

PURVEYING AFFECT: CANADIAN NEWSPAPER
COVERAGE OF THE DIANA SPENCER AND
KARLA HOMOLKA CHRONOLOGIES

SALEM ALATON

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines two major news chronologies in Canadian newspapers to see if through selective emphasis and language use they have been constructed to prompt affective response in readers. Key categories of longstanding press mechanisms to purvey affect are scrutinized within the material: creating a sense of intimacy with the news protagonist; sexualizing story content; and depicting the content as comprising scandal. Following respected Canadian broadsheets on the ostensibly contrasting stories of Diana Spencer and Karla Homolka, this work employs a discourse analysis to seek patterns of text-embedded affect prompts which correspond to press practices of some two centuries. It strives to contextualize the presence of these through the academic literature of sociology, communications theory and psychology. The effort brings into a contemporary and mainstream Canadian news media context practices more fully described in American and British press histories and associated more closely with the sensationalism of tabloid reporting.

DEDICATION

To my journalism students at Humber College, a bright next generation that must make sense of a transformed media spectrum and find the means there to cast light on what we need to know.

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**Purveying Affect: Canadian newspaper coverage of the Diana Spencer
and Karla Homolka chronologies**

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INTRODUCTION

The specific research question this thesis addresses is whether Canadian newspapers positioned two contrasting news chronologies through the same press mechanisms of selective emphasis to prompt readers' affective engagement. Selective emphasis could be illustrated by example as an editorial decision to describe the hair, makeup and clothing of a woman on trial for murder, or of one being considered for a central role in monarchical succession. An effort to prompt affective engagement could be comprised of the publication of details of the private life of such a public personality to foster in readers a sense of intimacy with that news-story protagonist, given that the emotions of story characters are promptings to reader emotions (Oatley 16).^{*} The news chronologies being examined, those of Diana Spencer from the time of her affiance to Prince Charles in 1981, and of Karla Homolka from the time of her arrest on murder charges in 1993, afford ostensibly antithetical story elements weighted largely to depictions of idealized love in the former case and extreme transgression in the latter. The choice of these chronologies stems partly from the point that they comprised two of the most widely and frequently disseminated ongoing news stories in Canada over the last three decades. These stories can still generate renewed bursts of press attention long after the death of one protagonist (as upon anniversaries of Diana's passing) and the disappearance into anonymity of the other (with a cluster of new reports appearing most

^{*}Although this thesis draws principally on the academic literature of the social sciences, citations are created according to the most current version of MLA style for reasons discussed in full on page 110.

recently in June, 2012, about Homolka's sighting by Canadian journalist Paula Todd [*Finding Karla*]). As the historical context described in this thesis is of the newspaper industry's tradition of connecting sensation to popular interest, the commercial dynamism of the Diana Spencer and Karla Homolka chronologies made them ready candidates in a search for affective prompts within news reporting. Further, their widely divergent content provided an opportunity to observe if longstanding press mechanisms for purveying affect are similarly deployed across such distinctive genres of news chronology as true crime and high society romance, gesturing toward a possible generality of their use. Finally, an analysis of their handling in mainstream Canadian newspapers brought into an under-examined Canadian media context those press practices of sensationalism whose origins and most notable English-language deployments belong to media traditions in the United States and Britain (J. Morris 214).

The timeliness of this query is that it is raised in a period when anxiety over the standards and purposes of contemporary journalism is such that media critics and academics today routinely signal concern over a perceived shift to a sensation-prompting agenda even in traditionally sober "elite" news media (Kitch 30). This concern expands to common assertions that the idealized role of newspaper journalism to provide public information important to democratic functioning (Kovach and Rosenstiel 40) is rapidly subsiding under pressure from a proliferation of competing information-providing outlets online and on cable television in favour of a wholly entertainment-providing news media (Gans, *Popularization* 18). Todd Gitlin, a media theorist cited in a number of instances in

this thesis, perceives a “hypervaluation of private life and the devaluation of public life” in current media practices that are increasingly devoted to generating transient feeling in consumers without substantive informational purposes (164). Not all the implications raised by such assertions can adequately be addressed here, certainly. Although I have drawn from coverage of the selected news chronologies almost entirely from such large, mainstream Canadian publications as *The Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star* rather than tabloids expressly associated by tradition with sensationalism (P. Morton 87), for example, it is not the intent here to seek a conclusion on whether there has been a dissolving of boundaries between the tabloid and mainstream news agendas as is commonly asserted today (Winch 115). While a quantitative content analysis of Canadian newspaper coverage over several decades could seek to statistically support or challenge claims that the extent of sensation-prompting reporting has increased, this thesis takes a more distanced approach in situating the purveying of affect as a conventional if often unacknowledged newspaper function. It is also not part of the present purpose to assess whether an increase in newspaper sensationalism, if it is occurring, constitutes a form of “journalistic degradation” (Zelizer 15). Rather, in taking two major, recent but disparate news chronologies as ground for analysis, this effort is to break down the extent of an affect-prompting approach in the structuring of these news chronologies and link it to newspaper traditions that are roughly two centuries old. The implications of such linkage would be that beyond Habermas’ extensive descriptions of the origins of newspapers as accounts of shipping transactions and state pronouncements (*Structural Transformation*), the purveying of affect has been and remains a central function of this medium; that this

function is operative today in mainstream Canadian publications; and that this function applies across a spectrum of content. Applying this research to the Canadian context with direct applicability to the experience of a Canadian readership is intended to enhance understanding of the state of newspapers' affect-purveying function in a culture which has not produced a surfeit of such inquiry. The Homolka chronology, for example, after two decades as the country's most prominent news scandal, has yielded just one academic book (Davey, *Karla's Web*) analyzing media coverage of the chronology, along with some scholarly papers largely focused on feminist concerns (Kilty, Frigon 2006; Thompson, Ricard 2009). There are also strong connections between Canadian society and these particular news chronologies. Although both chronologies examined here garnered international attention, with Britain as the evident centre of the Diana story, Canadian newspapers such as the *Globe and Mail* had traditionally followed closely the British royal family and emphasized Canada's relation to it as a Commonwealth nation. The Homolka crimes, investigation and trial were based in Southern Ontario and a focus of unremittingly intense news media scrutiny for many months.

Most salient to the purpose here is that identifying the use of the same press methods to prompt affect within such apparently dissimilar chronologies raises general implications for the continued broad currency of such manipulations even while setting them out in relation to longstanding press practices. Significant to a possible case for the general applicability of such mechanisms is that the same ones can be sought in parallel between the two distinctive stories, starting with the evident point that both protagonists were young, conventionally attractive, blonde women who inspired a great deal of press

attention focused on their appearances and presumed allure. It is also important to this effort that the research provides for a descriptive analysis of several key ways in which disparate news chronologies can be structured primarily to purvey affect, including creating a sense of intimacy with the protagonists, sexualizing data and casting the described circumstances as scandalous. In doing so, the work here permits an examination of these mechanisms to support a more aware consumption of Canadian newspapers and challenge the “subliminal trance” McLuhan famously alluded to in an interview describing the state of the media consumer (*Playboy*). As will be discussed further, the research here also gestures to problems suitable for further graduate study, including the social implications of an ongoing commodification of affect through media culture; feminist concerns with the gender-based stereotyping and sexual objectification of female news protagonists; the cultural impact of news media content that is often argued to be unsupportive of a civic agenda; and conversely the putative extension of the democratizing of the public sphere through news reporting that addresses domestic and introspective concerns as vigorously as political and economic ones.

Sensationalism is a term with historical significance for newspapers in broadly describing an editorial approach weighted to the superficial (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm 78), particularly the prominent display of scandal, of which disapproved sexual conduct, crime and other publicly exposed acts of impropriety may be positioned as subcategories. The effort here is in part to parse sensationalism by examining the mechanisms employed under that broad term to generate affect. Sensation and affect are

terms used here according to common definitions and qualitative values which are not conducive to rigid separation. Sensation is taken as the awareness of a stimulus, allowing that the stimulus and awareness may be slight or intense, while affect more specifically refers to a feeling or emotion in response to a sensation or stimulus (Barber). The culturally resonant term “sensationalism” is taken to refer to “the inclusion in news of elements meant to shock and provoke strong emotional responses among readers” (Kitch 29). Yet there is a lack of quantifiable boundaries among these expressions, which must rather be invoked, as they are here, in qualitative terms which are described. On this face of it, for example, a momentary experience of frisson at the description of Homolka’s short dress in the courtroom might be termed a sensation, while hours of convulsive weeping upon learning of Diana’s death is apparently an affective response. However, we will find that such plausible boundaries do not always hold in the examinations here; that Homolka’s dress would for many Canadian newspaper readers prompt sustained feelings of anger and outrage, while Diana’s death for some could comprise an instance of transient celebrity news not affectively more resonant than many others in the ongoing churn of such events. This ambiguity and sometimes even the interchangeability of the terms is not in contradiction to the findings of the discussion that follows. Sensation or affect that is purveyed by newspapers will be shown both historically and at present to operate at levels ranging from the provision of an entertainment to the eliciting of shock. There are no strict delineations here. Triggering deep or sustained emotions may fit a news medium’s role as an amusement while amusing readers may correspond to the relief of some form of emotional disquiet (Winch 21), as we’ll see in citing the rise of mass

media alongside the social turmoil of modernity. It is important to state, however, that it is not part of the present task to seek measurement of the affective impact of the examined news stories, even if such a thing were possible. Evidence here of the presence of affect-prompting mechanisms in the examined texts is sought to gesture toward editorial strategies on the part of Canadian newspapers through a qualitative analysis. Historical connections between the press's employment of sensation-prompting and the expansion of its readership (Ponce de Leon 23) are described here to assert motive for this structure of news presentation. Considerable effort is given to citing theory on the societal and social-psychological context that underlies the drive for both the commercial purveying of, and broad public receptivity to, sensation prompts, as will be discussed shortly.

The discussion of evidence of what I have called selective emphasis has been arranged here in chapters organized to concentrate on the efforts in Canadian newspaper writing to create reader intimacy with the protagonists of news chronologies, the academic underpinning for which is the subdiscipline of celebrity studies; to prompt sexual response through sexualized references in the texts; and to otherwise generate sensation through the positioning of reported incidents as scandals. By title, these chapters are: Intimacy in the Diana/Karla Newspaper Coverage; Sexual Content in the Diana/Karla Newspaper Coverage; and Sensationalism in the Diana/Karla Newspaper Coverage. It is to be understood throughout that it is Canadian newspapers that are being examined, notwithstanding references to the historic American and British newspaper

traditions which have their parallels in the Canadian context. Further descriptors for the narrowing of the content under examination could be “broadsheet” and “metropolitan.” As previously stated, it is so-called mainstream or “broadsheet” publications that have been examined rather than tabloids, even though many traditional differences between these categories have been vigorously argued in the last decade or so to no longer pertain, such as by scholarly authors anthologized by Zelizer in *Changing Faces of Journalism*. The selection is meant to suggest that while tabloids have the more obvious historic reputation for courting affective response through sensationalism (Thussu 18), the essential mechanisms for purveying affect are the same across the press, whatever differences in refinement and particulars of style with which they are deployed. Selected examples are taken from large metropolitan newspapers partly for the same reason, as it is in Simmel’s summation the culture of the metropolis which largely sets that of the nation and hence has leverage on the societal mainstream (*On Individuality* 335). It should be noted that at times the Canadian newspaper articles cited here had their origin in a U.S. publication, as shown in the accompanying citations, but once an article is published in a Canadian paper for a Canadian readership, or placed on that Canadian newspaper’s website, it is considered here a Canadian newspaper story.

A semantic point is that these protagonists are referred to through parts of this thesis as Diana and Karla, partly to deal with the changing references to the former as Diana Spencer, Lady Di, Princess Diana and then often just Diana, but also because both women have been accorded by many reporters the single-name use denoting celebrity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A theorist central to the contextual setting of the discussion in this thesis is Georg Simmel, whose work is variously situated in philosophy and psychology but who refers to himself in 1899 as the sole academic working in the discipline of sociology in Germany (Frisby 14). Significant to the purpose here, he is a seminal intellectual whose work is acknowledged as fundamental to that of many contemporary academics cited in this paper on matters of mass media today, including sociologist and media critic Todd Gitlin and a number of culture, communications and sociology theorists associated with the emerging subdiscipline of celebrity studies, which takes news media as essential ground for study. Simmel is expressly germane to the core query on the purveying of affect through news stories because in such works as *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) and *The Conflict in Modern Culture* (1918) he sets out the social and psychological drivers for the proliferation of cultural stimulations, sensations, diversions and entertainments within modern urban life. One of the dominant theorists of the individual's crisis of meaning within modernity, Simmel identifies the burgeoning of stimulations as "a series of compensations for the inadequacy of objective culture to the individual's subjective demand for an integral personality" (Weinstein and Weinstein 347). Emotionally, socially and spiritually withdrawn because of the modern urban requirements of specialized work, a money economy and the need for a defensive posture in human interactions (Simmel, *On Individuality* 325), deprived of a "comprehensive central idea" to confer meaning and a rooted sense of belonging (Simmel, *Conflict* 379),

individuals in this analysis are divided between society's demands and their own need for an emotionally rooted fulfillment (Weinstein and Weinstein 107). It is from this basic opposition and Simmel's flagging of the intensification of emotional life due to constantly changing stimuli (*On Individuality* 325) that lines are drawn by contemporary media theorists like Gitlin, who expressly take warrant from Simmel in finding that the urgency of modern life "impels us to search for momentary satisfaction in ever-new stimulations, sensations and external activities" and that mass media are a central force in the provision of these (51).

