doings of the Scandinavian princesses as treats from a delicate box of chocolates.
Fashion, as one such praline, receives a lot of media attention; and in *Svensk Damtidning* and similar texts, the princesses’ favourite designers and shoe brands are mapped out, and styles are continually estimated. From time to time success in the occupation of a princess is in fact narrated as something of a fashion issue: highlighting the importance of managing to look right at every occasion. Nevertheless, the display and the mediation of the princesses’ styles show that these styles are not necessarily in accordance with the latest trends or the popular fashion at work in society. The styles represented by the princesses are, as illustrated, constructed along the lines of duty and expectations in order to seem uniform. The styles created stay more or less intact over time, and as such they could be considered as signatures significant to hold on to. In the sense of preserving a style, a narrow royal fashion discourse is created, completely contradicting the usual concepts of fashion as ephemeral. The coherent styles of the princesses created by garments from prestigious fashion houses, and occasionally supplemented with attires by acknowledged national fashion designers, emerge as sovereign; not being as much outside fashion as could be considered as signatures significant to hold on to. In the sense of preserving a style, a narrow royal fashion discourse is created, completely contradicting the usual concepts of fashion as ephemeral. The coherent styles of the princesses created by garments from prestigious fashion houses, and occasionally supplemented with attires by acknowledged national fashion designers, emerge as sovereign; not being as much outside fashion as above fashion flux, when described as representing some extraordinariness belonging to the fairy-tale label of the “Princess identity” as an embodied quality expressed through dress. This extraordinariness, fictional as it is, relies on nostalgia and romantic expectations, personified by the images of Grace and Diana.

In the media texts examined, as in the opening filmic example of *Roman Holiday*, the fictionalisation of the life of a princess is caught up in a web of themes regarding not only fashion and duty, but romantic Cinderella imagery as well. The transformation narrative, featuring Cinderella and familiar from popular films like *Sabrina*, is a recurrent component in the storytelling practice. The Cinderella narrative is repeatedly recycled; thus, facts are modified and truths are invented, all in order to fit the preferred story of the woman of the people who falls in love with a prince and wins his heart. In addition, the depictions emphasise biographies, implying that there is more at stake than dresses to make up the princesses’ styles—pointing to questions of character traits, giving prominence to appearance in its dual sense: as “look” and as “public image”. In order to make this theme work, the women in question have to have at least a semi-ordinary background, an independent career, compassion as a character trait—and of course a winning personality. All these aspects are supporting the Cinderella narrative and are accumulating to create the notion that she was meant for something else. In terms of media attribution, and with reference to both Grace and Diana, the epithet princess, in the labelling of what a princess out to look like, thus seems to be more valid for a woman marrying into a royal family, than being born into—related by blood to—that very family. In that sense, the narrative is the superior element, and Mary fits into and embodies this narrative perfectly. With reference to well-known appropriations in popular culture, such as Disney, the Cinderella narrative visually assumes dresses as agents, as textures of transformation; the style of dressing give rise to connotations and are semiotically readable for telling the princess story.

As I have illustrated, the storytelling practice blurs notions of fiction and reality, and more than anything else, narrate a preferred story, leaving a complex set of conceptions behind. The meanings of appearance, which emerge from the texts, deal with visibility thematically: through a romantic imagery of Cinderella: being seen for who you are, correlating inner virtues with surface appearance, and through conspicuous consumption that is attracting attention. Thus, the inconsistency of the fairytale composition is brought out by the very component of consumption, the shopping spree in relation to fashion, as it reveals the seamlessness of the style as arranged, as a carefully constructed identity. In that sense, the story of the shoe-crazed princess has come a long way from romantic imagery and Cinderella’s glass slippers. The contradiction between discourses—romantic princess imagery and the construction of a royal look through consumption—is embodied and personified by Crown Princess Mary as star, and generates the notion that the twenty-first century Cinderella knows her assets, and how to spend her money—glass slippers or not.

**Notes**

1. The Academy Awards 1954: Best Actress (Audrey Hepburn), Best Costume Design (Edith Head), Best Writing—Motion Picture Story (Dalton...
Trumbo/Ian McLellan Hunter). BAFTA Awards 1954: Best Actress (Audrey Hepburn). Golden Globs 1954: Best Motion Picture Actress (Audrey Hepburn).

2. Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI Publishing, 1998 (1979)), 35.

