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Volume 39 number 1 Spring 1998

The many meanings of *Blacula*

Noir and the racial unconscious

Menace II Society and the death of Signifyin(g)

Foreskin fetishism in *Europa, Europa*

Special debate: the death of Diana

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Subscription & order information
Screen (ISSN 0036–9543) is published quarterly in March June September December by Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK Annual subscription price for institutions of UK and Europe £65 USA and Rest of the World US$122 Personal subscriptions £36 for UK and Europe and US$61 USA and Rest of the World and for Students and Unemployed UK and Europe £25, USA and Rest of the World US$45 Screen is distributed by M A I L America, 2323 Randolph Avenue Avenel New Jersey N J 07001 USA Periodical postage paid at Newark, New Jersey, USA and additional entry points
US POSTMASTER send address changes to Screen, c/o M A I L America, 2323 Randolph Avenue Avenel New Jersey N J 07001 USA

Payment is required with all orders and subscriptions are accepted and entered by the volume(s) Payment may be made by the following methods Cheque (made payable to Oxford University Press), National Girobank (Account 500 1056) Credit Card (Access Visa, American Express Diners Club) UNESCO Coupons Bankers Barclays Bank plc PO Box 333, Oxford Code 20–65–18 Account 00715654 Individual rates apply only when copies are sent to a private address and are paid for by personal cheque or credit card

Please send orders and requests for sample copies to Journals Subscriptions Department Oxford University Press Great Clarendon Street Oxford OX2 6DP Telex 837330 OXPRESG Fax 01865 267485

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ISSN 0036–9543

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Blacula (William Crain 1972)

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Screen Studies Conference

Glasgow • 3-5 July 1998

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special debate

Flowers and tears: the death of Diana, Princess of Wales

Preface

While everyone responded in their own particular ways to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, few appear to have been either lost for words or hesitant in framing suitable gestures and actions. Savouring the unaccustomed *frisson* of being caught up in, rather than detached from, the public mood, scholars and intellectuals have been no exception. In the week or two following the death, countless thinkpieces by prominent columnists appeared in Britain's quality press, each bearing aloft her (for the majority of these pieces were by women writers) particular truth about the event and people's (including her own) responses to it. A surprising number of these interpretations implicitly or explicitly conveyed a sense of insufficiency – a feeling, as with Barthes's famous third meaning, that there might well be something beyond explanation about it all. How difficult it is for the cultural critic or the semiotician to acknowledge that some signs might have no meaning, that some meanings might be simply too profound to yield themselves up to the familiar rituals of deconstruction; how thrilling nonetheless to pursue elusive meaning into the underbrush of myth; how gratifying, too, to feel that one's craft might at last be of some use in the wide world.

Diana's death exposed many truths about our commitments and priorities, collective as well as personal; and *Screen*'s intervention in the debate surrounding it is probably an act of mourning in the classic sense – one of the 'suitable' gestures and actions referred to above – as much as it is an occasion for the exchange of ideas (though on this subject many of the journal's readers will surely be interested in *Screen*'s particular brand of analysis)

The five essays which follow were commissioned during the week between Diana's death and the funeral. Although a new academic year was about to begin, and despite a very tight schedule, contributors were remarkably keen to offer their responses – though once again the preponderance of women among them is worthy of note, suggesting as it does a gender disparity if not in interest in the issue then certainly in willingness to offer public comment about it.

Many commentators on the event of the death and the responses to it, especially those schooled in academic styles of communication, have found their accustomed modes of writing wanting While in their different ways, all of the contributors to this dossier have drawn on their experience and expertise as cultural analysts, all are aware of the challenge involved in applying these skills to a phenomenon of such extraordinary cultural weight. If the feelings produced by this activity expose the limitations of accustomed styles of communication, writers might – as one or two have done here – be inspired to press at the boundaries of scholarly writing.

The contributions to this dossier address a range of aspects of the Diana phenomenon: the Diana icon and its transformations over the years; the narrative forms which have constructed popular understandings of her life and death; the mediations of television coverage of the death and its aftermath; the complex and oftentimes contradictory constructions of nationhood negotiated in this moment; the continuities and tensions between personal, domestic, media and public space thrown up in the period around the funeral. The dossier makes no pretence to exhaust all the issues, however. There are key aspects of this global media and cultural event which are barely touched upon here; and we therefore propose to extend the debate

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with further contributions and responses, which we welcome from our readers.

Annette Kuhn

Icon

'Ineffable' was almost the only epithet not applied to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. It was an occasion when nobody, neither media commentators nor members of the public, confessed to being lost for words. The event produced an excess of analogy, expressing by simile and metaphor what the Princess was like, what she meant personally, what she represented nationally and globally. In the process, the notion of Diana as 'icon' embodying multiple and often contradictory meanings became central to public discourse In this essay I want to trace the emergence of some central themes through the 1980s and 1990s by considering how feminist cultural commentators organized their discussions of the representation of Diana around the notion of 'icon'.

Published in 1984, Diana Simmonds's *Princess Di The National Dish – The Making of a Media Star* was the earliest book-length discussion. It covered the period from September 1980, when the media first 'discovered' and started following Diana, her engagement and wedding in 1981, and the global stardom confirmed in 1983 by a triumphal Australian tour with the baby Prince William when her celebrity began to eclipse Charles Although the book's cover design connects Diana with Heinz baked beans, Simmonds ignores the consumerist implications of her own title conceit to concentrate on Diana's exemplification of both traditional and modern femininity. she is Virgin Mother and Fairy Princess, but also 'the modern heroine of the eighties'

Also published in 1984 (in her collection *Female Desire*), Rosalind Coward's essay 'The royals' covers the same period and is the first to explore in depth the soap opera analogy which was to become common from the 1980s. 'The royals' produces Diana as 'modern', Coward argues, whilst simultaneously reducing all issues faced by modern women to 'choices within the family' Soap opera thus not only represses questions of female independence, but also accomplishes a repression of political and economic factors by concentrating on the primacy of sexual alliances and the fascination of human emotions bound up with traditional values. But Coward also highlights the shifting characterization of Diana, which even as early as 1983 is acquiring the attributes of the wilful wife who is getting above herself and her long-suffering husband.

This theme is taken up by Joan Smith in *Misogynies* (1989): her essay 'The frog princess' deals with the years between 1985 and 1987, when rumours of marital problems first emerged. Smith replays the romantic heroine analogy of the engagement/wedding period with reference to Georgette Heyer's Regency novel, *Arabella*. The appeal of Diana–Arabella for both the Prince and a misogynist culture, Smith suggests, is one of arrested development: the figure of the child–woman. The problem arises with the sequel. for a fictional happy-ever-after must go no further than the wedding, allowing the heroine to remain dependent and inexperienced Imprisoned in the 'tinsel fantasy' of the royal wedding, Diana cannot acquire the symbols of adult womanhood without being represented as wilful, unreasonable, spoiled and arrogant: hence 'a princess . . . who was kissed by Fleet St and turned into a frog'.