Together with Max Weber, Simmel is seen as a leading progenitor of the rejection of an empirical or positivist approach which postulated a unity among all sciences that could be established solely through data, arguing rather for an interpretive and subjective understanding where human behaviour in society was concerned (Frisby). Among other things, this accounting for human subjectivity in Simmel's examination of society gestures powerfully to the affective realm which is our concern here. The antipositivist impact of Simmel's work and its influence on the Frankfurt School (Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt am Main) are hence engaged in this paper particularly to the extent that this thesis cites at length the challenges of modernity as being contextual to the cultural trend to "entertainments" such as were provided through newspapers. The Frankfurt School's concerns with a qualitative form of sociology that sought to assess the state of the individual in the modern era provided the work here with key insights into the dynamic by which newspapers and other cultural products came to

provide an outlet for affective connections not otherwise readily available. Later Frankfurt School figures such as Habermas and Marcuse are employed here as well for the specific salience of their contributions, respectively, to the discussion of newspaper origins and the principle of civilization's repressed sexual drives.

It is also relevant that an academic thread common to these diverse scholars can be found in the Marxist theory that informed (in varied and disputatious ways) the early decades of the Institute with a perspective that consumer goods and entertainments diverted the population from fundamental needs which were unfulfilled (Wiggershaus). Referring to the products of culture as a "mass deception," Institute founders Adorno and Horkheimer argued that rather than being democratic and tailored to the individual, culture's entertainments were geared to elicit a conformity of response and thus had an underlying authoritarian agenda (Barker 44-45). While the intellectual orientation and objectives of Frankfurt School scholars ranging from Simmel to Habermas are multiple, there is discernably a common drive at the Institute to generate antipositivist theoretical critiques of a modern society which, pace Simmel, had become "increasingly destructive of individuality as organization has become more inclusive and depersonalized" (Maier 34). In the Adorno view that borrowed from Marx in setting out a central premise for other Frankfurt scholars to grapple with, "consumerist culture had caused people to regress to an infantile state of passive dependency, making them docile and afraid of anything new" (Liebes 42). While it is not our objective here to assess the political implications of that assertion, the vantage speaks to the critical eye intellectuals of the

Frankfurt School cast on mass culture with its inhibiting effects on the individual.

Significant to the interdisciplinary approach of this thesis, further, is that these theorists, and the Frankfurt School itself, are rooted in interdisciplinary work (Bottomore 71), with Habermas working from philosophy and sociology, Marcuse wedding psychoanalysis to a philosophy background and Institute founders Horkheimer and Adorno applying philosophy and psychology to the development of the shared Frankfurt goal of a “critical sociology” (Wiggershaus).

Many issues emerge from Simmel’s notion of individual fealty to an objective society that then supplies a menu of ephemeral sensation in lieu of an emotionally integrated life (*On Individuality*). Any of these could occasion extensive research in papers with different objectives than this one. Marxist and structuralist approaches have identified the distractions of popular culture as the exertion of a coherent system of political and economic control of the population (Rojek, *Celebrity* 33), for example. Gramsci’s case that there is a ruling-class cultural hegemony over the rest of the population even caustically assigns culpability expressly to newspapers as “so-called organs of public opinion” that create a problematic version of popular consent (Barker 59). Feminist concerns with gender depictions within the cultural content itself, as previously noted, are also an apparent area for further examination given the examples of news chronologies such as the ones dealt with here. Any of these avenues could generate entirely separate works of enquiry. Taking Simmel as a touchpoint to contextualize the modern urge for sensation is meant not to substitute for a considered grappling with such

other problems but to propose a basis for the phenomenon of the purveying of affect being examined.

It is also with such specificity of function that Jurgen Habermas is brought to bear here. This is expressly in his association of the newspaper with the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere (*Structural Transformation*) and that realm's later alteration under the influence of big business, government and the culture industries to render most citizens "spectators of media presentations and discourse....reducing (them) to objects of news, information, and public affairs" (Kellner, *Habermas* 265). Habermas traces the press from origins in which it serves commerce by reporting on large transactions to one in which news itself becomes a commodity that serves the private concerns of civil society (25). In doing so, he finds consumer subjectivity as embodied in the domestic sphere coming to the fore in such organs of information as newspapers and goes on to describe "the institutionalization of a privateness oriented to an audience" (43). There are significant political and economic ramifications in this leading to extensive analysis by Habermas and his progeny on the meaning of these findings for democracy in a market-oriented society, but our concerns here are particularly hinged on the resulting subjectivity in the public sphere that he identifies. Along with Simmel, Habermas is a significant resource for scholars of celebrity studies, for the phenomenon of celebrity, of which both news chronologies examined in this thesis offer examples, is about "the dissolving of the boundary between public and private lives" (Turner, Bonner and Marshall 12). In this vein, it is popular media with their focus on the private existence of

prominent figures that defines the realm of public concern and, again evoking Habermas, has gone on to create a postmodern public sphere (Hartley qtd. in Turner, Bonner, and Marshall 6).

It is celebrity studies theorists such as Rojek, Marshall and Turner, informed by Habermas' description of the emergence of subjective concerns in the public sphere, who anchor the chapter Intimacy in the Diana/Karla Newspaper Coverage, with celebrity reporting described as conferring an imagined state of intimacy for readers with prominent (even if notorious) figures. Again, political and economic consequences of the celebrity phenomenon have been extensively elaborated. Marshall asserts, for example, that celebrities embody the capacity of consumers to shape the public sphere "symbolically" (*Celebrity and Power* 7) albeit with an empowerment that is essentially false in the manner described by Horkheimer and Adorno in relation to the adoration of Hollywood stars (9). The significance of the celebrity discussion for the purposes here is celebrity's potent leverage as a prompt for affect because of the way it permits reader identification with the protagonists of news chronologies. News coverage of an event such as a royal wedding, for example, provides "frames for the recollection of personal experience" (Rojek, *Celebrity* 48). Even the mention of an emblematic figure in a headline can evoke in the contemporary reader "basic emotions remembered from other times and places..." (Schickel 51). Celebrities are powerful triggers to feeling because they embody social categories in which people make sense of and even experience their own lives (Dyer). While the foregoing may seem to be more accessible assertions in

relation to Diana, who was at different stages idealized as having blessed fortune and then as enduring a suffering to which many readers said they related, the connection appears more challenging in the case of Karla Homolka. Yet transgression as a door to notoriety and notoriety as a form of celebrity are clearly asserted connections in the subdiscipline's literature, which notes that particularly notorious criminals typically mythologize themselves (Rojek, *Celebrity* 157).

Although the socially enforced response to such personalities may be disapproval, even public expression of intense disgust as in the case of Karla Homolka, the chapter here on Sexual Content in the Diana/Karla Newspaper Coverage seeks other complexities in the affect prompts of such reporting. With Freud as the eminence behind his revisiting of psychoanalytic theory, Marcuse depicts society as inherently repressive of the sexual urge, drawing people to commercially propelled means of sexual engagement with consumer culture while leaving a powerful lack in which sexual drive remains transgressive (*Eros and Civilization*). He finds in Freud's view of individual psychology a social psychology in which the reality principle curtails the drive for pleasure and so supports society's "requirements, norms and prohibitions" to make internal the repression of instinctual needs (Kellner, *Marcuse* 83). Without refuting Freud's premise that there are internal, even biological mechanisms of this repression, Marcuse is germane here because of his insistence that there are historical, political and social dimensions to the thwarting of instinctual desires (Katz 148) that are then inadequately addressed by the products of consumer culture. Baudrillard is also cited in this regard for his stance that

seduction is entangled with consumer society production and power (*Seduction* 47).

Further along these lines, Australian culture scholar Jon Stratton, in a volume subtitled *Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption*, invokes Lacan's observations on the correlations between sexual lack and the surge in commercial substitutions in the last two centuries (4). The story of Diana Spencer, beginning as it does with a focus on her presumed sexual innocence and chastity (Bedell Smith), remains engaged with sexual content throughout as it passes through stages of scandal, quests for redemption through love relationships and ultimately a death simultaneously tied to sexual impropriety and the transcendence of all that has preceded through a media-conferred beatification.

Scandal is a central engine of sensation in this chronology, a casting of circumstances to suggest that a violation of social convention has occurred. A number of British academics, including Rosalind Brunt, Scott Wilson and Jeffrey Richards have marked the frisson of sexual allusions attached to the various stages of the Diana news chronology and are cited here. Karla Homolka's story has an established precedent in the sensational coverage of sex crimes with a female perpetrator in Victorian England, as Judith Knelman describes in *Twisting in the Wind: The Murderess and the English Press*, while the function of crime stories and trials as sensation-making public spectacles has been examined by such academics cited here as David Kidd-Hewitt, Keith Soothill and Chris Greer. Sensationalism, like sexual content and efforts to simulate intimacy with prominent figures, has a long history in the English-language press, which the chapter Sensationalism in the Diana/Karla Newspaper Coverage seeks to describe at some length. Scholars such as Laura Grindstaff, David Rowe, and S. Elizabeth Bird, expressly tackle

the issue of scandal as a leading component of sensationalism, with reference to Durkheim and the invocation of transgression as a way to fix social norms.

METHODOLOGY

The central query of this thesis entails a search in two Canadian newspaper chronologies for indications that they have been structured to prompt affect. Embedded in the question itself is the premise that these newspaper articles form a discourse, that is, a text that can be analyzed to reveal cultural models that position its characters and settings to be perceived in a certain way (Gee 77). Discourse analysis calls for “the interpretation of a communicative event in context” (Nunan 7) and it is the purveying of affect by newspapers through established mechanisms that comprises the contextual background here. What is being sought in the particular body of texts here is moreover related in each of three areas of affect prompts – the creation of intimacy with a news protagonist; the employment of sexualized references; and the generating of sensation through scandal – to an historical tradition of the newspaper medium. By these invocations of precedent in textual models in newspapers and the search for their reiteration in the contemporary texts being examined, the approach here is a discourse analysis in a fundamental sense of this phrase, a search to identify certain regularities in the data and to describe these (Brown and Yule 23). While the study of discourse can be seen to comprise a linguistic analysis, it is important here that detail selection and language use in newspapers is tied

to specific communications functions; the case being explored here is that an important one of these is the purveying of affect. The pertinent definition of discourse analysis here is thus not about describing the texts apart from function but looking at what newspapers reporters and editors “using language are doing and accounting for the linguistic features in the discourse as the means employed in what they are doing” (Brown and Yule 26). While there are several kinds of linguistic analyses that could be considered for the present mandate, discourse analysis offers the most effective fit because of this emphasis on seeking function, in this case to identify mechanisms for purveying affect. A key premise of this paper is that newspapers mix up the information-imparting (transactional) functions of the language use with the social, values-oriented or emotional (interactional) dimension of communication (Gee 83). In contrasting these functions as one of its core tasks, discourse analysis is particularly suited to the present research. Even written texts are to be looked at in interactional terms if the critical mandate of discourse analysis is to be brought into play (Fairclough). When a newspaper reports that Princess Diana and Prince Charles attended an event without appearing to look at each other, or that Karla Homolka favoured black cocktail dresses when she would go to bars to seek sexually available men, the “information” shared entails both supposition and an emphasis on details remote from the original information-imparting purposes of newspapers (Habermas). The information-imparting role of such reporting, in other words, may be argued to be inseparable from its interactional function.

The approach here is an effort to identify instances of “situated meaning,” in a

central process of discourse analysis to recognize patterns (Gee 42), previously here termed regularities. As we look at the news chronologies here, a number of instances of such patterns arise such as the ongoing treatment of Karla Homolka as an object of sexual allure through repeated reference to her attire and the presentation of small, apparently irrelevant details of her physical comportment and gestures. To the extent that a function of discourse analysis can be to identify manipulative communication (Maillat and Oswald 69), there are readily apparent contrasts between stated attitudes and situated meanings in the texts in this instance, with the positioning of Homolka's allure against a constantly evoked backdrop of moral condemnation of her. Such manipulations are also to be found, as we'll see, in the textual idealization of Diana's marital suffering while employing the language of scandal in relation to it. Discourse studies identify such cognitive manipulation as the positioning of readers to make "inappropriate contextual assumptions" (Maillat and Oswald 69) in which the newspaper tradition may be seen in particular to have excelled in constructing its texts for "accessible and strong assumptions" (72). The newspaper, with its pretense to report impartially on actualities while identified here as often manifesting the different purpose of prompting affect, may be a particularly strong example of the discourse analysis claim that language both reflects reality and constructs it in a certain way (Gee 82); and we will see there is widespread academic claim that news itself is essentially constructed.

