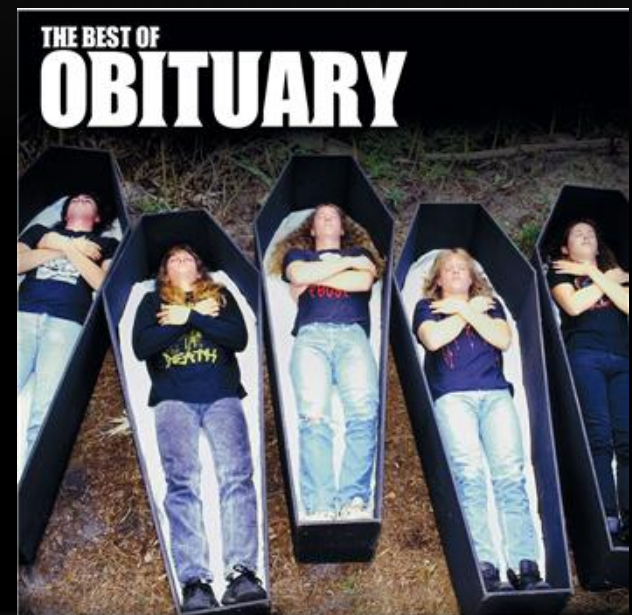


A matter of life and death:
the re-presentation of a musician's
suicide through the lens of the
obituary

Paula Hearsom
Senior Lecturer - University of
Brighton



Obituary

Dictionary

A published announcement of a death, often accompanied by a short biography of the dead person.

Etymology

[C18 from Medieval latin obituarius, from Latin obire to fall, from ob - down + ire - to go]



DEATH NOTICE

VELMA "PENNY" HATFIELD

Age 85, of Deland, Florida, passed away Thursday, December 31, 1992. Born in Mt. Washington, Ohio, Mrs. Hatfield moved to Florida in 1965 from Wooster, Ohio. She was a retired dental assistant for her husband. Mrs. Hatfield was a member of the St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in DeLand, the West Volusia Hospital Auxiliary, the Order of the Eastern Star #270 and the Order of the White Shrine of Jerusalem, Damascus Shrine #11 both of Wooster, Ohio.

She is survived by her husband of 66 years, Waldo E. Hatfield of DeLand; daughter, Jeanne Burleson of Melbourne, Florida; sisters, Ruth Wynn of Clearwater, Florida and Marjorie Nair of Clifton Forge, Virginia; brothers, Langdon Penny of Cincinnati, Ohio and Richard Dunn of Orlando, Florida; two grandchildren, Paul Burleson of Melbourne and Walda Sue Burleson of Stuart, Florida; and two great grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family prefers memorial donations be made to Hospices of Volusia, 655 North Clyde Morris Boulevard, Daytona Beach, Florida 32114.



panegyric
 biography
 elegy
 epitaph
 eulogy



“...obituary columns pick over the expired human condition and deliver their posthumous review with a formidable exercise of authority. They inform, they enlighten, they entertain; they also have the capacity to offend and wound... There is a duty to present a complete account so that the cause of historical record is satisfied. In composing these posthumous studies, therefore, writers and editors frequently encounter an ethical dilemma in deciding what measure of intimate information should be revealed. The cause of death (particularly if self-inflicted) and the subject’s sexual persuasion appear in this regard as questions of notable complexity”

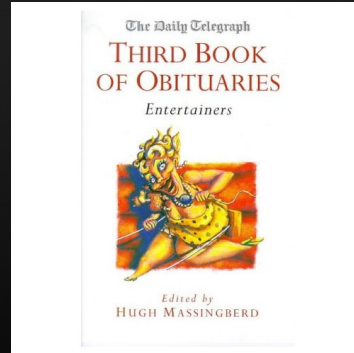
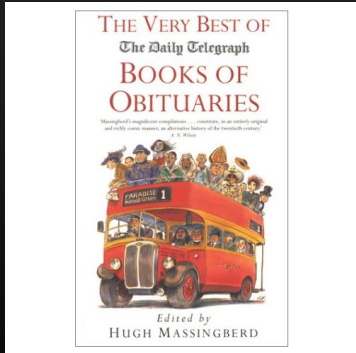
Starck, N, 2007. ‘Revelation, Intrusion and Questions of Taste: The ethical challenge for obituary editors’ in: *Journalism Practice*. Vol 1, Issue 3, Oct 2007. pp372-382



Centre for Ageing and Biographical Studies - Open University

Bytheway, B. & Johnson, J. 1996 'Valuing Lives? Obituaries and the life course' in: *Mortality*, Vol 1, No 2, pp219-233

Ethical issues



NUJ Code of Conduct

6. Does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest

5.

