

"Mit öffentlich-ausgebrochenen Liebes=Thränen" - How And Why Early Modern Festival Books Depict Emotions

[1] by Johann Ulrich König chronicles the week-long festivities staged in Dresden in May 1738 to celebrate the marriage of the thirteen-year-old Maria Amalia of Saxony (1724-1760) to the Bourbon Carlo VII, King of the Two Sicilies (1716-1788). The union was only possible because Maria Amalia's grandfather, August the Strong (1670-1733), had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1697 in order to be elected King of Poland as August II. This opened the way for his descendants to marry into the Catholic dynasties of Europe. His son, Maria Amalia's father, August III, King of Poland (Friedrich August II, Elector of Saxony, 1696-1763), married the Habsburg princess Maria Josepha (1699-1657) and two of their children married Wittelsbachs, while two others, including Maria Amalia, married Bourbons. In marrying Carlo, the son of Philip V, King of Spain, and his second wife, Elisabetta Farnese, Maria Amalia was making a grand marriage, the first woman of her house ever to marry a ruling king. Carlo succeeded to the Spanish throne in 1759 as Carlos III, so that, during the last year of her life, Maria Amalia assumed the far greater position of Queen of Spain. The marriage was celebrated by proxy, that is Maria Amalia's older brother Friedrich Christian stood in for the bridegroom.



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The author of the text is Johann Ulrich König (1688-1744), court poet, librettist and master of ceremonies at the Dresden court since 1719, while the work itself belongs to the highly developed and extremely numerous genre of the festival book, which from about 1550 on becomes an essential element of most princely, civic and religious festivals throughout Europe.[2] Though festival books fulfil many functions that go far beyond mere description, description is still their bedrock and, as König's title indicates, their aim is to convince the reader of their completeness and factual accuracy.

Two elements of the festival have to be recorded: the central ceremony – the coronation, baptism or marriage –, and the spectacles – the tournaments, operas, ballets and firework displays that entertain the guests. Ceremonies are fixed rituals, while spectacles can be varied according to the available resources. The festival book describes the spectacles to show the cultural sophistication of the organising court but records the ceremony in order to confirm that the pre-ordained ceremonial has been correctly observed, for this alone makes it valid and binding. It therefore records who stood and who sat, who walked towards whom, who was bare-headed in whose presence, who bowed to whom, who entered which room first and who spoke what words. Johann Ulrich König, as Master of Ceremonies, is even more concerned than usual to describe these matters in detail, for he was responsible for their organisation. In his account of the seven days from Wednesday 7 May to Tuesday 13 May 1738, during which it rained incessantly, König records in detail the solemn entry of the Spanish ambassador Count Fuenclara, his formal audience with August III, in which he asks for Maria Amalia's hand in marriage for Carlo, the illumination of the city, the actual wedding ceremony, the wedding banquet and "Fackeltanz".[3] the tournament, the Italian opera, and, at Pillnitz outside Dresden, the Italian comedy and firework display.

A couple of times during his narrative, König breaks through his description of the events to indicate that the marriage has an emotional dimension. After the key moment in the marriage ceremony he says, for instance:

All of this awakened, not just among these august royal parents and children but also among all those standing nearby, the tenderest eruptions of feeling.[4]

König cannot talk about the love between the bridal couple, however, for Maria Amalia and Carlo have never met and are not scheduled to do so until she arrives at the border of her husband's kingdom two weeks later.

Where the emotions do take centre stage is at the moment when Maria Amalia has to say goodbye to her parents and most of her siblings, in the certain knowledge that she will never see either them or the city of her birth again. König prepares the reader for this moment by describing the parting as "the day ordained for the departure, which scarcely anyone welcomed without a beating heart and inner sadness." [5]

He tells us further on that "most people mourned this parting with tears of love which burst forth in public".[6]

When he gets to the actual departure, however, König devotes no fewer than seven pages (210-217) to the pain of the thirteen-year-old princess and her parents, which is visibly expressed through a number of physical symptoms. Maria Amalia's "zärtliche aufwallende Regungen des Geblütes" (210, the tenderly surging excitations of her blood) lead to "an outpouring of the tears which burst forth violently and which the two queens [7], most painfully distressed at the thought of their imminent parting, were no longer able to

contain."[8]

Of course they tried to control their emotions "*mit einer großmüthigen Standhaftigkeit*" (210, with a magnanimous constancy) and this aroused even more sympathy in the bystanders, "for they were able to conceal their secret sorrow to such an extent that, apart from their rather reddened eyes, it was scarcely possible to become aware of any sign of the inner constriction of their hearts." [9]

Then, in an extraordinary passage, König goes on to awaken further the reader's compassion by emphasising that this very young woman is being sacrificed on the altar of dynastic duty:

One saw ... this young queen, with the most decorous calm, in her still tender innocence, like a second Iphigenia going to the temple; for the time was now fast approaching in which she, next to her inborn love of parents and fatherland, had decided in the most courageous way to sacrifice, through a most painful separation, even her own person for the good of the state, to the will of her most noble parents and the decree of divine providence. [10]

König continues in this vein for another five pages. The ladies-in-waiting are in floods of tears (212) as is Maria Amalia herself (213) and the eyes of the gentlemen of the court, not allowed to stand in line as Maria Amalia leaves so as not to upset her further, are moist (214). Once Maria Amalia has set off on the first leg of her journey to Italy, her royal parents rush ahead by a different road so as to surprise her at her first stop and to see her one final time, when she thought she had taken her leave of them forever. And then they really do have to embrace each other for the very last time:

During this embrace the three most painfully affected royal persons held each other close and all the more tenderly because, according to human judgement, it would be the very last time, for which reason and not without an inner compulsion they finally had to tear themselves away from one another. [11]

König introduces a more hopeful note by comparing this wedding with that of the Habsburg princess Maria Anna, second wife of Philip IV of Spain, in 1650. Unlike Maria Anna, who got married to "*einem bereits kränklichen Wittwer*" (228, an already ailing widower), Maria Amalia is at least being united "*mit einem jungen feurigen Monarchen*" (228, to a virile young king), so that many male children will surely be the result. [12]

These highly-charged descriptions of emotions show the reader the highest in the land exhibiting the normal human feelings of any family on sending a young child away forever into an uncertain world. The royal family is not behaving here in an artificially controlled way but rather shows a warmth and naturalness that is likely to endear them to their people and their court. This forestalls any possible criticism from their subjects that the members of the court and of the royal family "wore masks ... were inauthentic and dishonest ... [that] they hid their real emotions behind a fake façade". [13] When a theorist of ceremonial such as Julius Bernhard von Rohr goes out of his way to show that ceremonial must be driven by "Liebe und Devotion" (726, love and devotion) which - and this is the key point - his subjects must truly and spontaneously feel for their monarch, the corollary of this is that those same subjects must perceive in their ruler someone who is himself capable of feeling. [14] As Thomas Rahn puts it: "*Das Emotionstheater des Festes beruht ... auf Gegenseitigkeit*" (the emotional theatre of the festival is based on reciprocity). [15]

Other eighteenth-century accounts of royal weddings exhibit similar expressions of grief at the bride's parting. In his analysis of Hohenzollern weddings between 1640 and 1918, Daniel Schönplüg discusses what he calls "Abschiedsrituale" and cites a public demonstration of extreme grief at the theatre in Berlin in 1744. [16] Princess Luise Ulrike (1720-1782), the sister of Friedrich II, had just married Crown Prince Adolf Fredrik of Sweden (1710-1771) by proxy and was about to leave for her new home in Stockholm. Prince August Ferdinand, the king's brother, entered the royal box, threw himself on Luise Ulrike's neck and burst into tears. She began to sob, holding her brother in her arms, whereupon all the rest of the royal family started to weep in their turn.

It would be easy to conclude that these exhibitions of grief belong to a new and characteristically eighteenth-century culture of sensibility. This is not the case. The parting of the bride from her natal family and the sorrow this evokes have formed part of the choreography of dynastic marriages for centuries. In his account of the wedding of Eleonora Gonzaga (1598-1655) and the Emperor Ferdinand II (1578-1637) in Innsbruck in 1622, Gabriele Bertazzolo records the grief of the bystanders and the sorrow of Eleonora at the moment of leave-taking from her mother who is going home to Mantua. [17] Eleonora would have burst into tears, says the author, if the Emperor had not begged her, for love of him, to control herself. The grief of James I of England and VI of Scotland and of his queen Anna of Denmark when Frederick of the Palatinate (1596-1632) bears their daughter Elizabeth (1596-1662) off to Heidelberg after their wedding in London in 1613 is also put on record, a grief, says the account, which is all the more profound because their eldest son, Prince Henry, has just died. [18]

The account of the wedding in 1561 of Willem van Oranje-Nassau (1533-1584) and Anna (1544-1577), the daughter of Moritz, Elector of Saxony, gives far more detail:

Now that the festivities were at an end, the bridegroom wanted to depart for his own country ... When the moment of the parting came, a great sadness descended. The bride travelled in a coach and she was very

sad to the bottom of her heart, she completely covered her gentle face, which was all wet with tears. That she had to part from her uncle who had been so good to her pained her deeply. She was now obliged and compelled to leave him and travel to a strange land where she was quite unknown. It was also painful to her uncle, that is, Duke August, that he too had to leave her ... So he let her go, gave her God's blessing and often looked back. O parting is a great sorrow.[19]