The extent to which an apparently universal understanding such as an abhorrence of Homolka can obfuscate other messages embedded in a newspaper text has been

explored by Dutch discourse theorist Teun A. Van Dijk in relation to reporting on racism (“Discourse and the Denial of Racism”). In a research project conducted in both the Netherlands and California on public opinion on immigration and minorities, Van Dijk found that news media across the political spectrum were ostensibly agreed in their opposition to discrimination and racism, effectively denying their own practices as uncovered in discourse analysis. Not only was an ostensible opposition to racism congruent with social norms of which the newspaper editors and reporters were aware, but Van Dijk’s supposition was that these media workers actually perceived themselves to share those values, despite what he found to be discriminatory language constructions pertaining to minorities in their work (507). In my own research for a *Globe and Mail* article produced during the Homolka trial, I found similarly that while psychiatrists, psychologists and even attorneys asserted there was a widespread public avidity to experience sensation through news-mediated exposure to transgression, and for news stories to thus expressly cater to that avidity, newspaper editors, like the texts they were disseminating, would acknowledge only trafficking in information for civic purposes (Alaton). This is one reason that proposing ideological or political motive to the cultivation of sensation-prompts in newspaper work is beyond the present purpose, however much discourse analysis could potentially offer a tool to examine that matter. Van Dijk’s research suggests that manipulation within texts can be enacted with various levels of awareness on the part of the authors, and sometimes without much awareness at all or any conscious social agenda. As Grindstaff is told in examining manipulation in talk television programming, “asking a producer to describe manipulation is like asking a

fish to describe the aquarium” (185).

With these reservations, prompts to sensation can be seen as mechanisms whose discovery lies securely within the scope of discourse analysis. Gee refers to “recognition work” in discourse analysis in suggesting that the patterns being identified are not only about relations between words but their connections to, among other things, beliefs, values and emotions (20). This thesis alludes to a primarily commercial motive to the deployment of sensation-prompting in newspapers, as reflected in the traced history; while the implications in terms of a politico-economic value structure are significant, these are not the direct focus of this work. Rather, it is the intended interactional relation of the newspaper texts to the affective realm of the receivers that is central here, so the discourse is searched for such prompts according to known models for their generation, such as the allusions to intimacy in describing a celebrity. Because the affective content of the chronologies draws from textual references containing strong triggers for sensation in the recipient, such as sexual revelation, there are marked enticements for the reader to “shallow-process” the immediate concept on offer and the context as a whole (Maillat and Oswald 70).

CHAPTER 1: INTIMACY IN THE DIANA/KARLA NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

The Canadian newspaper chronologies of Diana Spencer from her affiancement to Prince Charles to her funeral, and Karla Homolka from her trial on manslaughter charges to the present, are examined in this chapter within the context of newspapers' historical shift to an attentive stance toward the personalities and private lives of prominent figures rather than solely official pronouncements and events. A personality repeatedly featured in the news is routinely referred to today as a celebrity, described at its most fundamental level as "anyone the public is interested in...." (Turner, Bonner, and Marshall 9). The academic subdiscipline of celebrity studies is concerned with the mass-media representation of figures in the news and other media (Rojek, *Celebrity* 13) and that area of study informs this chapter. What follows makes use of the work of early sociologist Georg Simmel on the advent of modernity and its attendant social alienation as a foundation for assertions made by celebrity studies, particularly to seek context in understanding why "celebrification" has become such a vivid presence in news telling (Rojek *Celebrity*). A core connection between modernity's alienation as depicted by Simmel and followers and this celebrification is found in the assertion that, "the more dramatic, rapid and disruptive the rhythm of social change, the greater the recourse to the personal...as a means of explanation" (Turner, Bonner and Marshall 15).

The current state of news telling, in this view, is that stories are built around

“private emotions” that now are treated as possessing “news value and cultural significance” (Turner, Bonner and Marshall 176). This can be seen to be markedly the case in the two news chronologies being examined, even to the extent that what media positioned as the public’s emotional responses to such events as Diana’s funeral and Homolka’s trial proceedings dominated Canadian newspaper reporting at times. We see in examples from the coverage that how people are purported to be *feeling* about the death of Diana or the crimes of Homolka sometimes becomes the subject of the newspaper stories.

This chapter sets out Canadian newspaper descriptions of the personalities and private behaviour of two leading news figures as integral to the effort to create reader engagement. Intimacy has been described as “largely a matter of emotional communication...” (Barker 229). It may seem that this would naturally imply a reciprocal form of communication, which is not what is present in reading media accounts of the private emotions of prominent figures, but Prager makes the case that intimacy is not necessarily reciprocal (21); that the news story protagonists know nothing of the existence of individuals within their public readership does not deter those readers from experiencing the celebrity figures as people they know, and even as members of their family (Schickel 265). In the primarily one-way flow of information between news figures and the newspaper-consuming public, “intimacy,” constrained as described, is treated here as the disclosure of detail which carries, or appears to carry, personal revelation about the life of the described figure. The

intimacy or apparent window to the interior state of another person in celebrification is asserted here to come not from the significant public deeds of the protagonists, but from details of their personal lives and characters which are apparently extraneous to the news contexts in which these personalities are set. The first-ever mention of Diana Spencer in the *Globe and Mail*, for example, cited “canny” photographers who took pictures with the sun behind her, revealing, “a very attractive 19-year-old who wasn't wearing a petticoat under her thin cotton skirt” (Webster). In a comparably personalized approach, a *Toronto Star* news article described Karla Homolka relaxing in her parents' back yard the day before she was charged in the killings of two Ontario schoolgirls: “She spent the afternoon lounging in the chair near the pool, at one point kicking off her shoes and putting her feet up as she munched on potato chips and listened to the Buffalo rock station WKSE” (Pron, “Manslaughter charges”). While such private details are underlined in these accounts, neither example speaks to matters of monarchical succession or crime, the ostensible news subjects underpinning the reports. Instead, the focus is on the appearance and presumptive personalities of the actors at the centre of the stories.

Invoking Habermas, who has described the evolution of newspapers from their origins as sober accounts of shipping news and government pronouncements (*Structural Transformation*), this chapter cites academic declaration that news media concerns with personality rise in parallel with the importance of public popularity to the commercial success of newspapers. This trend leads to the emergence of an

apparent intimacy with public figures, seen here to be constructed through press deployment of personal details not obviously germane to the news topic at hand. Close media attention to such matters as Diana's bouts of changing mood, for example, are seen to speak to emotional currents within the broader culture (Fenn 140). Coverage of the Homolka chronology is found to routinely feature "the reporting of non-events in emotional terms that seemed designed far more to stir the feelings of readers than to convey information" (Davey 18). While Habermas provides an historical trail tracing the transformation of newspapers into vehicles of popular connection with prominent figures, Simmel's analysis of the social alienation of modernity provides context to the presumed public appetite for such intimacy. Simmel finds in the urbanized, industrialized settings of the early twentieth century that individuals experience constraints on interpersonal intimacy and turn increasingly to mass-distributed entertainments (*On Individuality*). This corresponds to the emergence of a modernity in which he finds the individual caught in a struggle to prevent being submerged in "objective" society which is mechanistic, capital-based and demanding of complete fealty (*Conflict* 379). With this development of increased anonymity, crowding and the dominance of a money economy, Simmel describes the need for the individual to restrain the "irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses...." which continue to have life for urban dwellers in staged entertainments and mediated news information (*Conflict* 328-9).

Employed here as a current culmination of this trend is the celebrity, a figure

of popular interest described as a “construction of subjectivity that also individualized the collective sphere” (Marshall, *Celebrity* 40). This latter assertion extends Simmel’s premise that the mechanistic society that modernity brought was an objective society that left the individual seeking subjective responsiveness outside the regulated contexts of the workplace and the church (*On Individuality*). Celebrity seems to lionize individualism as a compensation for the impersonality of human interaction in the modern setting (Ponce de Leon 5); and by the 1920’s, with the North American ascendance of the popular press and such ancillary professionals as press agents and publicists, all public figures can be described as celebrities “packaged for public consumption” (Ponce de Leon 8). In offering an apparent dissolution of the boundaries between public and private identities through intimate descriptions in the press, celebrities sanction subjective responsiveness, notwithstanding that many scholars perceive these figures to be essentially constructed by the media and as having a largely imaginary connection with the readership (Rojek, *Celebrity* 109).

NEWSPAPERS’ HISTORIC SHIFT TO EMPHASIS ON THE PERSONAL

An emphasis on the personal – we may also say the private, interior or intimate -- is part of an historic shift in the orientation of news. Habermas finds that over two centuries ago a public sphere of the citizenry at large resulted in part from the rise of the commercial press because the public he describes was an entity that was not simply the passive recipient of official pronouncements but a dynamic population with interests and opinions in which the press was commercially interested

to be responsive (*Structural Transformation* 21). In this development came the emergence of news not only in its original function as a vehicle for reporting on trade and market commodities but as an important such commodity itself; even as culture was also converted into a commodity by dint of a newly interactional relationship with a public that determined the success of newspapers through its purchases of them (37). Ultimately, Habermas proposes the transformation of public concern with the affairs of state to concern with itself (43). In this analysis, as literacy expanded in the general population and widening exchanges of opinion were facilitated by coffeehouses and the distribution of pamphlets, the state started to lose its primacy in the determination of public concerns in favour of subjective and private criteria for assigning significance. Habermas finds that the public use of reason was guided by private experiences “as grew out of the audience-oriented (*publikumsbezogen*) subjectivity of the conjugal family’s intimate domain (*Intimsphäre*)” (28). The contrast is with state-issued direction on what facts are of concern to the population at large. As we’ll see, the *Intimsphäre* in the case of Diana was provided a steady flow of information about her that was unattached to government and church concerns about monarchical succession and focused intently on her emotional and intimate responses as a young woman to her marital situation. With Homolka, the *publikumsbezogen* as represented by Canadian newspapers will be seen to be intently concerned with her deportment, demeanor and affective state, matters almost entirely outside the state-sponsored effort to determine her criminal culpability.

This place of the family home, the *Intimsphäre*, most significantly to the

purposes here, was for Habermas a zone of an unfettered “interiority” which the scholar links to our modern conception of privateness (28). Audience-oriented subjectivity and interiority are contrasted in this writing by Habermas with the tradition of concerns determined by state and religious authorities, reflected in newspapers which began their history with staid official pronouncements and accounts of shipping and trade. This development of a responsive public sphere which is hinged on private concerns evolved through several conjoined factors, including newspapers’ growing dependency on a subscription base linked to the pursuit of advertising as a principal revenue source (Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* 21). While government officials and merchants may have been the relatively small captive readership for the earliest, spartan forms of newspapers, expanding the readership to a more broadly literate population suggests that descriptions of mercantile and legislative concerns would no longer suffice. That the numbers of readers were linked to the quantity and value of advertising put newspaper revenue into a direct relationship with popularity, and made public identity contingent on this mass medium, observes Marshall, who asserts that this development is so pronounced that the histories of journalism and celebrity are difficult to separate within a still-evolving public sphere (28). The ascendance of audience-oriented subjectivity, then, can be postulated as providing a cultural and commercial basis for personalized news-telling. The parallel development here is the movement from the rural past to the modern urban centres, where the alienation of modernity cuts down on direct interpersonal intimacy which then finds compensatory mechanisms in popular culture

(Simmel, *On Individuality*). In the modern, urban environment, calculation and depersonalized encounters with others become necessary in Simmel's premise to prevent having an unsustainable number of inner reactions to the large numbers of people one deals with, in contrast to the rural community where people are generally known to one another (*On Individuality* 331). Under the increasingly mechanized and regulated society's fealty to the "objective spirit" (*On Individuality* 337), and its demand for the subjugation of the self to that society (*Conflict* 379), Simmel finds that in the struggle to save what is personal in the modern, urban context, "...extremities and peculiarities and individualizations must be produced..." (*On Individuality* 338). These can be seen to be comprised in the dramatic news storytelling on celebrities, including the two principals examined here.