3. Nevertheless, stepping back in time entering the world of candles and quills instead of flashlights and blogs, renown—which might be compared to stardom—was connected to for instance royalties, opera singers, writers, and explorers, as they were well-known, talked-about public figures with reputation. See for example: Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010). See also for example: John Stokes et al. *Bernhards, Terry, Duse: The Actress in Her Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and Bertil Nolin, ‘Stjärnorna föds: Om stjärnkultur och kvinnlig konstnärsroll i det tidiga 1800-talets teater”, in *Litteratur och Kjön i Norden*, ed. Helga Kress (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafráðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 1996).

4. Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies; Film Stars and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1987); Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing; Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1994).

5. *Svensk Damtidning* was founded in 1889, and is one of the oldest women’s magazines in Sweden still in course of publication. The magazine’s main focus is on the way of life of the European royal families, and the magazine further aims to be first with the latest “news” concerning this subject. What is considered “news” is then based on both rumours and facts, and what is what is sometimes vague and difficult to verify. The point is that the way of life of the European royal families is regarded as news, and is published as such, which makes the material media specific, and, in this article it is treated as such. The magazine is further available in the regular paper format, and in a modified version on their internet homepage: www.svenskdam.se. This homepage also contains expanded articles and different blogs, as well as the latest news—all with continual updates.

In this article, the bulk of empirical material from *Svensk Damtidning* is drawn from the homepage. Since the page is in constant change, as a result of the updating practice, the stream of information is as such transitory as well as it is media specific. The material applied in this article is thus a piece of text from a particular time period, theorized and contextualized: and put in relation to other media texts focusing on similar topics.

6. The interdisciplinary—as well as intermedial—approach is thus a deliberate choice, and applied in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the subject matter in a cultural context.

7. By using fickle empirical material in this way, the flux of information is stressed, and, over and above: it highlights the methodological issue, that different answers can be gained from the same question raised due to the changes of information over time.

8. Patrizia Calefato, *The Clothed Body* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), 27. Calefato further states that “it is impossible to give style a single definition” and that “fashion itself becomes an open system for which a semiotic reading is possible**. Ibid., 29. See also for example: Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990 (1983)); Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988 (1979)); Angela McRobbie, *In the Culture Society: Art, Fashion, and Popular Music* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005 (1999)); and Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

9. Therése Andersson, *Beauty Box—Filmstjärnor och skönhetskultur i det tidiga 1900-talets Sverige* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006/2008), 61–81.

10. Cinderella as a folk tale is known worldwide and in many variations; one of the most well-known versions is the one published in *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* (1812).

11. Sarah Street, *Costume and Cinema; Dress Codes in Popular Film* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2001), 55.

12. Royal women—through history—who have become fashion icons are, for example, Marie Antoinette, Elizabeth I and Queen Christina. See for example: Caroline Weber, *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* (New York: Picador, 2006) and Jane Ashelford, *Dress in the Age of Elizabeth I* (London: Batsford, 1988). Appropriation of royal dress is of course made through costume cinema, see for example, Jane Gaines, ‘The Queen Christina Tie-Ups: Convergence of Show Window and Screen’, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 11, no. 1 (1989): 55–60; Elizabeth A. Ford and Deborah C. Mitchell, *Royal Portraits in Hollywood: Filming the Lives of Queens* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009); and Therése Andersson: ‘Costume Cinema and Materiality: Telling the Story of Marie Antoinette Through Dress’. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 3, no. 1. (2011): 101–112.

13. During the first part of the decade, Kelly’s style was established in accordance with Dior’s “New Look” and by costume designs for movies such as Edith Head’s work for *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954). Kelly’s famous wedding gown was the work of another costume designer, MGM’s Helen Rose. Rose also made the costumes for *High Society* (Charles Walters, 1956), which became Kelly’s last movie, before leaving for Monaco.

14. In the early 1980s, Diana supported British designers such as Victor Edelstein and Catherine Walker, dressing in classic tailored garments for
daywear and romantic gowns for evenings. By the 1990s, she had moved forward, evolved her style and expanded her range to international designers, for instance, Versace and Chanel, establishing a look with a sophisticated and simple silhouette, and coordinated accessories.

For a discussion on stardom and celebrity culture, see for example: Christine Gledhill, ed., Stardom: Industry of Desire (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) and Gill Branston, Cinema and Cultural Modernity (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000).