Joan Smith's account of the sequel, the essay, 'To Di for· the queen of broken hearts', was published in the week of Diana's death in *Different for Girls*. It charts a 1990s Diana who has, after all, broken free of the fairy-tale to take control of her own image, notably via the Andrew Morton biography of 1992, and the *Panorama* interview of 1995.

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But Smith sees the result as colluding with the media to produce yet more misogynistic myths of traditional femininity. *la donna abbandonata*, *la traviata* and Miss Havisham As with these fictional figures, the 'break' cannot go beyond the wedding, marriage, or any sexual alliance – except in terms of repeated betrayal (by Charles, by James Hewitt . . .). Smith's emphasis on Diana's media manipulation of tragic victim status involves a polemic against a more prevalent feminist interpretation of the *Panorama* interview, for whose genesis she credits the then Guardian columnist Suzanne Moore This claims Diana for mass female identification as an exemplar of strength and autonomy in the terms of the feminist/gay anthem· 'I will survive'

After Diana's death, Suzanne Moore's interpretation predominated, and images of Diana as autonomous woman were amplified into those of a quasi-feminist survivor of both betraying men and a hostile royal family. These images were also aligned with features of popular and democratic culture in ways already anticipated by columnist Julie Burchill in her 1992 essay 'Di hard: the pop princess' This compares Diana with the powerful, in-control 'stars', Madonna and Margaret Thatcher, but then asserts that 'beyond' them and the Windsors 'she is the point' (*Sex and Sensibility*) Anticipating the Prime Minister's spoken tribute and many of the subsequent written ones, she emphasizes: 'the love and loyalty of the people has shifted irretrievably from the ruling house – until death, beyond divorce and dishonour – to one individual. To the one and only People's – and Pop's Princess'.

For Burchill, Diana is 'the first royal icon raised on and sustained by pop culture' This is signalled not only by her knowledge and enjoyment of soaps, romantic novels and advertising jingles, but also by the 'popness' of spontaneity and openness: 'Not for Diana the stiff upper lip and stiff G and T attitude to disappointments of the heart· she is as touchy-feely psychologically as she is physically' The 'performance' of pop attributes ('like all great stars, she is only truly alive when performing') is what makes Diana not only lovable and loved, but also perceived as of, rather than apart from, the people

Burchill and the other women commentators see Diana as icon in the dual senses of defining images of femininity and 'signs of the times'. For Simmonds, who scorns a version of film studies for dissecting the 'star' icon while ignoring its social and political context, Diana's marriage to Charles stands as an antidote to the psychological and economic depressions of early Thatcherism, and evokes the glamorous fascination of the marriage of Elizabeth and Philip in Austerity Britain. Whilst the touchstone for all Joan Smith's essays is the cultural climate surrounding the Yorkshire Ripper murders of the late 1970s, which she sees as revealing the extent and depth of misogyny in British and western culture, her case studies are of women if not literally or metaphorically killed off then actually or figuratively reduced or undermined. Her 1997 essay collection asks why, when women in actuality are seizing power, *fin-de-siècle* anxiety about women's autonomy should cluster around obsessional fascination with three major 'sad icons'. 'Diana, Marilyn and Jackie. Each of them, in her own way, represents a type of femininity which is both out of date and extremely seductive – for women as well as men – at a moment when the old certainties about gender no longer seem to apply.'

In 1992 Camille Paglia examined Diana's iconic status in terms of the notion of cultural masks or 'personae'. Paglia transcends the traditional/modern, victim/survivor oppositions to present a thoroughly overdetermined icon, reprising and incorporating a range of classical and contemporary analogies: Cinderella, betrayed wife, princess in the tower, *mater dolorosa*, last of the silent movie stars, the beautiful boy. These are then

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wrapped up in the dominant persona of the pagan goddess Diana–Artemis. Paglia takes the Artemis huntress–hunted allegory to highlight the sheer unsustainability of the Diana icon, which, she observes, has become so freighted with varied personae and mutually contradictory imagery that it risks consuming and cannibalizing the real person: 'Mass media have made both myth and disaster out of Diana's story. We have created her in our own image And pursued by our best wishes, Diana the huntress is now the hind paralysed in the world's gunsight' (*Vamps and Tramps*).

Paglia's conclusion was echoed in Earl Spencer's reference to the 'irony' of the Artemis story in his Westminster Abbey tribute at Diana's funeral· 'It is a point to remember that of all the ironies about Diana, perhaps the greatest was this. a girl given the name of the ancient goddess of hunting was, in the end, the most hunted person of the modern age'. In the immediate aftermath of Diana's death many of the earlier iconic strands reemerged in the public messages placed outside the royal palaces and at focal points nationwide. Notably, there was the return of 'the fairy-tale ending' with Dodi Fayed, the last lover, replacing Charles in a popularly imagined everlasting unity of 'Di and Dodi'

At the same time, the term 'icon' itself was unselfconsciously adopted in the vocabulary of everyday speech, and massively reinforced in the tributes to Diana Developed as a secularized concept, the notion of 'icon' passed through art history and linguistics into semiotics and film studies, and from there into cultural commentary and journalism, emerging into popular idiom in written and spoken messages and slogans prompted by Diana's death. But in this popular appropriation the term reassumed its earlier religious meaning, particularly through the emphasis on the caring and compassionate aspect of Diana's persona – which had often been the subject of media ridicule and cynicism during her lifetime. The mounting piles of memorials offered a kind of ecumenical apotheosis of Diana in a quite unironic manner, on the lines of. 'Born a princess. Died a saint', 'A light has gone out'; 'A new angel in heaven'; 'Princess of love', 'Like Jesus'. Ritual reference was made to the heaped tributes being 'shrines' to Diana, while the routes between the shrines became those of 'pilgrimage'

Rosalind Brunt

Story

Whatever else she was, Diana was incontrovertibly a story. Written immediately after her death, this essay is an attempt to look at the different narrative forms which built up around her in her lifetime and which have been available as people attempt to make sense of her death. I want to look also at how public responses to Diana's death used – and rejected – these constructions in an ambivalent and complex way.