Characterizing personalization as a response to the growing impersonality of social relations that was brought about by modernity, Ponce de Leon invokes the Simmel mainstays of increasing urbanism, namely the quickening pace of life and reduction of much human interaction to an exchange of appearances (18). Working almost a century after Simmel while examining the phenomenon of celebrity in mass media, Turner and his Australian colleagues postulate correlations with his work, stating that the role for prominent news personalities is "as prisms through which social complexity is brought back to the human level" (166). Already blatant by the beginning of the last century, personalizing the news quickly became and has remained a standard strategy to attract newspaper readers (Ponce de Leon 42),

coming to a point of ubiquity such that the extent of personalization employed by the news media goes essentially unnoticed by the public (Turner, Bonner, and Marshall 9). The work of Simmel and those who have elaborated his analysis contextualizes the suggestion that personality-based news functions as a mechanism of compensation by allowing anonymous news media consumers a sense of intimacy with apparently significant actors, bridging the distance between public and private and sustaining the notion that individualism is prized in a modern society where people are actually depersonalized (Ponce de Leon 5). The lives of those personalities spotlighted in the news comprise experiences which by being chronicled in the news media assume an aura of meaningfulness many people find lacking in their own domestic and working existences (Rojek, *Celebrity* 52). By elevating the individual, celebrity provides points of connection by which to overcome the feelings of alienation that Durkheim called “anomie” (Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* 21), or sense of disconnected purposelessness, and to conduct discourse on the personal (27). Not only is social complexity simplified by these individual chronologies but so are more introspective concerns, while the magnetic news personalities become “representations for much more inchoate longings” (Schickel viii).

Using numbers as a measure of popular response, there is supporting data that such assumed intimacy with news personalities reached a contemporary apogee with the funeral of Diana, the event being television’s greatest draw of its era with an estimated global viewership of 2.5 billion (S. Wilson 48). It is salient that this was an event occurring long after Diana was bereft of any monarchical status; that is, her

death had no formal or immediate impact on the matter of royal succession in Britain, which would have been the sole basis in the earliest days of newspapering for reporting on her at all. If personalized news means an emphasis on the individuals within the context of events deemed newsworthy (Ponce de Leon 49), the lack of conventional political import to the passing of Diana takes the paradigm a step farther and suggests news predicated on widespread public engagement with a personality. There are specific indicators of this in the recorded response to her death. Diana's funeral brought forth up to two million people on the streets of London, thousands of whom lined up for durations up to seven hours to sign condolence books (McKibbin 15). In a space of five days, a memorial fund created in the former princess's name raised as much money as OXFAM and the British Red Cross combined generated in a year (Punt 86). Perhaps most notable in suggesting an affective basis for such engagement, a number of Britons in the weeks and months beyond the funeral told journalists that they had grieved Diana more intensely than their deceased spouses in an "avalanche of public grief (that) has no parallel within living memory" (Seabrook). Turner and colleagues note that "among the defining attributes of the signifying system which produces celebrity is the dissolving of the boundary between public and private lives" (12). Yet this dissolution of boundaries could be extended to the consumers of celebrity as well, as the death of Diana prompted public displays on the streets of London which the Church of England itself deemed revealing of religiosity (Woodhead 119). In people's public demonstrations of grief through tears and written

and spoken messages, the funeral of Diana gave them “peculiarly powerful affirmations of belonging, recognition and meaning” (Rojek, *Celebrity* 52).

That Diana was described as “an image waiting for a text” (Punt 94) suggests that media projection and the construction of the celebrity personality here were behind the intimacy; the veracity of the Diana personality brought into play in such news chronologies is unclear at best. In positioning the intimacy as constructed by media strategems we may begin by noting a lack of context in the texts. Concerns are elevated and details are supplied to an end which may be analyzed as corresponding to the generating of intimacy but lack an obviously informative purpose as news. We don’t know if it was normative for a London teenager of 1980 to wear a petticoat (Webster), for example, but the anachronistic term itself suggests the notion was already dated and irrelevant even while being invoked to suggest a privileged vantage on Diana’s person. The kicking off of shoes, as Homolka did at the poolside, rather than removing them by hand (Pron, “Manslaughter charges”), seems to carry unspecified implications of character, and we may be intended to infer that such a gesture appears oddly insouciant for a woman on the eve of being charged with slaying minors. Declarations of relevance are not directly forthcoming from the reporters and editors of the accounts, yet of the innumerable details that might be reported from sustained observation of these subjects, it is these that have been selected. Lacking the *bona fides* of contextualizing explanation, it can be asserted, as Gans does throughout *Deciding What’s News*, that these details and their connotations appear salient to readers *because* they have been selected, that professional

discernment has been applied to the selection in which salience is thus perceived as inherent. This legitimizing of ideas because they appear in writing dates far back, with Frye asserting that such a dynamic can be discerned in the earliest accountings of legend, history and reminiscence where the separations amongst these are essentially gone (31). There is significance to Homolka's kicking off of her shoes, in other words, because we are told she did so. And as the gesture is small to the point of being perhaps unconsciously enacted, it is again an intimate detail, one which casts importance on the subject's interiority rather than her public deeds. Even without imputing motive to the news reporting choices, the fact of such choice in a crafted presentation brings forth the observation that celebrity is "constituted discursively" by the manner in which the individual is represented (Turner, Bonner, and Marshall 11). While one of the Homolka victims was initially reported as a runaway with a troubled family life, for example, she began increasingly to be idealized as the emphasis shifted to intensifying the monstrosity of her murderers (Davey 31). Diana reached new heights of public attention during a period after having already given birth to the English throne's successors, a paradigm which leads to the view of celebrity as "the epitome of the inauthenticity or constructedness of mass-mediated popular culture" (Turner 4).

DIANA: ONE OF US AND ONE IN A MILLION

Prominent people getting married in the modern era has been a matter of widespread public interest because it is perceived as related to personal happiness and

so what has been understood in the last century as “true success” rather than signaling a public achievement, something the earliest forms of newspaper celebrity had emphasized through the professional work of aviators, tycoons and politicians (Ponce de Leon xiii). This reference to intimate personal aspiration bears connection to the domestic structure of the *Intimsphere* rather than the calculations of the state. While monarchical marriage was traditionally a geopolitical concern that forged allegiances between states or consolidated a family’s grip on a throne, the notion of the personal happiness of the principals, or their attraction to one another, was moot to the extent that between the Norman Conquest and the 20th century, only two British monarchs personally chose their wives (Hadley). Yet with present media attention to monarchical marriages as love matches, the royals and their doings, now short on political import, have been described as “the purest of celebrity phenomenon” (Schickel 27). This refers again to celebrity coverage’s dissolution of barriers between public and private, with a corresponding concern for interiority as seen in the media response to entertainment celebrities. With Britain’s monarchy, for example, the contemporary era features the 1947 wedding of Queen Elizabeth II generating an intense whirlwind of international headlines and broadcast descriptions of the event; at the wedding of Diana to Prince Charles, the “glamorous fascination” of Queen Elizabeth’s nuptials was said to have been revisited (Brunt 31). As recently as the April, 2011 wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton, the nuptials were described in a press account as “the chance to monetize news coverage” (Holloway), referring to the popular interest and advertising buys associated with the event.

The assertion here is thus that the pomp and circumstance involved, itself a subject of the most detailed scrutiny in the press, is intertwined with projections of what the occasion means for the participants arriving at this presumed state of emotional fulfillment. Diana's dual status as "one of us and one in a million" (Fenn 141) suggests a platform on which mass audience emotions can be experienced vicariously at a familiar ceremony taking place at an "elevated" level. There was little time for the press in Canada or anywhere else to establish that Diana actually was "one of us" or who she was at all, however. It was very shortly after her introduction to the world press that Diana, a sheltered, immature young woman with a high school education and little life experience (Bedell Smith) became affianced to Prince Charles and then wed to him in what would be the world's most widely watched televised news event until eclipsed 16 years later by a funeral which bore comparison to some observers only to the death of Rudolf Valentino in 1926, both events occasioning unprecedented mass public attention and suicides (Richards 59). Within two months of her introduction to the Canadian public through the *Globe and Mail* and other newspapers, Diana was being widely reported as affianced to Charles, with Charles already upset at the intensity of press interest in the affair (Associated Press, "Prince Charles angered").

Projection of intimate detail was involved in what was constantly ballyhooed in the press as a "fairy tale" wedding, as was apparent to disinterested observers from the general lack of any real knowledge of Diana, the textless image (Punt 94). Punt's provocative phrase suggests that Diana was a series of press photos (and television

images) onto which narrative, motivation, character traits and emotions could be imposed. Diana's celebrity proceeded from a chronology framed and reframed by the newspapers in Canada (and abroad) to optimize affective engagement, in which this malleable figure "corresponds to the poor little rich girl, wronged wife and a whole series of other Hollywood tropes..." (Richards 60). The phenomenon of widespread press attention and popular interest was focused on a person who had immediately become a celebrity, that is, someone charged with enacting a series of assumed roles and mounted performances (Ponce de Leon). The point here of Diana being throughout "one of us" is that subjective concerns of the *Intimsphere* -- finding love and happiness, being valued and admired, later suffering from neglect and spousal disdain -- are invoked, given credence, harnessed and made self-sustaining through media coverage of this personality, once again as a kind of antidote to the "stifling impersonality" of modern society (Ponce de Leon 6). Prime Minister Tony Blair, coiner of the phrase "People's Princess," is generally conjectured to have meant with his slogan that Diana was embraced by the public and that she made herself accessible to it. But she was also widely positioned as a princess who had emerged from the "people" and yet remained one of them: "Diana became some sort of universal lightning rod for people's sense of hurt, wrong and pain. People identified their pain with hers..." (Critchley 158). This connection appears to afford members of the public an element of the "self-preservation" to which Simmel refers (*On Individuality* 330) by validating individual concerns; Diana's mourners in one view only appear to represent a united mass of humanity while using the moment of her

death “for their own diverse ends” (Punt 88). She was a woman whose media existence precipitated widespread subjective efforts “to produce a coherent whole that is quite independent from the original....” (Punt 94).

The commercial news media leverage of popular response from intimate concerns is most obviously apparent at such climactic points as Diana’s wedding and funeral where emotions were displayed in large through press description and imagery. But this paradigm can be taken farther: at key stages of the Diana chronology there is evidence of a circular authenticating of sentiments through media coverage of public response to media coverage. For example, it has been noted that while two million Britons were present on London streets to watch Diana’s funeral cortege, an estimated three million persons walked the route the next day after following the media coverage of the funeral (Punt 100). The point recurring in the observations of Punt, Richards and others is that seeing people cry can prompt others to cry; same for fetching flowers, taking to the street, gathering before Buckingham Palace. A scene develops in which the sense of shared affect overcomes the distancing reality of seeing so many others present. For Turner, it is cultural flashpoints such as the death of Diana in which “it is their disproportionate nature that makes them so important: the scale of their visibility, their overwhelmingly excessive demonstration of the power of the relationship between mass-mediated celebrities and the consumers of popular culture” (3-4).

In the case of Diana’s funeral, the scale of the public outpouring and of media

attentiveness to it can scarcely be disentangled, with pronouncements within a day of the funeral referring to “the media event of the 20th Century” (Reno). In this largest of media events, masses of middle- and working-class people made public assertion of their intimate identification with a figure who was profoundly distant, at least by dint of socio-economic status (Jack). This is the kind of cognitive bridging routinely accomplished through the mechanisms of celebrity in which media select or construct “aspects of the personality, the emotional and affective and hence irrational elements of human action, in the exchangeable commodity form of the celebrity” (Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* 55). As products themselves had long been positioned through advertising for their association with affect, so could affective needs be tethered to public figures appropriately presented, such figures serving to both humanize and dramatize those needs (Rojek, *Celebrity* 10). The text that was supplied for the images of Diana also made her a commodity in this sense, a location for the mobilization of affect. For Diana’s chronology of 16 years from wedding to funeral featured, as noted, a number of different iterations of its subject that provided points of attachment for a broad range of such subjective needs; her story is frequently cited as a soap opera (Richards 60). Until her death, when a media-conferred beatification occurred in concert with that of near-simultaneously deceased Mother Teresa -- “The immediate issue was how to balance the coverage of Mother Teresa and Diana,” wrote Kyle Pope -- Diana experienced seeing herself alternately extolled, criticized, idealized and made object of scandal (Bedell Smith 361). Death would largely fix Diana’s sainted image, later reminders of which came with the tenth anniversary in

2007 of her fatal car accident. “Fund Embraces Diana’s Humanitarian Spirit,” ran the headline of one anniversary update (Elston) appearing not long after “Tenth anniversary of Diana’s death sparks commercial frenzy” (Hastings and Jones).

In the affect potentially prompted through a simulation of intimacy, the public relationship with Diana went beyond the usual celebrity tropes of knowledge of her romantic life and self doubts. The scale and intensity of public response at the time of her funeral was a visible culmination of the mass access to emotional attachment she represented, while the quality of the attachment deserves some emphasis here as well. The beatification she received in the press upon her death, a fixing of her final role (one that came in a burst following controversies over her affair with the wealthy playboy with whom she died in a car accident), had much-publicized gestures of caring behind it, when Diana’s photo-ops with AIDS orphans and land-mine victims received international attention and steady appearances in the Canadian press. Such acts could readily be contextualized as normative public duty for royals lacking a more concrete political mandate or power. Yet these essentially ceremonial gestures were typically depicted as spontaneous expressions of a deep-seated, even religiously profound caring; “Shortly after Diana’s death, the bishops of the Church of England met to discuss her religious significance” (Woodhead 119). Celebrity culture “motivates intense emotions of identification and devotion” (Rojek, *Celebrity* 98) and Diana, particularly in the wake of her death, became a leading example of this. Diana’s celebrity, and the intimate attachment to her, extended in the popular

imagination to her inner being and cosmic worth, with the front-page headline following her funeral reading, “Now you belong to Heaven” (*News of the World*).