As an example, the attention in Swedish media concerning royals reached its peak in spring/summer 2010 surrounding the “Princess Wedding”: the wedding between Crown Princess Victoria and Daniel Westling. Not least, the wedding dress-topic allowed free scope for speculations: what would the dress look like, and who was assigned to design the dress? Fashion and dress turned out to be one of the most significant media topics with regard to the wedding. It was later on revealed that Pär Engshede designed the wedding dress for Victoria; a pearly-white duchesse satin dress, with full-skirt, short sleeves, rounded and folded collar, and a wide waistband holding the 5-m train.

Thus, the way these princesses are styled might be considered as a kind of nation branding—on a symbolic level—as they are understood to signify aspects of national identities. Due to this signifying practice of style, the woman’s body is in a way utilized as displaying the country as creative, cosmopolitan, stylish, or cool, through designer fashion. For a discussion on the relationship between fashion industry and nation in Scandinavia, e.g. in Denmark, see, e.g. Marie Riegs Melchior, ‘Cat-walking the Nation: Challenges and Possibilities in the Case of the Danish Fashion Industry’, Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research 3, no. 1. (2011): 55–70. Supporting for instance the national fashion industry by endorsing national designers thus seems to promote the country’s creative industries. There is a moot point in Swedish media whether the Swedish princesses are sufficiently interested in and supportive of fashion, referring to fashion as the national fashion industry. In the editorial of the Swedish fashion magazine Damernas Värld this point is made from time to time, for example, in connection to the fashion and design award ceremony “Guldknappen”. Moreover, the editorial contains an open invitation to Victoria and Madeleine to attend the ceremony, and an appeal to involve themselves in the Swedish fashion business just as they attend other corporate events. Damernas Värld, no. 9 (2008), 15.

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To see e.g.: www.theroyalforums.com, www.sofiasroyal sweden.com, and www.svenskdam.se.

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To see e.g.: www.svt.se, www.tv4.se, www.dn.se, www.svd.se, www.aftonbladet.se, and www.expressen.se.

More or less every newspaper in Sweden have a fashion review from the banquet, highlighting the fashion choices made by Queen Silvia, Crown Princess Victoria and Princess Madeleine, and discussing how well they succeeded in their appearances, which, however, is always perceived as winning. See e.g. www.svt.se, www.tv4.se, www.dn.se, www.svd.se, www.aftonbladet.se, and www.expressen.se.