Of the many narrative forms available, four have been especially widely deployed in representations of Diana since she joined the Royal Family on her marriage to Prince Charles in 1981. The first is the fairy-tale. This is a story of origins, in which a Proppian lack is liquidated by the wedding. It provided a satisfactory linear history in which Diana's unhappy childhood, her loss of her mother, her desire to fit in and be 'a good wife', could all be resolved in a magical transformation. In this story, Diana's lack of educational qualifications and anything resembling career ambitions could stand for the more traditional humble origins of the woodcutter's daughter, her innocence and virginity translated into rare qualities which fitted her perfectly for the part. Like all fairy-tales, this story ended with a wedding, with the kiss on the balcony, a kiss so brief in television's moving image but frozen into a

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longer and more meaningful image: one which should have signified a happy ending but had to be translated into a beginning of another kind of story.

Classic narrative can be defined in terms of the disruption and restoration of a stable situation. In this story, though clearly the central protagonist, Diana was more ambiguously placed since she functioned as the disruptive agent. This story allowed for, indeed needed, its main character's less amenable qualities, for it offered different readings. On the one hand, Diana's disruptive qualities could be read as a breath of fresh air, a desire to bring the Royal Family up to date; on the other, they could be understood as neurotic, manipulative and selfish. The 1995 *Panorama* interview was a crucial narrative turning-point, a move in which the heroine tried to seize authorship of her own story, not only to become its narrator but also to explain how the story could make sense only if the disruptive quality of its heroine was reread as moral virtue. This was, of course, endlessly debated, but once again the narrative lacked closure, the resolution which classic narratives need because, as Barthes's proairetic code indicates, we make sense of them only retrospectively; we understand their beginnings through a knowledge of their endings.

The soap opera form, however, provided precisely the never-ending quality which tighter narrative forms like the fairy-tale and the classic narrative lacked. The wedding in the early 1980s coincided with a worldwide boost of the soap opera format led by the US primetime television stories *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, and in Britain by new realist soaps, particularly *EastEnders* and the revived *Coronation Street*. The soap opera format relied on conflict within, and affairs outside families; it also allowed for villainesses as well as heroines and established clear characters – but allowed them to change positions and attributes along with the twists and turns of the plot. In its US variants, soap opera also offered a rather old-fashioned, but still seductive, glamour. Most crucially though, as feminist critics have shown, it reversed traditional values by privileging the feminine world in which emotion, empathy and talk were the means by which life could best be understood and managed. The parallels between the fictional world of soaps and the turmoil which Diana's marital unhappiness generated in the House of Windsor made the soap format an irresistible framework for understanding her life; and indeed the values of soaps were those expressed by Diana herself – the need to talk, the need to hug – and drew on the same discourses of feminine understanding and popular psychology.

The soap opera parallels perhaps explain the somewhat uneasy fit between Diana and the news story, particularly on television and in the broadsheet press. Stories about Diana carried to an extreme degree the tendency of news stories to personification, to the use of people to stand in for underlying issues: the economy, politics, the environment For much of her married life, Diana was literally speechless: it was clearly her person, her body, which was the news. Her *being there* was what was important This emphasis on simple presence was not sufficient for 'serious' reporting, but even when a story did develop it rarely fitted the agenda of the public sphere. The breakup of the marriage, it was argued, was a personal matter, and Diana's behaviour was shocking because she privileged the personal in the public sphere. This can be seen most clearly in the *Panorama* interview, in which she used the language of romance (the much mocked 'Queen of Hearts') and soap opera in an interview in the BBC's most prestigious current-affairs slot. Very often, though, the Diana news story avoided this contradiction by placing her within the context of constitutional issues and histories of the Royal Family.

All these narrative formats provided

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frameworks for placing and understanding Diana: they were not hidden structures, but deployed quite overtly The impact of her death was such that these frameworks had to be reworked in an extraordinarily intense fashion – and in a way which turned 'the people' themselves, or more particularly Diana's mourners, into writers of the story Watching the news coverage, seeing and hearing people interviewed, listening to phone-ins, one had a sense of participants confident of their own expertise, and becoming more so during the week between the death and the funeral.

On the day of her death Diana at last became, unproblematically, a news story; and it was on that Sunday that the news media, particularly television and radio, had the greatest control of its telling. They responded with reports of particular events – the Royal Family's church attendance, Charles's journey to Paris to bring her body home – and with analysis and discussion largely from 'experts' – Court correspondents, churchmen, reporters. On that day the news agenda was very quickly established and the emphasis, and blame for the accident, placed on the activities of the paparazzi and the tabloid press This had two functions: it allowed television journalists to distance themselves from the excesses of the popular press, and also produced a 'serious' issue for debate – the right to privacy. The discussions of that day were a classic example of the way in which news stories take hypotheses as fact and preclude alternative explanation Monday's announcement of the results of blood tests on the driver were shocking: not just for what was revealed, but for the way in which it threatened the neatness of the news story which had been established the previous day.

During the week that followed, however, the 'experts' found themselves less in control as the mourners began to participate in the event through laying flowers, signing condolences, radio phone-ins and television interviews Towards the end of the week, one Channel Four News featured interviews with people waiting to pay a last tribute. There was no commentary, and the anchorman concluded with the remark that reporters sent to the scene had discovered that people could speak for themselves. Kate Adie, the BBC's respected foreign correspondent, frequently commented on this: 'people are so articulate about it . . . they know what they want', she reported from outside Buckingham Palace. Commentary on radio phone-ins was more critical and demanding than the experts could afford to be. People phoning in and mourners laying flowers criticized the Queen's absence from London well before the press made it a headline issue later in the week. The traditional signifiers of royalty were studied for their usefulness in the cause of expressing grief, and refused if found wanting. The explanation for the absence of a flag flying at half mast over Buckingham Palace (the royal standard is flown only when the monarch is in residence) was deemed irrelevant: a flag had to be there so that it could say something 'different'.

Public response drew on the narrative frameworks which had been used extensively in Diana's life. In a literal sense, the death completed the narrative formats which up until then had lacked closure. The fairy-tale story required a perfect princess, and there were many who came forward as witnesses to Diana's good works. Again, the personal testimony of the ordinary became more important than that of the rich and famous, since Diana's goodness could precisely be confirmed by her concern for 'the people' This was an area with which the media felt quite comfortable, and footage of her visits to hospitals, hospices and charities featured strongly in news coverage. The fairy-tale element can also be seen in the way in which the happiness of her relationship with Dodi was insisted on by many of those interviewed. Harrods became one of the sites at which a final union between Diana and a

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man could be celebrated Ironically enough, the evidence for this final resolution of the fairy-tale had been the holiday photographs snatched by paparazzi.