KARLA HOMOLKA: INTIMACY WITH DEVIANCE

Just as personality and interiority were the focus of early celebrity reporting on movie actors, socialites and other figures of popular interest (Ponce de Leon), the pattern can be seen in Homolka’s case to hold with the protagonist in a chronology of violent crime. Canadian press attention to this story began by fixing first on two missing Ontario schoolgirls; then on the suspected male abductor, Paul Bernardo; and finally on his wife Homolka, where it has largely remained ever since (Davey). At each stage, the positioning of Canadian newspaper coverage to create a sense of intimacy with the principals can be discerned. Before Bernardo’s and Homolka’s roles in the disappearances of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French were known, media personalization of the victims was such that newspaper columnists employed the mechanism of addressing the girls in print directly and by first name as in *Toronto Star* writer Rosie DiManno’s familiarity in exhorting, “Be well, Kristen. Be safe. Be alive” (“St. Catharines”). The reporter’s assumption of intimacy was conferred directly to the readers, who were invited to think of the news figure by her first name and join in the plea to her. The *Toronto Sun*’s stories on the case presented the newspaper itself “as a deeply caring friend, one that sent Kristen its love.....” (Davey 18). Then, with the identification of first Bernardo and then Homolka as suspects in

the killings, the personal focus shifted abruptly from the missing youths to the abductors, press accounts dubbing them “Ken and Barbie” after neighbours remarked that the pair were young, attractive and ostensibly ordinary people who “could even be ourselves” (Davey 120). Here was a shadow reference to “one of us and one in a million” (Fenn 141). What was exceptional in Homolka’s case was situated not as an aspirational ideal but an ostensibly loathed aberrance, yet we see that the matter of her emotional outlook, sexual identity, romantic aspirations and motivations were, as with Diana, dominant points of interest in the coverage. Sexual behaviour, even in the commissioning of crime, is personal and murder itself is described as an act of inherent intimacy (Schickel 8). With Homolka, Canadian newspaper readers were afforded the opportunity to enter “an imaginary relationship with such a transgressor” (Davey 114). Even as the reporting on Homolka proffered such connections, it also quoted citizens who wanted more. As a St. Catharines woman named Theresa Wilson told reporters outside the courtroom for the Homolka trial, “I’m 50 years old and this is the first time I’ve ever been in court. I want to see what this woman has in her soul” (Abbate and Appleby). In a smaller-scale parallel of the public effort at proximity to Diana upon her death, members of the public arrived at 5 a.m. to await a courtroom seat on the first day of Homolka’s trial (Millar and Duncanson). Even when the scrutiny for interior response from the principal was fruitless, it was noted, as in, “Homolka showed no expression as she was driven into the courthouse underground by police” (Millar and Duncanson).

Such personal engagement with a criminal figure is well established and extensively attended to within a major genre of newspaper reporting. Violent crime is one of the oldest, most consistent areas of public interest and coverage of crime has been a staple of news media historically (Hall et al). There are newspaper accounts comprising trial reports from as early as the end of the 17th century and historical analysis that these functioned as a popular form of amusement (Soothill and Walby 12). Reporting on crime continues to figure prominently as an ongoing form of entertainment even in literate societies (Greer 188). Moreover, today's media highlight "deviance" as a key element in the presentation of the news, where "the elements of horror, murder, celebrity, sex and perversion" can make crime reporting into a large-scale social spectacle (Osborne 34), as we will see the Homolka trial in Canada to have been. Press and public interest in intimate details concerning persons ostensibly designated as pariahs has not been the conflicted impulse it may appear because "...crime was conceived as outside the moral limits of the ordinary, which meant that crime reporting was unproblematic, moralistic and unifying in its agreed disapproval" (Osborne 25). So emphatic was disapproval of Homolka and her actions that the house where her crimes with Bernardo were commissioned was to be razed (Pron, "Bernardo house") and videos of the transgressive acts themselves were, in an unprecedented move, incinerated by the Ontario Attorney General's office (*cbc.ca*). Yet newspaper readers of the accounts were "cloaked in the protection of self-righteous indignation" (Davey 51) and could proceed to descriptive intimacy with the transgressive personality who was set in a framing commentary of shock and

disapproval with the mechanisms of celebrity treatment intact. Canadian newspaper descriptions of Homolka from the start reflected the kinds of observation and proximity to eminence that celebrities such as film stars are accorded:

Accompanied by two female friends, Homolka always arrived at the bar around 9 p.m., and stayed until closing. She sat at her favorite table near the dance floor, sizing up the men while sipping on her favorite drink, a vodka and orange juice, said the waiter. The blonde-haired veterinarian assistant usually wore the same low-cut, short black dress (Pron and Duncanson).

Such interest in a figure like Homolka may not have belied the disapproval being expressed by the Canadian press and the ordinary citizens who were being quoted, but it evidently displayed another form of emotional engagement as present. A simple response of revulsion, for example, would not explain the bidding war that broke out between the *Toronto Sun* and *Toronto Star* newspapers over the rights to reproduce Homolka's wedding album photos (Canadian Press, "Paper pays \$10,000"). Five journalists seeking to write books (and three film-television production companies wanting to produce teleplays and movies) were engaged in an effort to secure rights to the story even before Bernardo or Homolka was formally charged with murder (Walker). Nor was popular interest in the criminals always prefaced with protestations of disapproval. Along with the fan-based marriage proposals to murderers that are revealed in connection with every high profile proceeding, the internet had become a site of other affectively charged declarations,

including sexual exhortations: “One posting on *ChinaDaily Central* describes Ms. Homolka as ‘the most beautiful white female killer....She is a hottie!’” (Lackner).

We have noted that intimacy and celebrity are centrally about the apparent dissolution of boundaries between public and private. The public revelation of violent, sexual crime supports this understanding, making emphatic the observation that news media often lie between the audience and realms of experience to which that audience would not otherwise have access (Abercrombie and Longhurst 63). Violent sexual crime is typically commissioned with covertness and the social violation entailed is great. Further underlining this sense that reporting on crime allows public access to what would otherwise be hidden (intimate) information is a normative psychiatric analysis that sexually charged, violent crime is an expression of universal, unconscious desires usually kept under control, and so crime reportage details such violations in a manner that has psychological resonance for the general population (Alaton). This aspect of media attention paid to the violent sexual criminal as the violator of social taboos will be explored further in the following chapter on sexual content in the Diana/Homolka newspaper coverage but what is germane here is that revelation of sexual crime is intimately revealing of a story protagonist in a manner that comprises an affective prompt to a readership granted proximity to forbidden behaviour. In the Homolka chronology, evidence that newspapers’ attentiveness to such crime pairs consumer interest with ostensible journalistic legitimacy was seen with the public clamour for court-suppressed information on the proceedings of the Homolka trial, when Ontarians were reported to have traveled to

Buffalo to purchase U.S. newspapers carrying the censored information, and news sellers resorted to vending photocopies of the trial articles when their supply of papers ran out (Davey 234). On the matter of news media “legitimacy,” novelty has long been held within professional journalism as a central news value (Whitaker, Ramsey and Smith 14) and is typically an important feature of such crime. Moreover, an apparently high degree of individual pathology associated with the reported crime both furthers the sense of intimate revelation of the protagonist’s interiority and elevates media “relevancy” (Kidd-Hewitt 15). Although some ongoing presence of violent crime is normative in society, it stands out acutely from assumed norms of social behaviour and so is typically experienced as “unpredictable, unusual, disruptive of the social order.....and thus dramatic, sensational” (Hall et al 3). There is no consistent relationship between the rates of specific kinds of crimes and their coverage in media but it has been repeatedly observed that crimes comprising sexuality and violence are particularly compelling of media attention (Wykes 144).

Criminal transgression is hence declared a “reliable path” to notoriety, which Rojek further terms a form of celebrity (*Celebrity* 169). Because the subjects in the press spotlight were engaged in violations of the social code, newspapers had to present them with “a judicious blend of titillation and moral outrage” but without stinting on the elements of celebrity coverage previously discussed (Ponce de Leon, 23). Notoriety is a form of celebrity that has by their open declaration been consciously sought by some violent criminals with the intended object of rectifying society’s previous failure to acknowledge – celebrate – the self-assumed specialness

of the transgressor (Rojek, *Celebrity* 143), although the motives of these news subjects are not germane to this thesis. While it is in any event unknown if a desire for notoriety played a role in Homolka's criminal actions – her male partner had fruitless ambitions to become an entertainment star through his rap music (Pron, *Lethal Marriage*) -- we see that Canadian newspapers reporting Homolka's case largely employed the intimate tone and personal emphasis of other celebrity reporting. There is an ongoing press attention to Homolka's appearance, for example, as in a reference to her "sporting a new, shorter brunette hairstyle" 13 years after the conclusion of her public trial (Rakabowchuk). At a similar distance of time from Homolka's crimes and public sentencing, small, personal details such as comments in a love letter she wrote from prison comprised front-page news: "I miss you, your lips, your arms, everything" (Blatchford). Whoever a celebrity figure actually is becomes moot as that person's public self is shaped into "a cultural formation of meaning" (Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* 57), beginning pointedly in Homolka's case from the fact that she was a woman. Homolka's gender can be seen at each stage of the chronology to be a source of intense press interest – to comprise a key aspect of her notoriety. Significant here is that Homolka's crimes were exceptionally deviant from norms, firstly because she was engaged in the sexual violation and murder of children as a woman. Historically, media's interest in criminal personalities, as opposed to the fact of crime itself, is intensified as aberrance is heightened, and gender "reversal" is seen as particularly aberrant: "the most sensational murder trials [in the Victorian era] were of women who had had some sexual motivation, or at the very least were young

and attractive” (Knelman 230). Another analysis of this tilt in media emphasis holds that gender only becomes a focus in crime reporting when a woman is the perpetrator: “Accounts of intimate violent crime from the British press in the 1990s neglected the evidence that such crime was largely masculine and offered little critique of violence as associated with masculinity” (Wykes 160-1). Davey similarly draws up a detailed case elaborating the point that coverage of the Homolka case was sensationalized by her identity as a woman yet bereft of connections to relatively ordinary, familiar social ills, particularly the mistreatment of women by men (*Karla’s Web*). There is a wide range of important feminist concerns being evoked here that is beyond the scope of this thesis but significant to the present purpose is that the sex and sexual personality, that is, the intimately defined identity of the news subject in the Homolka chronology, were central to the press coverage. The motivation, psychological profile, personal habits and demeanor of the protagonist can be seen to supersede details of the legal proceeding in such emphasis. That Homolka was acting in concert with a male lover, for instance, evoked another tenaciously sensational media scenario from 30 years earlier, that of the United Kingdom’s so-called Moors murderers, Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, who for decades received more press attention than all other sex criminals in Britain as their intimate relationship intensified the deviance and novelty of their crimes (Soothill and Walby 87).