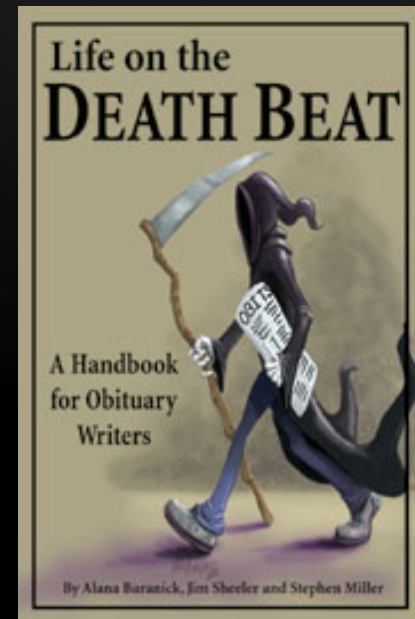
Intrusion into grief or shock

- i) In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings, such as inquests.
- *ii) When reporting suicide, care should be taken to avoid excessive detail about the method used.

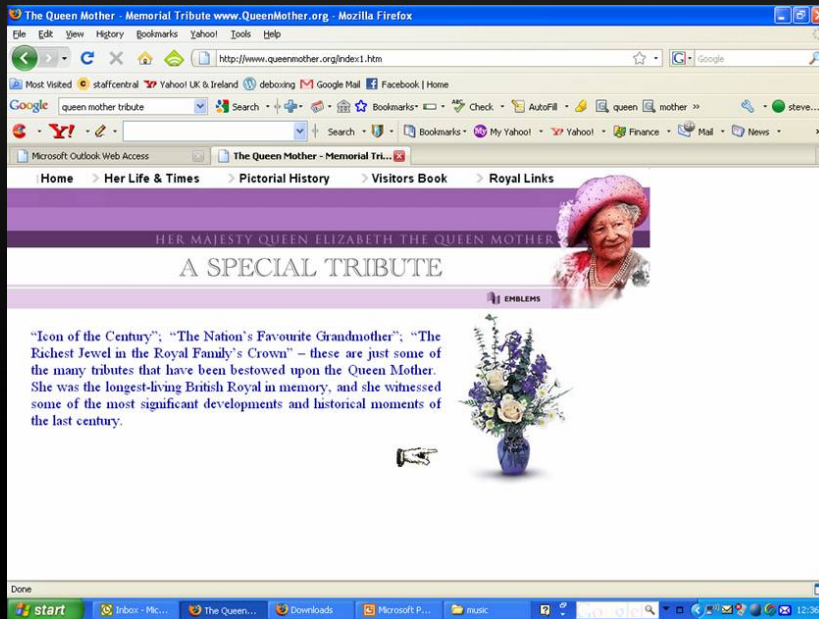
Question of style (guides)



Alana Baranick



The most expensive obit in history?



“It seems inconceivable that Blossom Dearie should die of old age”