Interestingly, though, many women among the mourners resisted the narrative of perfection and wanted to remember Diana as someone who changed things. They seemed to want a more flawed figure, whose faults lay precisely in her disruptive quality. This tale of disruption could be tamed somewhat by focusing on her position as a mother who fought for her children and for all children. But the notion of her rebellion against tradition, of a disruption which death should not be allowed to resolve in the manner of a classic narrative, was a persistent motif. While the woman as a disruptive element is at the heart of many soap operas, the abrupt ending of Diana's story made soap opera less useful as a narrative format: 'I can't believe there won't be another photograph', said one commentator. What is striking, however, is the dominance of soap opera values in the way in which people spoke about Diana's death Talk about private feelings – the staple of soap opera – was valued as the best way of expressing grief, and indeed as a sign of grief itself. In this discourse the refusal of the Queen and Charles to speak was taken to signify a lack of grief, and was harshly criticized. News story legitimations – the causes of the crash, privacy investigation – seemed less and less appropriate as the values of the private sphere asserted that the news story was precisely about the expression of grief and the assuaging of loss. For those outside this 'feminine' discourse, there was very little space in which to speak

The narrative frameworks I am describing were not hidden structures, and could be consciously deployed. These constructions helped to explain the Diana who for most people had been available only through the media. Ambivalence about the fictional formats which starred a real person might explain people's desire to outflank the media and reach Diana by other routes. Evidence for this can be seen in two phenomena: the witness provided by those who had met Diana, and the need to be physically present Those who had met Diana – journalists, politicians, friends – told their stories, but, critically, the accounts of 'ordinary people' always emphasized physical proximity, as if touch were the means whereby the reality of her presence could be asserted – sight being compromised by the media's endless use of photographs. Physical presence at the sites of mourning and at the funeral was also spoken of as a way of experiencing the event fully television offered a better view, but not the smell of the flowers, the touch of the crowds Ironically, the narratives of presence were recounted through the media, and the crowds at the Palaces became a media event in which those present used the media to tell those who relied on the media what they were missing.

Christine Geraghty

Image

The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, unleashed a deluge of media coverage. Diana rapidly became a cathartic object of grief, a symbol of hope, caring and community, and bearer of many grand themes from personal transformation to 'people power'. Her life was framed by a series of narratives: from chrysalis to butterfly, from fairy-tale wedding, through 'crowded marriage' to tragic divorce. Her death was presented in poignant contrasts: loving mother; motherless boys; joy at last discovered, joy cruelly thwarted; famous woman, created by media image; woman, destroyed by media image.

Visual representations were central to the construction of this event. Within days the mass media were representing 'the strength of feeling' and 'national mourning' through capturing gesture and symbolism. Cameras

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panned the carpets of floral tributes, focusing on the guttering flame of a candle, the poignant message, the gift of a teddy bear Visible acts of mourning were not only volunteered by 'the common people' but demanded of the Royal Family. In response to 'public demand', the union flag fluttered at half-mast at Buckingham Palace and television cameras focused hungrily on the physical interaction between Prince Charles and his sons.

But among all the visual symbolism, the most pervasive image was of Diana herself. The press produced tributes devoted entirely to photographs of her, with titles such as 'Diana: a life in pictures and front pages' (*Sun*, 2 September 1997). The face of 'the most photographed woman in the world' was used by mourners to adorn the gates of the Palaces. It was reproduced on commemorative plates, posters and T-shirts. Indeed, as if her image had become burnt upon the retina, some people even witnessed a miraculous vision of the princess, as she had looked in one of her magazine poses.

Diana's image also dominated television coverage. Footage of the princess interspersed commentary and news reports, and for several days, compilations of scenes from her life rounded off lunchtime and evening news bulletins. We were repeatedly presented with Diana in her wedding dress, in fashionable evening gowns or in casual wear with her boys. We saw Diana garlanded with flowers on a visit abroad, Diana in landmine protection gear. We saw the blonde and glowing princess, clad entirely in white, embracing a sick black child. Often these pictures were presented using cinematic conventions: soft focus; images framed with white lilies; shots played in slow motion, without any synchronous sound These conventions, suggesting 'flashbacks' and dream sequences, signal that this is not 'live' coverage They also carry a certain glamour, framing Diana in an angelic, 'not of this world' light

While Diana's image was repeatedly displayed, her voice was rarely heard. Footage of the princess was literally mute, in death, Diana, creature of the modern media, became star of the silent screen. Most of the compilation tapes and images were wordless, or included only the most brief and mundane remarks. In one *Reporting Scotland* bulletin the only words from the princess were 'I don't eat breakfast' – a response to a cameraman's enquiry (BBC1, 31 August 1997, 18.05). The absence of words is partly attributable to the fact that Diana was not an orator in any traditional sense. It is also due to the restrictions under which the media and Diana herself were operating. (With the exception of the notorious *Panorama* interview, statements about her own life were largely made public through a form of ventriloquism, as with Andrew Morton's biography) However, the absence of words was also testament to the power of Diana's image.

On the day she died, ITN was unusual in framing scenes from Diana's life with at least a few sentences spoken by the princess. Shots of her dancing, posing for *Vogue*, and cradling a child in her arms like a latter-day Madonna, were intercut with scenes from a public appearance at which she recited a poem. 'Life is mostly froth and bubble', she read, 'two things stand like stone, kindness in another's trouble, courage in your own' (ITN, 31 August 1997, 13.00).

The image of Diana as a woman who cared, and a woman who suffered, was a central motif in the coverage. Diana's 'troubles' were vividly 'revealed' through closeup shots of her looking tearful, and by illustrations of her estrangement from her husband: turning away from Prince Charles's kiss after a polo match, the couple in their car, staring coldly in opposite directions (ITN, 31 August 1997, 13.00) One particularly famous scene was repeatedly revisited· the princess sitting all alone in front of the Taj Mahal. Diana as victim,

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hunted by the paparazzi, was also a recurring theme. Because of the manner of her death, photographers were themselves literally 'in the frame'. Television coverage showed wide-angle footage of Diana pursued by photographers, dodging and turning her back like a hunted animal to escape the circling cameras (ITN, 31 August 1997, 13.00).

Diana's compassion was portrayed through her visits to the sick and the homeless, and her laying on of hands. AIDS was the first area in which the significance of Diana's touch emerged – shaking hands ungloved, hugging and keeping bedside vigil with those considered social pariahs At the time, sections of the media honoured her actions as 'courageous' and 'saintly', while others savagely attacked her. Nevertheless, Diana's actions were seen by many as proof that HIV was not transmissible by casual contact. It was Diana's then status *within* the establishment that made her touch so powerful (see Jenny Kitzinger, 'Visible and invisible women in AIDS discourse', in Doyal et al. [eds], *AIDS Setting a Feminist Agenda* [London: Taylor and Francis, 1994].