Contemporary readers will have been aware that Anna was an only child who had lost her father when she was nine and her mother two years later and that she had been brought up by her uncle, August, Elector of Saxony. This second loss of a father-figure adds to Anna's distress.[20]

The extent to which emotions are depicted in festival books is a subject that needs further investigation. Festival books are, after all, works of official court historiography. They record and interpret, often in a sober and factual style, an important dynastic event for posterity and were widely circulated to other courts. Why describe the sorrow of the bride and her family on such a festive occasion as a marriage? My hypothesis is that it is connected to the role of the consort as a focus for the emotional life of her people. Along with such duties as child-bearing and the visible performance of religious and charitable acts, the consort, as "Mother of her People" ("*Landesmutter*"), must also serve as a "Mother of Sorrows". This begins with her – in König's words – Iphigenia-like sacrifice of her own person on her wedding day, followed by her exile. It continues with her grief over her dead children, a grief which very few early modern consorts were spared and which unites her with her female subjects. This visible display of suffering, promulgated by the mass media from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, can be seen to an exemplary degree in the figures of Luise, Queen of Prussia (1776-1810), and Diana, Princess of Wales (1961-1997). It goes some way towards explaining the extreme reaction of their subjects at their deaths.

[1] Johann Ulrich König, *Vollständige Beschreibung aller Solennitäten bey dem hohen Königlichen Sicilianischen Vermählungs=Feste/ Welches im May=Monat des Jahres 1738. An dem Königl. Pohln. und Churfürstl. Sächsischen Hofe zu Dreßden in Vollmacht prächtigst vollzogen worden. Auf Befehl des Hofes ausgefertiget* on J.U.K. Dreßden und Leipzig, Bey Friedrich Hekel, und Georg Conrad Walther, Königlichen Hof=Bücher=Livranten. 1738

[2] See Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, "The Early Modern Festival Book – Function and Form" in *Europa Triumphans. Festivals and Festival Books of the Renaissance and Baroque*, 2 vols, J.R. Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly and Margaret Shewring, eds (London: Ashgate 2004), vol. 1, 3-17; Thomas Rahn, "Fortsetzung des Festes mit anderen Mitteln. Gattungsbeobachtungen zu hessischen Hochzeitsberichten", in *Frühneuzeitliche Hofkultur in Hessen und Thüringen*, Jenaer Studien Bd. 1, Jörg Jochen Berns and Dettlef Ignasiak, eds. (Erlangen and Jena: Palm & Enke, 1993), 233-48. For an insight into the number and types of European festival books between 1500 and 1800 see <http://festivals.mml.ox.ac.uk>

[3] A dance at a wedding in which torches are carried either by or in front of the bride and groom.

[4] "Solches alles überhaupt erweckte so wohl unter diesen hohen Königlichen Eltern und Kindern, als auch bey den Umstehenden, die allerzärtlichste Gemüths=Bewegungen." König, *Vollständige Beschreibung*, 58.

[5] "... der zum Aufbruch bestimmte Tag, welchen die wenigsten ohne Hertzklöpfen und innerliche Betrübniß erblickten..." Ibid., 149.

[6] "Die meisten beklagten diese Trennung mit öffentlich[sic]-ausgebrochenen Liebes=Thränen..." Ibid., 187.

[7] Maria Amalia, now Queen of the Two Sicilies, and her mother, who was Queen of Poland.

[8] "... Ausbruch der mit Gewalt hervor gedrunghenen Thränen, welchen, bey nunmehr herankommendem Scheiden, diese beyde dadurch am allerempfindlichsten gekränkete Königinnen, nicht länger zu widerstehen vermochten." König, *Vollständige Beschreibung*, 210.

[9] "... da Sie den heimlichen Kummer dermassen zu verbergen wusten, daß man kaum, an ihren in etwas errötheten Augen, einiges äusserliche Merckzeichen der innerlichen Hertzens=Beklemmung gewahr werden konnte..." Ibid., 211.

[10] "[Man] sahe ... diese junge Königin, mit der allerwohlanständigsten Gelassenheit, in ihrer annoch zarten Unschuld, als eine andre Iphigenie, zum Tempel gehen; nachdem die Zeit nunmehr herzu eilte: da Sie, nebst der ihr angebohrnen Eltern= und Vaterlands=Liebe, selbst auch ihre eigene Person dem Heil des Staats, dem Willen ihrer allerdurchlauchtigsten Eltern, und dem Ausspruche der göttlichen Schickung, durch eine schmerzliche Trennung, großmüthigst aufzuopfern, entschlossen war..." Ibid.