Dellar, F. 2009. *Mojo*. May 2009: 37

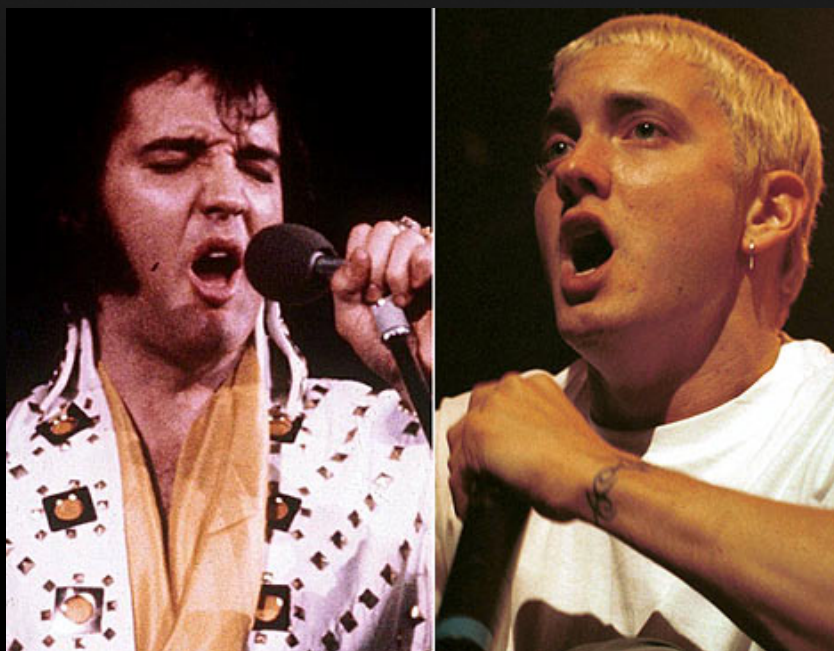


Forever 27 Club



"Now he's gone and
joined that stupid club.
I told him not to join
that stupid club."
Wendy Cobain in the *Aberdeen
Daily World*





**‘Elvis to Eminem:
quantifying the price of
fame through early
mortality of European
and North American
rock and pop stars’**

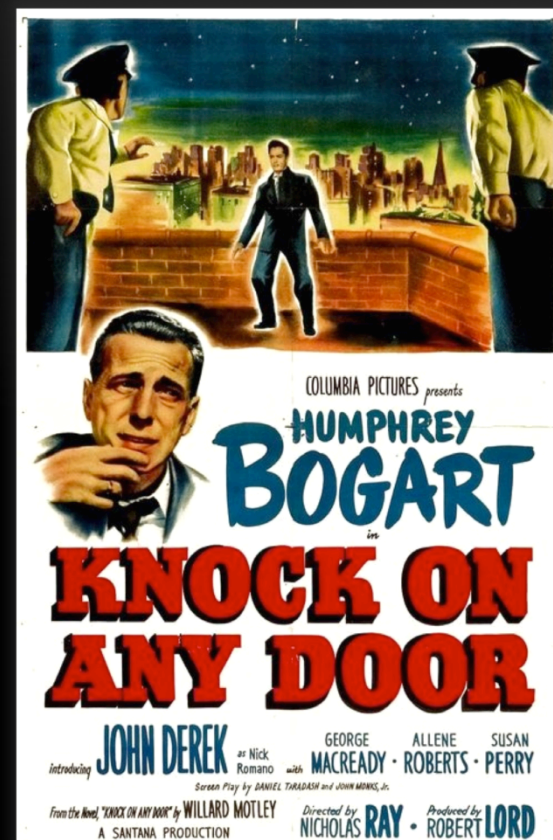
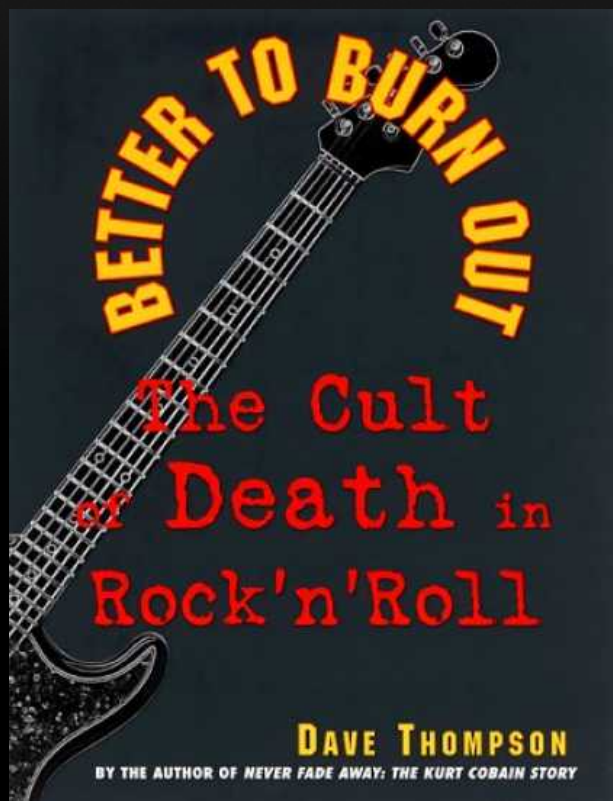
Mark A Bellis (*et al*) *Journal of
Epidemiology and Community
Health*. Vol 61, Issue 10, 2007.
61:896-901