Diana's involvement in AIDS marked the beginning of a transformation of her image. Her *touch* began to have meaning over and above its 'royal stamp' This was quite explicit in the coverage of her death. Newspaper tributes after her death included photographs gathered under headings such as 'Diana the mother' or 'Diana the fashion icon'. Among these were pages devoted to her touch, with titles like 'Compassionate touch' (*News of the World*, 14 September 1997) and 'The caring side that saw Diana embrace the world' (*Daily Mail*, 1 September 1997). Television news repeatedly showed her running to embrace her sons, patting a child's knee, cupping an old woman's face, stroking a cheek and embracing a young boy, often with no indication of the nature of the event, nor of the identity of the object of her touch (for example, BBC1, 1 September 1997, 18 30).

Diana's story was essentially a story told in pictures, and in particular in television pictures. It is often remarked, not least by the media themselves, that 'Diana' was a creation of the modern mass media. She was, according to *USA Today* 'the princess of the MTV generation' and, according to the *Sunday Times*, 'first lady of the global village' (quoted in the *Guardian*, 3 September 1997; *Sunday Times*, 7 September 1997). Communications technology, continuous live news coverage and the expansion of radio and television coverage were central to the public experience of her life and death. The media coverage gave its consumers a sense of intimacy with Diana, of involvement in her story, and for many young women a sense of Diana's life as parallel to their own. The obsession with her life mirrored the growth in 'reality television', fly-on-the-wall documentaries and video–internet sites. Her story operated as a modern fairy-tale, soap opera and Oprah Winfrey show rolled into one. In addition, as Bryan Appleyard pointed out, when the final episode came, 'Diana dies everywhere and instantly - on the Internet, CNN and every television screen in the world, on the radio, in every newspaper, she was the first icon fully to live and die in the global village' (*Sunday Times*, 7 September 1997, p. 6).

However, such analyses ignore important distinctions between different media Rather than generalizing about the imagery in the media as a whole, I want to isolate television, and explore the extent to which the *moving* image was essential to producing the Diana mythology and shaping the 'national shock and mourning'.

This analysis is informed by the fact that I do not own a television, and as a result, saw none of the television coverage of Diana's death until two weeks after the event. In the meantime I had relied on newspapers and radio for constructions of the event. When I did eventually watch the video recordings of the period between her death and her funeral

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I was struck by the extra dimensions added by the television portraits and by the moving power of the moving image. Television imagery was able to portray the living princess in very particular ways, starkly framing her death and constructing a seamless unity of public grief.

At its most basic, television was able fully to capitalize on the power of Diana's image, providing hundreds and hundreds of images – not just the few dozen that could be packed into newspaper tributes These pictures, unlike still photographs, could be juxtaposed with music, words, text or silence; and full use was made of television's capacity for framing, editing and movement

Part of Diana's appeal lay in gesture and movement Her famous 'look' could not be fully captured in a still photograph. Its 'flirtatious' effect lay in eye movement, the intense glance followed by the shy look away. Her attraction lay not in 'posing' but in 'spontaneity'. It is no coincidence that standard formal paintings of her were said to appear insipid. In this sense Princess Diana was neither 'attractive' nor even simply photogenic, she was, above all, 'telegenic'. The oft repeated theme of 'touch' was also better illustrated by television's time frame for action. Television could show the prolonged stroking of a child's knee, the clasping of hands for several seconds, the intense and maintained gaze into the eyes of a sick child, Diana kneeling quietly beside a young blind man as he slowly and meticulously felt her face to construct a portrait of her in his mind (ITV, *Princess of the People*, 5 September 1997, 21.30). Such scenes showed not only 'the caring touch', but the extent to which Diana was open to the touch of others. In inviting as well as receiving touch, she also breached royal protocol (remember the outcry when the Australian Prime Minister placed his hand on the Queen's back)

The television camera not only captured movement, but also provided it. Several news bulletins showed snapshots from private visits where no television cameras were present The absence of television cameras was used to signal Diana's 'genuine commitment'. But, lest we miss their significance, the photographs were scanned minutely. In one photograph of Diana having her hand kissed by a young man, our gaze was directed from the man's lips, along Diana's arm and up to her face. Another snapshot was filmed to draw the viewer's eye to the princess's enthusiastic physical contact with others. focusing first on a resident in a battered women's refuge, still seated, holding out her hand, the camera scanned the image to reveal Diana herself, out of her chair, almost lunging across the table as she stretched to reach out to the other woman (*Princess of the People*).

Mobile framing was thus used with particular effect to communicate Diana's warmth. Above all, it presented her as vibrantly alive. It was this which made television the ideal medium for communicating the drama of her death. This is reinforced by the status of film and video recordings in western culture. The dead are immobile and silent, the living speak and move. Technology which reproduces the 'living' voice or moving image offers a far more startling conjuring up of the dead than other records. Film and video recordings seem more 'lifelike', we have learned to see them as closer simulations to 'the real thing'. We are acclimatized (relatively) to the dead leaving behind letters and photographs. The contrast between such 'frozen in time' records of life and the facts of death are a little less stark (at least for those who have no personal relationship with the dead). New technologies confront us with new manifestations of the departed, however. As answerphones became widespread, people encountered the shock of recorded messages replayed after the speaker's sudden death, and western culture is still getting used to video recordings of deceased family members

In Diana's case, of course, most people

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only ever knew her through media portraits. How could her death be absorbed when she 'lived on' as television viewers had always known her? How could we not be shocked by the contrast between the intellectual knowledge that she had died and the visual representation (even if now in slow motion) of Diana, 'so full of life'. (The security video footage of Diana leaving the Ritz moments before the accident, added an extra edge to such coverage).

Further drama was provided by the raw immediacy of television reporting. News reports of Diana's death displayed all the rough edges of 'live' coverage· the clips from CNN, Peter Sissons assigning the wrong name and gender to the BBC's correspondent in Paris, newscasters turning to blank screens where location shots were meant to appear. From the start this marked out these bulletins from their routine counterparts, branding the event with the status of a major disaster, worthy of instantaneous newsflashes around the world The emotional tempo was raised by the way in which journalists and newscasters, who traditionally scorn emotional displays, were visibly shocked and publicly stated that they were close to tears.

Mobile cameras fully exploited the dramatic potential of events. Both ITN and BBC news bulletins treated viewers to a car trip down the tunnel in which Diana was killed. As the camera shot down the tunnel in the front seat of a car we were informed that this was the route of her last journey. While the BBC took a straight line through the tunnel, ITN allowed the camera to swerve slightly towards the pillars of the underpass, and the sequence was cut before we emerged once more into the light (BBC1, 1 September 1997, 1800, BBC2, 1 September 1997, 22.30; ITN, 31 August 1997, 13.00).