While crime reporting traditionally thrives on exaggerating the “abnormality” of the criminal act, there is also common emphasis on the “normality” of the context in which it occurs (Hall et al 4), invoking that central juxtaposition of celebrity in

which the news icon is both extraordinary and ordinary. Homolka's supposed normalcy was heightened in the press by frequent references to her being pretty; being a veterinarian's assistant whose professional supervisor declared she was incapable of bad intent (Rankin, "Suspect's wife"); choosing with Bernardo a characteristically middle-class house in a staid Ontario community ("When the couple got engaged, they picked out their 'dream house,' a Cape Cod-style home in Port Dalhousie, that was available to rent at about \$1,200 a month" [Duncanson and Pron]); and so on. The public Homolka was "superficially as 'nice' as the murder victims" (Davey 117). As celebrity entails the dissolution of boundaries between public and private lives (Turner, Bonner, and Marshall 12), criminal acts, in this case sexual crimes enacted by a couple, suggest a heightening of the revelatory power in that dissolution. Significant in its echo of the consumer orientation of celebrity, Davey notes of Homolka, "normality here was being defined in terms of consumerism" (122), harkening again to press descriptions of Homolka's clothing, facial expression, frequenting of clubs. Despite the ostensibly factual newspaper context of the descriptions, much of the language framing the Homolka chronology can be seen as designed to entice reader engagement with unsupported presumptions of psychological intimacy rather than to simply inform of publicly significant occurrences such as the discovery of a crime or the conduct of a criminal trial. Homolka's sexuality and her capacity for an intimate partnership are identifiable as subjects of recurrent interest on the newspapers' part. At a time of general ignorance about the inner machinations of the Homolka-Bernardo relationship, for example, the

Toronto Star described their wedding as “a storybook ending to a long courtship” (Rankin, “Suspect’s wife”). The contrived nature of this statement later emerged with the information that the relationship had been sexually consummated almost immediately during the pair’s first encounter and that the dismembered body of one of their victims was being exhumed on the day of the nuptials from a lake near the site of the wedding (Pron, *Lethal Marriage*). While the crimes of rape and murder with which the couple were charged would have made terms like “courtship” and “storybook” seem to be malapropisms, it is apparent that in further contrasting ostensible normalcy, here elevated to the idealized status of “courtship,” and aberrance, so would the novelty be increased, again expanding on a core news value (Whitaker, Ramsey and Smith 14) and showing curiosity about the psychological underpinning of these events. Moreover, the reference to “storybook” readily evokes the newspaper term repeatedly employed for Diana’s wedding: fairy tale, a construction that continued to be used in the press about Diana even while reporters were seeing first-hand that she was breaking from the strain very soon after the wedding (Bedell Smith). Although Diana’s setting by the press in a “fairy tale” was not immediately used to provide contrast with the self destructive behaviour which followed but to maintain a favoured iconography, it would prove a similarly unsupported projection when it became known that her husband had been conducting an affair with another woman since before the marriage almost without interruption (Bedell Smith). Presenting both weddings as “storybook” events suggests an interior understanding that they contained idealized elements known to any viewer who had

been exposed to such notions of romance, a presumption about the happy, excited feelings of the chief participants in both cases. Homolka's wish to hire a white, horse-drawn carriage for her own wedding so that she and Bernardo could be wed like Diana and Charles (Pron, *Lethal Marriage*) suggests that even the protagonists of this news chronology were entranced by press-generated projections onto the protagonists of another. The celebrity of Diana and Charles, like all contemporary celebrity, "provided innumerable reference points...for recognition...and emulation" (Rojek, *Celebrity* 109) and the popular breadth of the celebrity dynamic apparently finds Homolka among those entranced by media coverage of the princess. As news media had turned from primarily providing information to supplying the "cultural construction of social identity" through celebrity (Turner, Bonner, and Marshall 6), Homolka seemed to have been provided a social posture that attracted her for this most public ceremony. Davey argues that the press's projection of romance onto Homolka's wedding was entirely manipulative, the nuptials featuring only routine and banal decorative elements that *mimic* a fairy tale so as to romanticize the couple's ostensible ordinariness (119). Yet in light of later revelations about Charles' underlying alienation from the start of his marriage to Diana, it could be argued that the "original" in this instance was itself a mimicry of an idealized rite attended by idealized emotions – aspects of which were aroused in a mass audience through press coverage of the event.

Newspaper mechanisms for projecting emotionally-freighted intimacy with the

celebrity figure reached an apogee in the Homolka chronology when the trial proceedings that revealed her aberrant deeds were placed in Canada under a court-ordered publication ban. Underlining the presumed intensity and loathsome nature of the acts, Homolka's own lawyer asked for a publication ban on the trial proceedings to protect the families of the victims from further trauma (Abbate). While the resulting ban blocked journalists at the trial from reporting on the details of the proceedings, however, the public could freely surmise that reporters were privy to details they couldn't directly relate. That those details were emotionally harrowing was telegraphed by Canadian reporters in describing personal reactions to the courtroom accounts of the murders, as in Toronto journalist Christie Blatchford's declaration that "there was mucous running from my nose and I was gasping for breath" (Alaton). Elsewhere, a report related, that "Everyone was bawling, everyone," and that "'It was pretty emotional. A lot of people in this city would be very upset to hear what went on,' a shaken reporter said later" (Buckham). There are sexual connotations generated by this imagining in an information vacuum which will be examined further in the succeeding chapter. What we see in the examples to this point, however, is that while newspaper reporting on Homolka vehemently protested its social rejection of the news personality involved, it was engaging in "an illusion of intimacy" (Schickel 4) with the prominent criminal actor no less than it would with a movie star or a princess:

Karla Homolka invariably looked immaculate...but in her round blue eyes,

there seemed to be something dead, as if something was missing. Trapped by the awful circumstances, besieged by all the attention, she projected anger more than remorse in her gaze, as though she still could not quite grasp why she was on trial (Appleby).

CHAPTER 2 SEXUAL CONTENT IN THE DIANA/KARLA NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

Canadian newspapers are seen in what follows to pay close attention to sexual content within diverse news chronologies, particularly to the putative allure of selected figures in the news and their sexual behaviour. The objective of such news content, both historically and in the present examples of Diana Spencer and Karla Homolka, can be analyzed as an effort to generate affective engagement from consumers, the dynamic this thesis is concerned with. A first support for such a premise is the line that can be drawn between the imparting of details pertaining to sexual matters and reader reaction: “Work in sexology, medicine and social psychology confirms that sexual information elicits...sexual response” (Reichert 5-6). Moreover, consumers of media carrying such content are “favourably energized by sexual information,” with a commercially propulsive impact for those media products (Reichert 6).

This is seen by several academics cited here as a key driver behind the frequent iterations of sexual content in news media and more broadly “the sexualization of culture” (McNair, *Striptease Culture* 9). As the market orientation which informs media content is contextual to (albeit not the focus of) this analysis, we may gesture to the critical connection forged by intellectuals such as Baudrillard in citing the entanglement of allure with commercial production (*Seduction* 47). A newspaper account of a potential monarch can readily turn its emphasis to the ostensible sexual allure of its subject because content in mass culture itself, according to Baudrillard, may function as only a

vehicle for the seduction of the consumer (“Mass” 71). This “seduction” may not be overtly sexual but the description of the phrase “sex sells” as a longstanding advertising adage (Putrevu 57) references a widespread acknowledgement that specifically sexual content is often associated with consumer goods or, as in newspapers’ case when text is largely the product, even comprises the purchased object itself. With the deployment of the celebrity in news media, as with the positioning of any consumer object in advertising, “when the sexuality is related to the product or cause, favorable brand attitudes and corporate image emerge, whereas no benefit accrues when such a relationship is lacking” (Putrevu 57). My intent is not to explicitly make the assertion that Diana Spencer and Karla Homolka are themselves consumer products – although there may indeed be such a case to be made through a different academic inquiry – but to treat sexualized newspaper descriptions of their news chronologies as products shaped according to methods of reader attraction used throughout much of newspapers’ history. Supporting the assertion that ties sexual content to the mandate of the commercial press and other media, “...sex has the ability to attract and maintain the attention of audiences, which can increase ratings and circulation with the ultimate result of generating greater revenue for the organization” (Reichert 6). Moreover, together with the “hedonic value” of sexual information, the deployment of the latter in newspaper chronologies is related here to the previously discussed dimension of intimacy wherein media consumers “develop and maintain parasocial relationships with media personalities” (Reichert 7).

Germane to the sexual content in the chronologies of Diana and Karla, the reported behaviours are frequently positioned in terms signifying transgression, meaning

violation of social convention, in both instances. This invocation, as we'll see, also comprises content to prompt affect, including an element of reader involvement triggered by "proximity" to the violation of sexual taboos. My chief concern here remains with the news-format mechanisms of deploying sexualized detail in these Canadian newspaper chronologies to generate reader engagement. However, reference to psychoanalytic theory, starting with Marcuse's vantage that sexual urge itself is made transgressive in society (*Eros*), is contextually salient as key portions of Diana's chronology and almost all of Homolka's story are positioned in the press as featuring transgressive behaviour. In establishing society's repression of sexual expression, the psychoanalytic theory of sexual lack reinforces the premise here of a social appetite to which sexual content in news media provides a form of supply. A diverse body of cultural analysis with Freudian emphasis, starting with Marcuse, suggests that the commercially-housed invocation of sexuality is not one of drives elsewhere satisfied but of needs and pleasures elsewhere denied. That the biological drive can ultimately never be sated in human society, believes Marcuse, is inherent in Freudian terms by which the instincts are always intended to be repressed in civilization (*Eros* 34). This creates the paradoxes we find in a society which simultaneously features countless appeals to sexual engagement through media culture while creating obstacles to sex education, contraception and abortion (O'Neill 53).

Australian culture critic Stratton ties the Freudian-described unfulfilled state directly to the machinations of the market economy, noting that, "Lacan's theorization describes the form of male sexual desire, based on lack....which correlates with the increase in consumption in the west in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (4).

For women, formerly relegated to the domestic realm of the home, sexual lack similarly drives other forms of consumption as “commodities became feminized and eroticized” (Stratton 48). Both Marcuse and Lacan frame the state of unrequited sexual want here as socially and culturally promulgated, but it is also implicit in this theorizing that the needs being invoked culturally are resonant with *sui generis* biological drives that are stymied by social mores. Sexual provocations in the news media are thus “not sudden enticements or pornographic asides; they [are] satisfactions, however partial, of an inescapable demand” (Murray 101).

Again, there are important feminist concerns implicit here which cannot be adequately addressed in this paper and require extensive deconstruction in another academic context. That the two lead subjects of the analyzed newspaper coverage here are young, conventionally attractive women raises complex problems on the nature of reader gratification and the sexual objectification being purveyed in these chronologies. Difficult questions evoked here include sex differences in the public response to the objectified figures and the patriarchal assumptions behind news media positioning of the sexual interests of their readership.* However, the influential view of scholars like

*Examining reader response to sexual content in advertising, for example, studies find marked difference in male and female reactions and these are seen as emerging from divergence “in men’s and women’s sexual beliefs and motivations” (Dahl, Sengupta, and Vohs 215). Usefully coincident with the current purpose, however, is that this latter analysis postulates that women’s interest to a greater extent than men’s is in sexual content attached to “emotional intimacy and commitment” (*ibid*). Such committed intimacy is notably the case in the two news chronologies here. In an important sense, both Diana’s and Karla Homolka’s examples are the chronologies of marriages, which nonetheless feature adultery and other forms of the hedonic sexuality these authors find of greater interest to men.

Laura Mulvey that such figures are the focus of the scopophilic male gaze or objects of female identification (Stratton, 109) does not oppose the stated premise here that sexual content in the Diana/Homolka chronologies is positioned to generate affect and hence reader engagement across the gender spectrum, notwithstanding gender-divided political and social implications that would take on central significance in an explicitly feminist analysis. (There is some notable resistance on the part of each of these two women, moreover, to remaining tied in place as a “bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” [Mulvey 362]. While it is noted elsewhere in this paper that Diana becomes a strong figure for reader identification as a wronged and suffering woman, she also wins popular favour and support over her husband and the repressive monarchy to which he’s attached [Bedell Smith]. Homolka brings about the spousally-abusive Bernardo’s arrest and secures his conviction while substantially mitigating her own criminal sentence under the Ontario justice system [Pron, *Lethal Marriage*].) Without attempting to parse along gender lines the effort at reader response to the chronologies, what is unavoidable here is that the chronologies are strongly linked through the sex of their protagonists and accordingly their positioning as objects of sexual attraction. Such treatment of news-chronology protagonists is not novel, as we will see; there are well-established press mechanisms behind the positioning of sexual allure, transgression and aberrance. Sexual content in news coverage, however much or little relevant to the public-event-recording mandate of such coverage, has a long and strongly grounded role in the life of the commercial press.

SEXUAL CONTENT IN NEWSPAPERS HISTORICALLY

To speak of sexual content in newspapers would appear an acute shift from the unadorned accounts of mercantile activity and government pronouncements with which newspapers began (Habermas 16). Yet in the context of modern mass media we may endeavour to position sexualized newspaper reporting as an extrapolation from what’s

long been in evidence in a “libidinised economic order” (Stratton 70). McNair asserts that “commodified” sex “is of major economic significance in the cultural capitalism of the twenty-first century” (*Striptease Culture* 6). Corresponding claims have been made that such use of sex has been visible throughout mass culture since well over a century as described in the work of Stratton. As sex itself suggests an affiliation forged in want, so does the consumer economy seek to create such an affiliation between consumers and products (Gitlin 179). That newspapers would be a particularly important conveyance of such developments flowed in part simply from the point that printed matter enjoyed something close to a cultural monopoly from the 17th century to the late 19th century (Postman, *Amusing* 41). In the period from 1870 to the commencement of the First World War, the daily newspaper dominated the public sphere (Starr 251). By 1910 in the United States, for example, daily newspapers had a circulation of 121 for every 100 households, or an average of more than one paper for every home (Starr 252). James Gordon Bennett, publisher of *The New York Herald*, found by the mid-1800’s that stories on sex scandals (and crime) increased both circulation and advertising revenue (Ponce de Leon 23). Following both his example and the London tabloids, American newspapers made increasingly prominent use of sex scandal and crime through the latter part of the 19th century and dramatically so from the early decades of the 20th century, as has been referenced in examinations of the careers of the two leading American newspaper industry moguls of that period, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer (Liebling). The assertion that print news media routinely emphasize sexuality is also made in analyses of the market strategies employed by them, such as in this scrutiny of British

tabloids during the period of increasing competition in which the Diana-era scandals of the royals arrived: “In the 1970s and 1980s the [British tabloid] form broke qualitatively new ground.....from the outset, sex was chosen as the terrain on which the circulation war would be fought” (McNair, *Mediated* 168). The bridging link between the emphasis on sex in newspapers and Stratton’s libidinised economic order has repeatedly been identified as advertising by such observers. While the earliest shipping accounts contained none (Habermas), advertising in newspapers was becoming important before the close of the 17th century, and with it came a growing role for sensationalism (Innis 27). In the United States, where advertising would represent 60 per cent of newspaper revenues by the beginning of the 20th century (Starr 252), the *British Quarterly Review* had pronounced the American newspaper to be as if “published by a literary Barnum....whose paper is prolific of all kinds of sensational headings” (255). That the trend line has continued unabated has been asserted in analyses of the careers of such contemporary newspaper moguls as Rupert Murdoch, whose formula has similarly been described as predicated on sex and sensationalism (Lacey 29), notwithstanding that his holdings have ultimately extended to drier publications such as *The Wall Street Journal* and that the recent closure of his *News of the World* signaled a limit to social acceptance of the intrusiveness of his approach.