[11] "Bey dieser Umarmung hielten die drey schmerzlichst=gerührte Königliche Personen sich unter einander so viel zärtlicher umschlossen als es, menschlichem Ansehen nach, das allerletzte mahl seyn dürffte; weßwegen Sie sich auch endlich, nicht sonder innerlich=erlittenen Zwang, wieder von einander losreissen musten." Ibid., 216-7.

[12] Maria Amalia did give birth to six sons, but only after she had first produced five daughters.

[13] Ute Frevert, "Defining Emotions. Concepts and Debates over Three Centuries", in *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000*, Ute Frevert, Christian Bailey, Pascal Eitler, Benno Gammerl, Bettina Hitzer, Margrit Pernau, Monique Scheer, Anne Schmidt, and Nina Verheyen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6.

[14] Julius Bernhard von Rohr, "Von der Ehre und Devotion, so die Unterthanen ihrem Landes=Herrn abstatten", in *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der Grossen Herren*, Berlin: bey Johann Andreas Rüdiger, 1733. Facsimile edition ed. Monika Schlechte (Weinheim: VCH 1990), 724-32. How Friedrich II of Prussia deliberately evoked such feelings of devotion in his subjects is charted by Ute Frevert in *Gefühlspolitik. Friedrich II. Als Herr über die Herzen?* (Göttingen: Wallstein 2012).

[15] Thomas Rahn, *Festbeschreibung. Funktion und Topik einer Textsorte am Beispiel der Beschreibung höfischer Hochzeiten (1568-1794)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007), 173.

[16] Daniel Schönplflug, *Die Heiraten der Hohenzollern. Verwandtschaft, Politik und Ritual in Europa 1640-1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2013), 229-30.

[17] Gabriele Bertazzolo, Breve relatione dello sposalitio Fatto della Serenissa Principessa Eleonora Gonzaga con la sacra cesarea maesta di Ferdinando II. Imperatore (Mantova per Aurelio, & Lodouico Osanna fratelli, Stampatori Ducali. 1622), 74.

[18] *Beschreibung Der Reiß: Empfahun[n]g deß Ritterlichen Ordens: Vollbringung des Heyraths: vnd glücklicher Heimführung: Wie auch der ansehnlichen Einführung: gehaltener Ritterspiel vnd Frewdenfests: Des... Herrn Friederichen deß Fünften/ Pfaltzgraven bey Rhein ... Mit der ... Princessin/ Elisabethen[n]/ deß Großmechtigsten Herrn/ Herrn Iacobi deß Ersten Königs in Großbritannien Einigen Tochter : Mit schönen Kupfferstücken gezieret.* (Heidelberg: Vögelin 1613), 71.

[19] "Da nun ein endt hett solche freydt/ Wolt der Breutgam von dannen scheidt/ Und widerziehen in sein landt/.../ Und da es an ein scheiden gieng/ Gros trawrigkeit sich do anfieng/ Das frewlen in eim Wagen fuhr/ Von hertzen sie gantz trawrig wur/ Bedeckt ir zartes antlitz gar/ Welchs von zehren gar feuchte war/ Das sie solt von irm Vettern scheidt/ Dasselbt war jr von Hertzen leidt/ Der ir so viel gutz hat gethan/ Den solt und must sie itz verlahn/ Und ziehen in ein frömbdes Landt/ Darin sie noch war unbekandt/ Ir Vetter auch Hertzog August/ Der sie auch do verlassen must/ War seiner Gnaden auch ein pein/.../ Also er sie hinfaren lies/ Gottes Segen über sie sprach/ Zurück er offt hinter sich sach/ O Scheiden ist ein grosser pein..."
Elector August and other nobles accompanied Anna and Willem as they left the city. They then have to turn around and go back. Quotation from: Nikolaus Prunquiel, *Von dem herrlichen Einzug/ Hochzeit vnd freud/ des Durchleuchtigen/ Hochgebornen Fürsten vnd Herrn/ Herrn Wilhelmen Printz zu Vranien [et]c. Vnd der Durchleuchtigen ... Furstin ... frewlin Anna Hertzogin zu Sachsen/ [et]c. ... Herrn Moritz (Seliger gedechtnis) ... Nachgelassenen Tochter/ Welche durch zuthun ... Herrn Augusti ... Churfürst ... Genantem Printzen von Vranie[n] vermalet ... Churf. G. zu ehren vnd vntherthenigem gefallen auffs kurtzt verfast vnd reimweis gemacht.* (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1561), C4 v-D1r.

[20] Willem, a widower, was marrying Anna for her money and the marriage turned out to be a disaster.

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