Such camerawork was combined with dramatic juxtapositions. Bulletin after bulletin showed images of the princess and then cut to pictures of the mangled wreckage of the car. Pat Kane, writing in *The Herald*, described his own experience of watching such reports. Every time he saw a television clip of Diana, he was: 'For a second, stunned by her tele-presence, you think: is she still alive then? But almost instantly, the TV report will then transmit that image which is almost becoming a fetishistic object, a necessary visual punctuation . . . the S-class Merc, a knot of painted black metal, squished flat like a cheap toy car. . . . If sex, death, and technology were ever compacted into one object, this would be it.' Such repeated juxtapositions led him to suggest that the only person with anything 'original to say about this century-defining event' must be 'J.G. Ballard, controversial author of *Crash*' (*The Herald*, 4 September 1997, p. 17)

The final theme in Diana's post-mortem emerged in representations of public reaction to her death While, the 'nation in mourning' was represented in all the media coverage, it was television images which most insistently presented a 'seamless unity in grief'. Self-consciously employing the double meaning of contemplation and imagery, BBC news bulletins used a compilation tape called 'Diana reflections'. The tape showed familiar scenes from her life, intercut with a singing choirboy, and soundbites from representatives of diverse charities. It concluded by cutting between the different interviewees as each spoke, as if with one voice, a consecutive line from a prayer (BBC, 'Diana reflections', 5 September 1997). Elsewhere the television cameras displayed closeup shots of weeping faces, often then pulling back to show a massive crowd The impression was that everyone was united in grief, that everyone was in tears.

It was not only the television viewer's gaze which was guided in particular ways. Images of Diana's face were often intercut with scenes of mourning, and giant portraits of the princess dominated studio discussions (*Princess of Wales a Tribute*, BBC1, 31 August 1997, 20 00). News bulletin footage

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panned from closeups of the princess's picture to writers in books of condolence (*Reporting Scotland*, BBC, 31 August 1997, 18.05; BBC, 5 September 1997, 21 30) In BBC coverage of the funeral, Diana's face was superimposed on a bird's-eye view from high in the roof of Westminster Abbey during the minute's silence. Her downcast and compassionate gaze appeared to fall on the scene below (6 September 1997).

Unusually, television coverage also made dramatic use of silence. The Channel 5 news on the day of Diana's death, for example, simply opened with a picture of the princess, with no caption. This image was held for a few seconds of silence before the written words appeared: Diana, Princess of Wales, 1961-1997 (Channel 5, 31 August 1997, 12.50). Silence was even more marked in the broadcast of the funeral which was dominated by the clipclop of horses' hooves as they pulled Diana's coffin through the still streets of London Here, silence was not created by editorial muting of the ambient sound, silence *was* the sound. As Anthony Troon of *The Scotsman* commented, television 'is supposed to be the medium which abhors an audio vacuum, where every unforgiving minute has to be filled with prattle. But at times on Saturday, it seemed that the leaden quiet of the London millions had presented the medium with an unexpected challenge They were going to have to record hush. Their commentators were going to have to shut up. Hush was the story.' (*The Scotsman*, 8 September 1997, p. 26)

In a multimedia world, momentous events and famous people are created though many forms: television, radio, newspapers, magazines and often, too, the internet. But television has a special role. Of the multitude of media through which 'Diana' was created, television was certainly the most important Princesses feature in many stories, and powerful narratives which predate television inform the Diana myth. A troubled and troublesome princess, a young life cut short, two motherless princes – all these are events with a narrative force which would have entered the repertoire of myth without the aid of television But the Diana icon that we know depends on images, and especially on the everyday familiarity and moving power of television images.

And yet television, and indeed the media as a whole, cannot contain every aspect of Diana. Her life was not a script, her death was not staged; and public response, though choreographed by the media, sometimes exceeded its mediation. The silence of the crowd at Diana's funeral was broken as the people applauded her brother's tribute Were the crowds watching on the big screens outside Westminster Abbey assuming the role of mourners, fans or protesters? As the applause rolled into the Abbey itself, what kind of spiral was set up between the outdoor screens, the public, the Abbey and television? The limitations of an exclusively media-based analysis must also be recognized at another level The myth of Diana now reaches beyond the confines of the media, and its meanings cannot be understood through analysis of media content alone. How did people make sense of, and work with, Diana's image as a vehicle for their own aspirations, fears and desires? How did her image take on its own momentum in a particular historical and political context? What forms of cultural production took place beyond the screen? How did people's experience of her death intersect with what they saw and heard around them in the streets? While writing this essay I repeatedly asked people I met to describe their most memorable image from the previous two weeks. I was struck by the extent to which they not only described television images but also their own encounters with strangers, the reactions of friends and relatives, their own direct experiences of the rituals of mourning. The 'Diana phenomenon' was created through the mass media, but has become imprinted on the collective memory. Diana the media-created

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icon outlives and now overreaches its progenitor.

Jenny Kitzinger

Nation

In the week following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, there was a palpable sense of unease regarding the location of boundaries between the global, the national, the popular and the personal. The tensions circulated at least in part around the following issues: she was an international phenomenon who also had to be reclaimed as a national one; she was part of the Establishment, however problematically, but also a popular icon perceived as being in opposition to it; she was a public figure, but some, at least, experienced her death as a personal loss. Media commentaries that week and beyond became obsessed by these issues, but for me this sense of unease was best epitomized by Tony Blair's announcements and the Queen's broadcast, and finally crystallized in the ways in which the funeral service was televised by the BBC and ITV.

In his first response to the news, Blair spoke about the reactions of 'the whole of our country', and then referred to the feelings of 'people not just in Britain but throughout the world' – a phrase which was no doubt intended to sound soothingly inclusive, but which somehow only succeeded in underlining an opposition. Later that morning, he again spoke of 'this country' before substituting a qualified use of the word 'nation': 'We are today a nation, in Britain, in a state of shock'. Although this was a move which acknowledged his global audience (leave out the 'in Britain' and it sounds much more parochial), for a domestic audience aware of the looming devolution referenda, it perhaps also carried the unfortunate implication that in a British context, the word 'nation' no longer possessed a clearly defined referent. In his second announcement, Blair again used the awkward 'in Britain – throughout the world', before adapting it with his trademark term: 'the people everywhere, not just here in Britain but everywhere . . .'. By so doing, and by calling Diana 'the people's princess', Blair managed temporarily to surmount the problems of inclusiveness and exclusiveness in the inter/national binary. But his use of the term 'the people' set up another opposition which was to require very careful handling as the week wore on.

Although at times 'the people' were synonymous with 'the nation', there were moments when they became the antithesis of the nation-as-Establishment. With demands for the funeral route to be lengthened, for the Queen to make a broadcast, and for the union flag to fly at half mast over Buckingham Palace, 'the people' became citizens rather than subjects, and Blair was in the tricky position of having simultaneously to side with the Royal Family and to align the Government with popular sentiment. Paradoxically, in his third official statement on the Wednesday, he was at pains to point out not that the people of Britain shared the grief of the Royal Family, but that 'they share our grief'.