Indications of the intensity of popular interest in sex scandal have been registered at a number of junctures in the last century when prominent individual stories could generate record-breaking sales of newspapers. The 1963 Profumo affair, for example, in which English and Soviet officials with access to sensitive information were sharing the

services of a prostitute, brought *News of the World* to an unprecedented circulation of 6.25 million (Conboy 158). Particularly notable in the 1993 trial of Karla Homolka was the expression of public interest in the pursuit of information pertaining to sexual violation which was by court ruling not available in the Canadian media. As aforementioned, Ontario residents crossed the U.S. border to secure copies of *The Buffalo News* which carried the information, and demand was such that news vendors began selling photocopies of the relevant story (Davey 234). When conventional access through the airwaves to a U.S. television program with trial details was blocked in Canada, domestic newspapers pointed out that Canadians could circumvent the ban with satellite dishes (Abbate and Breckenridge) while a former provincial police officer faced charges for distributing videotapes of the program (Canadian Press, "Man expects charges"). Such avidity followed the eruption of sex scandal in Diana's case as well, when newspapers conducted surveys throughout Britain to measure the response to Charles's admission of infidelity while tens of millions of viewers watched the key interview on television (Darnton). While there is in all this an apparent lack of the "gatekeeper function" championed by those who perceive a central role for the press in the functioning of a democratic society (Kovach and Rosenstiel 46), we will see there is not obviously any contradiction with the definitions of salience the press has set out for itself since over a century.

SEXUAL CONTENT AND NEWS VALUES

The ongoing crowding of information sources in media's marketplace has led to a growing explicitness and frequency in the usage of sexual content (Dahl, Sengupta, and Vohs 215). Newspapers must sell so as to win advertising and so the adage "sex sells" is germane to newspapers themselves. In newspapers, story selection is ostensibly guided by a trade construct typically denoted as news values, which set out such elements as breadth of public impact and currency as being key to newsworthiness (Whitaker, Ramsey, and Smith 13). News values, however, also prominently include such elements as conflict, human interest and novelty within their standard (Whitaker, Ramsey and Smith 14), categories to which sex scandal and sex crime can be readily seen to belong and further to combine with dramatic force. Following an earlier phase in which politics was a dominant theme for newspapers, sex has been asserted as a historical "staple" of journalism, one which over time spread increasingly from penny publications for the less literate into those catering to middle-class readers (Conboy 169). In adhering to the values of newsworthiness, prompting the sexual interest of the readership was made part of the ostensible function of pursuing the public interest, alongside an ever-present commercial requirement to attract large numbers of readers (Wykes 192). A press unrestrained by government censorship was historically championed even by the founding personalities of the American republic as essential to the workings of democracy (Kovach and Rosenstiel 23). Yet as a commercial centre of production, newspapers' conception of news values was not restricted to informative and critical inquiries into political and economic matters but extended to a business imperative to

ensure many stories were also “entertaining and dramatic (like fiction)” (Hartley 166). News values could thus readily encompass sex scandals and sex crimes as being at the same time “highly newsworthy and extremely potent commercially” (Greer 97). Even reporting on the contents of divorce cases was central to the sex scandal strategy of such publications as *News of the World*, which led all others for readership for decades (Conboy 158). Playing a role in Stratton’s libidinised economic order, “news was a commodity which was created according to....perceived demands....” (Conboy 23).

Numerous critics within the newspaper industry and amongst academics have asserted a present trend line of increased emphasis on sexual content and other personality-focused reporting in media coverage. Journalist Sidney Blumenthal, for example, identifies the “explosion of a tabloid culture” (Gronbeck 132) and scholars Lull and Hinerman assert that coverage of scandals, typically sex-related, is today pervasive. “Jim McDowell, editor for *Sunday World*, says of current differences between quality and popular press, ‘There’s none.’” (Greer 95). Statistical analyses support the idea that this traditional area of emphasis in the newspaper industry for much of its history is again growing. A study of the *Vancouver Sun*, for example, found that in a period from 1977 to 1994 when reporting on white-collar financial crime had steadily diminished, reporting on sexual offenses more than quintupled (Hackett et al). With coverage of the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, a process emblematic of the traditional newspaper notion of its role in safeguarding the public interest (Kovach and Rosenstiel 68), political and entertainment reporting were asserted to have merged, with a particular emphasis on sex scandal involving politicians (Gronbeck 125). A recurrent academic assertion is that

coverage of sex scandals not only furnishes the “hedonic value” that all sexual content offers but plays a part in the “regulation of the communal moral order” (Tomlinson 69). This latter alludes to socio-political functions of the press which are not properly the subject of this thesis. But it is salient here that positioning sexual content with avowed social disapproval serves to assert transgression in the examined chronologies --extending such established news values as conflict, human interest and novelty -- and provide a form of sanctioned access to that content. The affective appeal to readers is thus sought through news story content that is “transgressive in ways that tap into fundamental and powerful cognitive-emotional structures...” (Lull and Hinerman 22).

REPORTING SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AS TRANSGRESSION

Press accounts of sexual behavior which is positioned as transgressive, a word we will examine, “satisfy news values and offer audiences, largely deprived of access to representations of a hugely constitutive part of themselves, a glimpse of the forbidden...” (Wykes 192). Invoking Marcuse’s point that sexuality is repressed in society and so is made transgressive (*Eros*), celebrity studies offers the assertion that, “transgression is a *universal* characteristic of human culture” (Rojek, *Celebrity* 54, italics added). Significantly, news media have been successful in making themselves among the only socially acceptable outlets for examining such manifestations of sexual behaviour (Wykes 192). What actually comprises media scandal or transgression is contingent on what behaviours are so positioned in the press, for these are mediated experiences that don’t generally have an independent existence outside their coverage (Thompson 49).

Scandal is described as “private acts that disgrace or offend the idealized, dominant morality of a social community” (Lull and Hinerman 3), although I propose a more neutral term such as “contravene” rather than “offend” because of what we see to be avid public interest in the relevant press accounts. Accounts of transgression provide “a viable and safe channel through which to release psychic tension” (Lull and Hinerman 23), partly present because of the gulf that normally exists between idealized public morality and the everyday practices of ordinary people (27). Critically, while there are no generally agreed-upon means to assess the dominant morality of a community, there is an ongoing effort in the press to present sexual conduct as if it does indeed contravene it: “Managers of modern news media actively try to turn stories into scandals” (Lull and Hinerman 9). So we see, for example, that casting news reports of adultery under a gaze of disapproval, readers were assured that the Queen was “anxious to repair the tarnished image of the royal family” (Reuters, “Camilla determined”). In words like “anxious,” “repair” and “tarnished” in the previous citation and “secretly” and “bristled” in the following one, news accounts reflected both the impermissible nature and the presumed public excitement to key developments in the Diana story: “Britain bristled with curiosity...[when] it emerged the Parker-Bowles' secretly began their legal separation barely a month after that of Charles and Diana...” (Agence France-Presse). Given that adultery, divorce and a renewed search for romantic love were landmark events in Diana’s chronology, the pervasive presence of scandal in the press (Lull and Hinerman) could be seen to frequently bear her likeness. (A closer discussion of scandal follows in the next chapter on sensationalism.)

Overt transgression appears most obviously associated with a story dominated by sex crime, as in Homolka's case. Yet a transgressive sexualized element can be found in even the relatively early reporting on Diana, whose story ventured from an initial media emphasis on her presumed chastity to an image as "a loose woman with a penchant for rough trade" (Punt 94). At the social stratum she occupied, the fact of Diana's divorce itself was violating of convention to the point that it had the potential to imperil the institutional monarchy within which it was taking place (C. Campbell). The actual legal divorce proceedings between Diana and Charles, in which both would declare adultery (Associated Press, "Report") were anticipated in the press as "the Super Bowl of dirty laundry" (Kornheiser). Further suggestive of the commercial dimension normative to the reporting of sex scandal (Greer 94), the "dirty laundry" generated major television appearances by the principals and the publication of memoirs, with the nature of the press perspective tipped in such words as "confesses": "The latest missile in the battle of the books is Charles' authorized biography in which he confesses to three affairs with Camilla Parker-Bowles over the years, before and after each was married, and to not ever having loved Princess Diana" (*Salt Lake Tribune*). The imprint of transgression so adheres to sexuality that newspapers have traditionally blurred distinctions between what is criminal and what is "kinky" (Greer 94). A contiguous view is that media's employment of scandalous material ranging from marital infidelity to crimes of sexual violation offers audiences an opportunity to experience elements of the transgressions vicariously while being able to pass moral judgment on them (Lull and Hinerman 27). Britain's *Mirror* tabloid offered reporting on the Homolka trial, for example, in "prose

littered with adjectives like ‘sadistic,’ ‘sinister’ and ‘sick’...” (Canadian Press, “British tabloid pulled”). Because of the extremity of transgression in Homolka’s crimes, journalists and editors involved in purveying the contents of her case strenuously disavowed any “hedonic value” or other sensations of arousal attached to the chronology (Alaton). But legal and psychiatric professionals engaged in such cases treat a drive to consume reports of scandal and deviance as normative: “‘There is a thrill to it, a prurient interest to it, there is an appeal to being shocked,’ says Toronto criminal lawyer Paul Calarco...” (Alaton). Newspaper attentiveness to crime has been seen to increase as the violation of social norms intensifies; for example, not only is sex crime a leading element of commercial news coverage (Greer 44) but stranger-initiated sex crimes involving children (the legal status of Homolka’s victims), while of lesser publically-reported incidence than almost any other forms of sexual assault, comprise a major portion of such reporting (70).

Notable in this matter of the extent of the transgression involved was the Canadian media’s ongoing emphasis on the ostensible normalcy of Homolka, normalcy providing a ground against which transgression could be contrasted. Her apparent social normalcy was so high as to affect her sentencing *after* the exposition of her crimes: “‘I find she is not the worst offender because she has no previous criminal record,’” remarked presiding justice Francis Kovacs” (*Globe and Mail*, “Homolka doesn’t fit”). Canadian newspaper reporting on Homolka heightened the sense of transgression involved in the case by emphasizing the middle-class tranquility of the setting and the nominally bourgeois appearance of the crime perpetrators: “Evil had not been visited

upon the community [of St. Catharines], like an invasion by some alien force; it had walked and smiled and lived among them. It had said good morning at Tim Horton and good evening at Swiss Chalet” (Davey 121). While crime reporting traditionally thrives on exaggerating the “abnormality” of the criminal act, there is also common emphasis on the “normality” of the context in which it occurs (Hall et al), evoking that central juxtaposition of celebrity in which the news icon is both extraordinary and ordinary. Homolka’s supposed normalcy was heightened in the press by references previously examined here in the chapter on intimacy. The attraction to this clash with ostensible normalcy, notes Schubart, derives from a Freudian-described impulse by which “we wish to break the limits of safety, sanity and normality by moving into a world of chaos dominated by unconscious desires” (226). More pointedly, and in specific reference to coverage of the Homolka crimes, Davey states that “cloaked in the protection of self-righteous indignationwe read and gain unconscious access to our own remote and secret savageries and fears” (51). There is an echo of Freudian tensions among id, ego and superego in Hall and his colleagues’ summation that crime news speaks to the ongoing contention in society between order and disorder, and that news media function as controlling forces “to define, place and ‘make sense of’ the illegal, the abnormal, the ‘unthinkable’” (2). The allure of the danger in this zone of transgression is such that “crime [reporting] is so popular, so threatening and so entertaining all at once” (Osborne 29).