“Rock'n'roll is the perfect scenario for people who need a lot of attention, who were ignored as kids. It's the most indulged, ridiculous situation. It used to be that as a rock star everyone was happy if you killed yourself.”

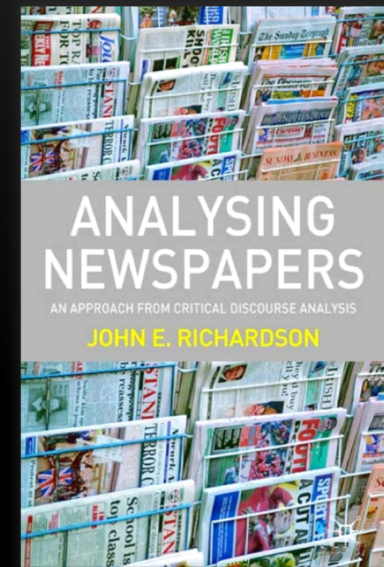
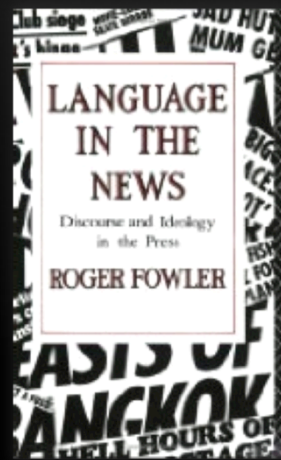
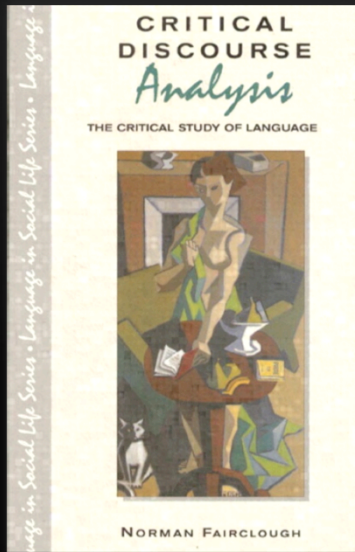
[Michael Hutchence, Q, 1993](#)



Live fast, die young and leave a good-looking corpse



Critical Discourse Analysis





Holding the space

- Gans, H. 1979. *Deciding What's News*. New York: Vintage
- Schudson, H. 1992 *Watergate in American Memory*. New York: Basic Books
- New York Times - [Portraits of Grief](#)
- Kear, A & Steinberg, L. (Eds). 1999. *Mourning Diana: Nation, Culture and the Performance of Grief*. New York: Routledge
- Fowler, B. 2004. 'Mapping the Obituary: Notes towards a Bourdieusian interpretation' in: *Sociological Review*. Vol 2. Issue 52. pp148-171





Hearsum, P & Inglis, I. 2010. 'When Two Worlds Collide: Michael Jackson: Celebrity, Death & the King of Pop. In: *The Journal of Celebrity Studies*. Vol 1 Issue 2. (forthcoming)

Mark Linkous

- Broadsheets
- Euphemisms
- Age
- Scene
- 'haunting'
- OD-induced heart attack
- Drugs use
- Depression
- Musical themes of death
- Other musician-suicides
- Posthumous work
- URLs - <http://www.rollingstone.com/rockdaily/index.php/2010/03/06/sparklehorses-mark-linkous-takes-own-life/>
- Images



From the Linkous Family: "It is with great sadness that we share the news that our dear friend and family member, Mark Linkous, took his own life today. We are thankful for his time with us and will hold him forever in our hearts. May his journey be peaceful, happy and free. There's a heaven and there's a star for you." - March 6, 2010



“There is no such thing as bad publicity except your own obituary.”

Brendan F. Behan