It was in this announcement that the public/personal distinction also came to the fore. In his first statement Blair had said that Diana would be mourned 'as a friend', but now he spoke 'not just of national loss but personal loss', in what seemed to be an attempt to contain popular feeling by once again recasting 'the people' as 'the nation'. Blair somehow managed to pull off this makeshift elision, and the painstakingly balanced rhetorical structure he had succeeded in building continued to hold up. With the Queen's broadcast on the Friday, however, it all started to look a bit shaky again.

The ways in which the Queen's statement negotiated the tensions outlined so far only served to strengthen that sense, which had

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been intensifying throughout the week, of an institution trying desperately to catch up with the times and never quite succeeding. The extent to which the Royal Family and its advisors were still out of synch at this point was demonstrated by the problems the Queen's statement had in maintaining Blair's elisions. The Queen's reference to the sadness expressed 'throughout Britain and around the world' echoed Blair's initial phrase and worked well enough, even if things had moved on since then; but her statement that the funeral was 'a chance to show to the whole world the British nation united in grief and respect' threatened the tentative sense of inclusiveness that he had subsequently created. All of a sudden, it was back to 'us and them', the British versus everyone else, the meaning of 'the nation' temporarily returning to the nation-as-Establishment rather than the nation-as-the-people, to the pedagogic rather than the performative (see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*).

Despite this, there was at least a passing reference to popular sentiment when the Queen mentioned the 'lessons to be drawn from . . [Diana's] . . . life and from the extraordinary and moving reaction to her death', and brief attempts were made to acknowledge criticisms of the Royal Family's reaction and to establish a sense of solidarity. 'We have all been trying in our different ways to cope'; 'We have all felt those emotions in these last few days' It would perhaps have been too much to expect the Queen to acknowledge openly the relative popularity of Diana's much less formal style, let alone to start talking enthusiastically about 'the people'

It was perhaps with the public/private binary that the Queen's speech was most successful. Not only did she acknowledge that 'Millions . never met . . . [Diana] but felt they knew her', but she also addressed us 'as . . . your Queen and as a grandmother'. Even if this was not very plausible, there was at least a sense that she was trying, and so it was unfortunate that there was more of the headmistress than of the grandmother about her final behest that 'each and every one of us, thank God . .'

Much could be said about the funeral service itself, and particularly about Earl Spencer's tribute; but the different ways in which the BBC and ITV handled it – in terms of their emphasis on its national character, and in how they addressed the official versus the popular, and the public versus the personal – is perhaps of more immediate relevance here The BBC made much more of the national element, the commentary just prior to the beginning of the service terming it 'the focus of a nation's remarkable outpouring of grief and affection'. Although there was no direct reference to the Englishness (as opposed to the Britishness) of the event, there was a close shave with mention of the private funeral later to take place 'in a green corner of Northamptonshire'. But balance of sorts was attempted with an instructive black flash at the bottom of the screen informing us when the choir sang 'Air from County Derry', and shots of the crowd holding Welsh dragon flags for 'Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer', with the accompanying commentary, 'For the Princess of Wales, a great Welsh hymn', just in case we missed its significance If there were any implicit Scottish references in the service, however, then the BBC, at least, did not comment on them. At the end of the service there was an attempt to return to the national theme, as we were reminded: 'For one minute the whole nation keeps silence'.

When it came to dealing with the official versus the popular the BBC, not surprisingly, took a conservative line. This was perhaps best expressed via the camera work, which was at times reminiscent of *Songs of Praise*, and at others bore a striking similarity to a televised display of synchronized swimming A sense of formality and distance was

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achieved by the use of highly composed shots of stained glass windows – often with a didactically Christian content – and Abbey architecture, as well as by some strange shots of the coffin, the candles, and the patterned floor from directly overhead. There were relatively few shots of the crowd outside, though the superimposition on a shot of the Abbey interior of a slowly fading picture of Diana could perhaps be read as a concession to the popular The predominant use of aerial and crane shots with relatively few eye-level shots, a frequent use of slight diagonals for filming speakers, and ruthless editing when it came to shots of the chief mourners, all resulted in the creation of anything but a personal tone.

With ITV, there was less emphasis on the national and a much more popular and personal feel Perhaps because there was less 'educational' commentary during the service itself, there were fewer references to the nation. Instead, ITV went for 'the people's' approach, with more shots of celebrities from the worlds of pop and fashion, a greater number of shots of the crowd outside, and an emphasis on the diversity of its members. Indeed, it was as if ITV was attempting to represent the 'emotional' and 'marginalized' members of the rapidly redefined nation that the media had been hailing guiltily all week as their new constituency. There were fewer aerial and crane shots, more mid shots and closeups – often head-on rather than from a diagonal – and less deferential treatment of the chief mourners. Whereas the BBC gave us shots of the backs of the Princes laying their wreath, ITV ensured that we could at least see Prince Charles crossing himself. And if the ITV coverage was at times uncomfortably claustrophobic, there was also something particularly heartwrenching about the way in which the bearing of the coffin was shot. It was frequently filmed coming directly at us, or moving vertically down screen rather than being shot from a diagonal. At the end of the service, it repeatedly disappeared from view before being shot in a particularly long take, setting up a feeling of suspense that we were about to lose it yet again By contrast, the BBC's filming was less direct, and perhaps, therefore, less traumatic.

What these various discourses underlined for me was the fact that the nation really is an extremely delicate construct. It can only exist in opposition to other nations, resulting in a continuous reiteration of difference. Particularly during times of heightened emotion, it requires constant political containment and reclamation, so that the potential hysteria of the leaderless group becomes aligned with, and neutralized by, the structures of the State. As someone pointed out, what might have happened had all this occurred under the previous Government is something that hardly bears thinking about Instead, with skilful political handling, 'the people' could be allowed their moment of triumph before being firmly recast as New Labour's 'New Nation'. But perhaps what was most interesting about these discourses was that they raised the question of whether there really was a tension between national and personal mourning for Diana. For perhaps mourning a public figure and possessing a sense of nationhood are both based on identification, and the nation is only ever a substitute, part of an ongoing process of mourning, for our most fundamental, originary losses.

Beth Edginton

Space

I live in central London. On the morning of the funeral I began to watch television as the cortege began its journey through Hyde Park, and then through familiar streets. Most striking perhaps was not the expected silent crowds nor the crunching hooves and feet, but the rhythmic tolling of the Westminster

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Abbey bell, once every minute: a kind of *passacaglia* to the morning's events Some time around 10.15, as the procession neared Whitehall, my wife and I decided to walk to the Abbey, not in the expectation of actually seeing anything – that is not in the expectation of seeing *her* – but more to take in the atmosphere, the silence, the emptiness of the city, the strangeness of it all; and of course, though perhaps more self-consciously, to participate in some way, to share, to claim, to own a piece of it.