The Country Girl (George Seaton, 1954).
Fashioning the fashion princess

32. Ibid., September 19, 2007.
33. See e.g. Dyer, Heavenly Bodies.
34. Svensk Damtidning, September 27, 2007, www.svenskdam.se. The stylist Anja Camilla Alajdi has worked with Mary since 2003 (the engagement between Mary and Frederik). The stylist supporting Victoria is Tina Törnqvist, and Petra Middelthon has advised Mette-Marit.
35. Ibid., September 27, 2007.
36. The issue of royals reusing apparels at public events was further a subject matter highlighted in Swedish media in 2005: Victoria and Madeleine attended a wedding, and they were both wearing gowns that they had worn at previous public events. As this was not bad enough, they were caught on camera. Victoria wore the same dress as she did at the Nobel Prize Banquette in 2000, and Madeleine the same dress as she did at the Spanish royal wedding in 2004. The reusing incident was picked up by, for example, Expressen, and was referred to as a fashion fiasco. In the article, the princesses were advised, if they insisted on reusing their dresses publicly, to at least choose ones from occasions that have not already been mediated worldwide. Expressen, August 7, 2005/July 18, 2008, www.expressen.se.
37. See e.g.: www.theroyalforums.com.
38. The issue of female consumption and luxury goods was heavily debated in Swedish media in 2007, and the dispute was named “the handbag debate”, with reference to conspicuous consumption of prestigious designer bags from Hermès and Louie Vuitton. See e.g.: www.aftonbladet.se and www.dn.se.
39. Expressen, June 13, 2007/June 17, 2007/May 29, 2008, www.expressen.se.
40. Ibid. The news of Madeleine’s similar shoe shopping adventure in 2003, when she bought 17 pairs of on-sale shoes, all at once in an exclusive store, did not by far get the same media attention as Mary’s. Although it was noted by Aftonbladet, and the article was illustrated with photos of Madeleine from 17 various occasions wearing 17 different pairs of shoes. The article also mentioned that Madeleine’s then boyfriend had to help her carry all the shopping bags back home from the event. See e.g.: www.aftonbladet.se.
41. Svensk Damtidning, September 19, 2007, www.svenskdam.se.
42. Elizabeth Wilson, Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity (London: Tauris, 2003), 275.
43. For instance, Diana altered her style considerably when the divorce from Charles went through—the little black strapless gown designed by Christina Stambolian commonly known as “the divorce dress” marks the transition. Diana used style symbolically and signified her freedom and “new life” through dress. See e.g. Tina Brown, The Diana Chronicles (New York: Anchor Books, 2008).
44. See e.g. www.svenskdam.se.
45. The most resent cases are the marriages between Catherine “Kate” Middleton and Prince William, and Charlene Wittstock and Prince Albert of Monaco. In Sweden in 2008, the situation was reversed and far from coherent. Television programs, newspapers and magazines ventilated different opinions concerning the coming marriage between Daniel Westling and Crown Princess Victoria. See e.g. ‘Års Kungliga Höghet Westling’ (trans. ‘His Royal Highness Westling’) www.svt.se (originally broadcasted on SVT1, June 2, 2008). This discussion did somewhat declined in 2010, as the wedding was settled to June 19, 2010. Instead, more or less every newspaper and broadcasting company had special sections dedicated for the upcoming wedding. See e.g. ‘Prinsessbröllopet’ (trans. ‘The Princess Wedding’) at www.svd.se, ‘Det Kungliga Bröllopet’ (trans. ‘The Royal Wedding’) at www.svt.se, and ‘Bröllopet’ (trans. ‘The Wedding’) at www.tv4.se.
46. See e.g. Karin Johannisson, Den mörka kontinenten: kvinnan, medicinen och fin-de-siècle. (Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag, 1994/2005).
47. Heather Evans, ‘Mary Donaldson: Tassie Princess’, Signs of the Times (2004), The Sign of the Times, May 2, 2008, www.signsofthetimes.org.au.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Svensk Damtidning, September 19, 2007, www.svenskdam.se.
51. The Sign of the Times, May 2, 2008, www.signsofthetimes.org.au.
52. Ibid.
53. See e.g.: Jane Austen Mansfield Park (1814). For similar rite of passage novels, see e.g.: Louisa May Alcott Little Women (1868), Charlotte Bronté Jane Eyre (1847) and Lucy Maud Montgomery Anne of Green Gables (1908).
54. These films could be named transformation movies, and spans films such as A Modern Cinderella (J. Scarle Dawley, 1911), Irene (Alfred E. Green, 1926), Grease (Randal Kleiser, 1978), My Fair Lady (George Cukor, 1964), Now, Voyager (Irving Rapper, 1942), She’s All That (Robert Iscove, 1999) and Working Girl (Mike Nichols, 1988). See also e.g.: Tamar Jeffers McDonald, Hollywood Cattwalk: Exploring Costume and Transformation in American Film (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010).
55. Costume designer for the complete Sabrina movie was Edith Head. Hubert de Givenchy made the post Parisian costumes for Audrey Hepburn, but remained uncredited. Sabrina also became the starting point for the Hepburn-Givenchy collaboration, which resulted in costumes for films like Funny Face (Stanley Donen, 1957), Breakfast at Tiffany’s (Blake Edwards, 1961) and Charade (Stanley Donen, 1963).
56. Vogue (Australia) December, 2004.
57. The Courier Mail: www.couriermail.com.au (April 6, 2008/May 9, 2008). See also: Jan Körner and
Jim Lyngvild, *Mary—Prinsesse med stil* (Köpenhamn: Aschehoug, 2006). In *Svensk Damtidning* it is even asserted that Mary’s reputation as a trendsetter caused prestigious fashion houses to deliver exclusive outfits to her residence, hoping she would wear them at media covered events. *Svensk Damtidning*: www.svenskdamtidning.se (May 2/June 18, 2008). This practice—irrespective of the validity in the case of Mary—is commonly applied when it comes to film stars and other celebrities, and serves as an artistic as well as commercial approval of her fashion status and marketability. As with the comparison to film stars, the endorsement practices have multiple ends: by offering free garments to a particular star, the idea is the star hopefully will like the clothes/accessories and buy more fashion from the same designer brand, as well as, through their public appearances, influence other people to buy. The meanings attached to the designer brands and the meanings assigned to the star, are supposed to, due to the “collaboration” mutually reinforce their images, and further, when a star’s style is scrutinised in papers, magazines, and on blog spots, the texts and photos in, for example, *Svensk Damtidning* or *Vogue* will generate free advertising for these brands as well. Therése Andersson: ‘Dressed for Success: Hollywoodstjärnor och mode’, *Kulturella Perspektiv* 14, no. 3 (2005): 60–8.