We left the television on: the rest of the household was beginning to emerge. And we could hear the bell continuing to toll as we walked down the stairs to the front door and out into the sunshine. At the threshold we could still hear it, but now it came not from the television but from the Abbey itself It was *real*. The same bell. The same sound. But real. We had in some simple but mysterious way punctured media space, moved away from mediated reflection and representation and into experience. In that moment we had seamlessly mimicked the actions of the millions who left the safe, domestic unambiguity of media representation and made the pilgrimage to London during those extraordinary days before, during and even after, the funeral.

It is this passage from, this escape from, this *appropriation of*, media space on which I want to reflect here, in the recognition of course that the relationship is more insidious and more complicated than can be encompassed in a few pages. The question I want to address is this: how and why is it that as the world media went into spasm on the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, millions upon millions of ordinary folk (myself among them) decided to get up out of their armchairs, leave their front rooms, take the commuter train and *occupy* public space – and, indeed, public time, since the public holiday that was the funeral was not declared as such; and the funeral itself, by all accounts, was created to fulfil the projections of those who wanted to be, needed to be, on the streets beside her.

Many explanations of this behaviour have already been offered. The key words have been mass hysteria, religious fervour, media manipulation. Each privileges a dimension of (mostly gendered) vulnerability, in which observed behaviour (and *pace* Max Weber, it is behaviour rather than motivated action that is being addressed) is defined, psychoanalytically, spiritually or sociologically, through a frame that gives little or no credibility to the capacity of individuals to take charge of, or responsibility for, what they feel, believe in or do. To be sure, it is easy to be seduced into the opposite position, to romanticize our freedom from the collective forces of contemporary culture, to exaggerate the capacities of individuals to determine and to define for themselves their own place in mass society. Both positions have truth within them Each, on its own, is untenable. At issue of course, now, is how to understand the specificities, not the generalities, of these responses and the relationships they express and engender.

Why Diana?

Well, she was beautiful. She was young. She was vulnerable. She was a princess. She was an ex-member of a royal family riven by dissent and tortured by decline. She was from time to time, and perhaps increasingly, able to use the media for her own ends, assuming that she knew what those ends were and could hold on to that knowledge long enough. In the crosscurrents of contemporary mythology, her life was myth supreme. As one card pinned to a tree in the Mall poignantly put it, 'Diana, you were not allowed to live your own fairy-tale', an observation that perhaps (mis) recognizes the tragic paradox the fairy-tale inevitably sustains.

For me the key event in this fairy-tale, more Grimm than Andersen perhaps, was the *Panorama* interview of 1995. In that interview, and of course in the consequent

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media response which electrifyingly fanned and intensified its content, Diana broke the bounds, and like those who subsequently occupied public space in her name, punctured the conventions of the media's representation of royalty.

These conventions, and they have been well analysed by David Chaney, involve the emergence of an increasing tension between public and private, symbol and reality The construction of the royal family as media figures, as the symbolic centre of Britain's forlorn attempt at nation building during the twentieth century, involved a delicate manoeuvre to preserve its status, while at the same time making it accessible and human The parallels with the Hollywood star system have been noted, and are intensely relevant, as Elton John's choice of musical epitaph made crystal clear. While it is certain that television was a key medium in this project, and the 1953 Coronation its beginning, Diana's wedding involved a major shift of gear (my house is still cluttered with wedding memorabilia, including a fine tin tea tray and an equally fine tea caddy), a shift in which, wittingly or unwittingly, the Palace colluded.

How were they to know that the project could not but be doomed; that the tension between public pomp and private passion could only be fatal? How could they anticipate the carnivorous appetite of the media, domesticating the wild symbolic for mass consumption? Until Diana, and perhaps especially until that television interview, the tensions and contradictions were being managed – just. But she blew it She blew it all away.

The *Panorama* interview created a new space, a space that was outside the media frame, though essentially still contained by it. The balance between symbol and reality had, possibly permanently, been shifted: not because she attacked the Palace (though that was hardly likely to be inconsequential) but because she displayed more humanity than she was permitted. Of course, all of this was premeditated, much of it coached, and some of it probably disingenuous. Yet the desire to be a 'Queen of Hearts' (as much as the achievement of becoming the 'People's Princess') severed the head, and enabled her to occupy – though still as symbol – a transcendent space. The hagiography began at that moment. What was signified above all was the possibility of breaking the bounds. It was a lesson that was to be vividly learned, one which was reproduced by the million in the actions of those who subsequently broke their own media bounds and, although still contained and indeed increasingly exploited by the media, occupied the streets of London.

Who placed the first flower?

We are told that, in the media age, there is no escape from the simulacra. That everything we touch is mediated, transformed, poisoned by media. That the boundaries between reality and fantasy, truth and falsehood, fact and fiction can no longer be determined, are no longer any use. This is indeed what we are told. But such a position downgrades experience to insignificance. It is empirically vacuous. It is frighteningly amoral. Even if it is easy to exaggerate the power of the popular demonstration (which was far from being a popular revolt) and to intimate, as the press have not been slow to do, that this might signal the end of the monarchy, indeed the end of life in Britain as we know it; and even if the Republic is not yet at hand, it would be a terrible mistake to consign the actions and feelings of so many to the dustbin of mediation.

To walk among those who gathered before and during the funeral was to walk amongst (and this is not romance) ordinary people: families, generations, ethnically diverse, middle, most suburban, England, who were not just taking the media air, but actively participating in an event which without them would have been meaningless. There was tourism and voyeurism, of course (and I, in part, was both tourist and voyeur), but there

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was also a powerful set of claims and connections women identifying with the woman, children identifying with the child, parents identifying with the parent, lovers with the lovers (it is amazing how many tributes included Dodi Fayed), dreamers with the shattered dreams. And these identifications, these connections, were acted upon. They were performed. The ritual was being invented in real time. And public space was being occupied. You could smell the lilies.

No matter that this whole performance was in turn appropriated, not to say encouraged and sustained, by the media themselves. The performance itself was a popular appropriation in which meanings were shared and in which shared experiences were forged and would be remembered And performance, indeed, is what it was, a 'doing and a thing done', drifting between past and present, presence and absence, consciousness and memory (Elin Diamond, *Performance and Cultural Politics*). In this performance, performed for the self and performed for the other, participants claimed ownership of an event which in those very claims clawed it back from the clutches of the media. In this performance, daily played out both in front of, and beyond the reach of, television cameras and the notebooks of journalists, we put our own stamp on things. And this piece is yet another attempt to do just that.

Roger Silverstone

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