Diana’s story didn’t comprise crime and Homolka’s crimes weren’t enacted within a frame of celebrity. Yet there is within the two chronologies evidence that

transgression can at times be observed as a function of social station in relation to aberrant behaviour, bolstering the normalcy-aberrance equation for readership interest in such stories: “Disaster is good stuff, sex and crime and celebrity make terrific news, and famous sex criminals with disastrous impact are the very best” (Soukoup 228). Social interest in accounts of transgression, following Marcuse’s premise, rises in proportion to the “degree of repression to which such instincts are subjected in a given society” (Praver 53). The element of transgressive appeal in sexual news content is such that it has been likened by several scholars to pornography, as in Davey’s provocative assertion that the presumed attractiveness of the bodies of Homolka’s teenaged victims was a prominent feature that the news coverage held in common with pornography and advertising (47). Also evocative of erotic content geared to excitation while being socially repressed or stigmatized, the court-imposed publication ban on Homolka’s trial turned all the materials of the proceedings into contraband (Abbate and Appleby), which, as we have seen, led to strenuous public efforts to acquire them. Here, too, while the Homolka chronology was notable for the intensity and duration for which it excited this type of interest on the part of Canadian newspapers, it was not unprecedented: “As far back as the eighteenth century, and probably before, trial reports about cases of sexual crimes... have been constructed as a genre of pornography” (Soothill and Walby 12). In contrast to visually explicit pornography, however, erotic content in newspaper accounts is essentially limited to words which are normally kept allusive rather than graphic in descriptions of sexual incidents, and so there is importantly a dimension of reader imagining that accompanies engagement with the story content. Because this conjectural

dimension runs counter to the traditional understanding that news traffics in what can be concretely depicted and catalogued (Gans,1980; Epstein 1973), “the ambiguity, the unconscious desires and the sexual content is a point of departure media research seldom uses” (Schubart 227). Homolka’s crimes occurred not only out of public view but even their legal examination was altogether kept from public examination due to a publication ban on the trial proceedings. “Over and over in the media coverage and the viewers’ imaginations the teenagers were murdered and remurdered. With the [news publication] ban...this invitation to imagine became virtually irresistible” (Davey 53). As Ontario newspapers fought the publication ban in court, they even offered the provincial justice system the advice that the ban was only increasing reader and media interest in the hidden contents of the case (Middlemiss).

The foregoing need not be comprehensive of the uses of sexual content in news reporting as a means to prompt affect. The effort here is to establish sexual reference in the reporting as a significant tool to that end, recalling the chapter’s starting assertions that “sexual information elicits...sexual response” and news consumers are “favourably energized by sexual information” (Reichert 7). As we see in the news chronologies examined here, newspaper treatment of the stories used to varying extent in the cases of both Diana and Karla the affect-prompting techniques of making sexual identity central to the coverage, establishing the sexual allure of the protagonists and setting out (much of) the sexual behaviour as transgressive. The chronologies have their particular configurations in the use of these; the “deviance amplification” (Kidd-Hewitt 12) is

paramount in the case of Homolka and the persistence of sexual allure, from infancy to death and even in death, in the case of Diana.

ALLURE AND DEVIANCE IN THE TWO CHRONOLOGIES

Both Diana Spencer and Karla Homolka were consistently presented in the Canadian press as objects of sexual allure and the nature of such newspaper content was to prompt affect as found within sexual response. Homolka was seen in childhood as pretty in the manner of a doll or of a princess (Pron, *Lethal Marriage* 17) – both these comparisons suggest projection or artifice, a constructed paradigm of beauty -- and she spoke of herself and Bernardo ordering a horse-drawn white coach for their wedding expressly in the manner of Diana and Charles at *their* wedding (Pron, *Lethal Marriage* 197). Such elements consciously invoke, even on the part of one of the news subjects, the sexual enticements that would be found in the media descriptions of both women, young blondes of similar ages, colouring and builds. There are also evidently important differences between the figures, most obviously in Diana's positioning (through much although not all of her chronology) as an idealized and ultimately beatific subject and Homolka's as an epitomizing emblem of deviance and social unacceptability. One of the clearest manifestations of this opposing dynamic is the ostensibly genteel, admiring tone adopted early on for Diana's appearances, sometimes not very subtly casting her as a chaste object of sexual interest with an avid press in pursuit: "The press has nicknamed her 'Shy Di' because, among other things, she still blushes when followed by photographers" (*New York Times*). Reporting on Homolka conversely took on a clear

tone of disapproval, often expressed as if on behalf of the reading public, while offering this figure as a taboo object of sexual interest: “There was Homolka, cavorting about in a slinky black evening gown, hamming it up for the camera at a birthday party, a celebratory bash behind bars at the medium security prison. How could a killer enjoy such luxuries, an angry public wanted to know” (Pron, *Lethal Marriage* 9). These definitions were not static during the chronologies, however. Diana’s last romance, with wealthy playboy Dodi Al-Fayed, brought disparaging, racially charged and sexually chastising references to her as “an Arab merchant’s bit of posh” (Lomax 75), for example. Extending the point from a reversed vantage, *Toronto Star* columnist Michelle Landsberg suggested that if Homolka and Bernardo were Arab, Homolka’s assumed subservience would have fit people’s stereotypical notions of that culture and much of the frisson associated with her acts would be gone. This aspect of flexibility in the handling of the content will be explored further in the subsequent chapter on sensation and scandal in news coverage. In any event, while the context of approval or disapproval had important ramifications for whether the sexuality of these figures was positioned as socially sanctioned or taboo and transgressive, press descriptions in both cases focus on the women as objects of allure. The mechanism at times could be as simple as, having “established” the attractiveness of Homolka through persistent reference to it, even a banal detail of appearance or behaviour could assume sexual resonance, as in the observation of Homolka at poolside: “At one point yesterday she held up her arm to a friend’s to compare who had gotten the most sun” (Pron, “Facing manslaughter”).

There is an overriding parallel in the importance of both women's sexuality at the most rudimentary level, that of their gender. Being a woman created expectations of Diana's sexual identity (chaste yet with a provocative lack of petticoats) at the time of her affiancement which were different than those which existed for her male partner, who was more than a decade older and known to have had a history of intimate relationships (A. Morton). Expectations of Diana's sexuality also extended to the imperative for her to become a mother and a reportedly heightened sense of transgression when her adulterous affairs were revealed. Most importantly in Homolka's case, her gender greatly intensified what Knelman describes as the public sense of transgression in light of the crimes, a phenomenon she traces to at least 19th century England. Female criminals are "constructed as the antithesis of acceptable femininity...." (Kilty and Frigon 40) although this does not exclude sexual allure from "unacceptable" femininity, as we repeatedly see in Homolka's case. The press attention to Homolka's "sexuality, criminality and victimhood" (Kilty and Frigon 44), the latter superseded by later revelations which heightened her apparent aberrance, can be viewed as gender specific and integral to "the social, legal and media constructions of her dangerousness" (56). Insofar as Karla Homolka's profile in Canadian newspapers pertained to the enactment of crimes of sexual violation, there was an element of attention to her own sexuality in the coverage. Karla moreover presented herself in private correspondence that came to light as assuming the persona of one who was both voraciously sexual and given to imaginatively heightening a transgressive allure to her sexual identity, as in the juxtapositions of innocence and carnality in this published conclusion of a letter to partner Bernardo:

“Signed, your furry little creature. Your princess. Your cunt, slut, asslicker, and cocksucker. And most of all, the little girl who loves you madly” (Pron, *Lethal Marriage* 131). Homolka in such later-publicized personal disclosures atop her criminal actions could be said to have made her own sexuality an inevitable issue in the coverage. Yet press critics of the reporting on her underlined that public interest in her case was also in significant part predicated on the premise that Homolka was personally alluring in sexual terms that would be understood and accepted by the general newspaper readership itself, being “so pretty, so blonde, such a good figure” (Landsberg). Homolka had been seen as the prettiest schoolgirl in her class (Pron, *Lethal Marriage* 17) and had taken pride in having long hair like a Barbie doll (20). Press responsiveness to Homolka’s conventional sexual attractiveness was such that during her trial, featuring the graphic detailing of extremely violent acts, there was scope to report that she wore “different outfits every day, her cheeks rouged, her hair elegantly coiffured” (Appleby). Homolka’s reported transgressiveness pivoted critically from the fact of her sex. News treatment positions perpetrators of sex crimes as normatively male while the involvement of a woman in the violations markedly creates a focus on her sex and sexuality (Wykes 160-1). While newspapers in their crime reporting are routinely given to “deviance amplification” (Kidd-Hewitt 12) as a manner of augmenting the element of novelty, Homolka’s taking a role in pedophilic sex crimes as a woman made her statistically unusual in the extreme. These elements of Homolka’s sexual identity, including her sex in itself, her conventional sexual attractiveness and that her crimes comprised sexual violation along with murder, created intense and exceptional press interest of the kind Knelman has cited in the

newspapering environment of Victorian England. Drawing a line of comparison between Homolka's actions at the close of the last century and such cases of criminal transgression from a century before, while murder in Victorian London was itself unexceptional and did not routinely excite press attention, "murders by women, because they were rare and particularly threatening, were well publicized" (Knelman 33). Setting aside that the Homolka case featured sex crimes against children, the act of murder by a woman in itself, given women's conventional role as nurturers, had long been perceived as a contravention of natural laws as well as those devised by society (Knelman 11). Moreover, as novelty is a core news value in the tradition of the press (Whitaker, Ramsey, and Smith 14), the exceptionality of a woman's involvement in such crimes as Homolka's made her femaleness not only a point of dramatic focus but a central element of her newsworthiness, as with Knelman's Victorians. With the female murderer "not only had she flouted the human taboo against killing another human being, but she had also challenged the social stereotype of femininity: gentle, submissive, passive, self-sacrificing, delicate" (Knelman 20).

Homolka's crimes, notwithstanding that they were committed in concert with a man, were exceptional even among women's recorded acts of homicide, as studies normally indicate "women engage in murder when it is victim-precipitated or for self-defence" (Thompson and Ricard 262). Academic analysis has gone as far as to assert that sex only becomes a focus in crime reporting when a woman is the perpetrator: "Accounts of intimate violent crime from the British press in the 1990s neglected the evidence that such crime was largely masculine and offered little critique of violence as associated with

masculinity” (Wykes 160-1). Davey similarly draws up a detailed case elaborating the point that coverage of the Homolka case was sensationalized by her identity as a woman yet bereft of connections to relatively ordinary, familiar social ills, particularly the mistreatment of women by men.* To leave aside for another academic context the feminist concerns here, significant to the present purpose is that the sex and sexual personality, that is, the intimately defined identity of the news subject in the Homolka chronology, were central to the press coverage. That Homolka was acting in concert with a husband, as has been noted, evoked the chronology of Britain’s most prominent sex criminals in the modern era, Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, who “despite

* One of the most difficult challenges for feminist analysis in the case of Homolka entails grappling with the apparent duality of her simultaneous victimhood and victimizing expression of moral agency. Given psychiatric testimony during her trial that Homolka felt she had to show complete subservience to her abusive and menacing male partner to retain his affection and avoid his brutality, “Homolka acted in a manner reflective of femininity within the patriarchal ideology” (Thompson and Ricard 262). Accounting for videos of the crimes that came to light subsequent to the trial, Kilty and Frigon ultimately find Homolka’s status as victim and transgressor with moral agency aren’t mutually exclusive (39). Tellingly, they note that “while the image of Paul Bernardo has faded from the limelight, the media has consistently maintained its gaze on Homolka” (*ibid*). That this gaze reveals an intensity of interest in Homolka’s sexuality is apparent in the popular accounts of her story, notably in books by Toronto newspaper journalists Nick Pron (*Lethal Marriage*) and Stephen Williams (*Karla: A Pact with the Devil*) which expanded on similar reporting they had done for Toronto newspapers.

the time since their convictions (19 years at the time of this writing), figure in the media more than all the rest of the sex criminals currently in custody put together” (Soothill and Walby 87).

For all the differences in her story of marriage, motherhood and divorce, Diana, who was subjected to “blanket coverage” (S. Wilson 40) from the time of her affiancement to her funeral, was a focus of reporting with a sexual emphasis implicit even at unexpected junctures of the chronology as when newspaper photos of Diana’s auto-wreck death were described as “the very acme of intrusive prurience” (41). As a measure of the linkage between such content and popular interest and commerce – which can be suggested as comprising news values as well -- a London photo editor offered 300,000 British pounds for those images of the death and international headlines ensued 10 years later when a British coroner finally released some of them (Kay). Converging to assert an unassailable “news value,” media and readership interest in Diana’s body image issues, broken marriage and love affairs has been compared to that conferred on the most prominent of movie stars (Richards 61) with Diana herself described as a “truly scrumptious national dish...fallen upon with such rapacious desperation by the press...” (Brunt 23). While there is news content in the Diana chronology that can be seen as overtly sexual, such as the revelations of her adultery, with Diana and sexual content, “media organizations are using it for more than a simple plot device” (Reichert 8). As with other female pop culture stars who are “constrained in their image construction by a focus upon their sexuality” in a manner exceeding that of male celebrities (Williamson 118), Diana’s media-recorded chronology may be seen to have such a focus throughout,

with each of her succeeding identity tropes carrying its own sexual associations. For example, within the sexually-themed or connotative reporting that was part of the “epidemic of representation” (Turner 100) of Diana from the outset, her father tells reporters at the start of international attention on her that “as a baby, she was a superb physical specimen” (Plommer). This underlining of the celebrity object’s purported allure that commenced with Diana’s introduction to a wider world employed what was commonly then a positioning of her as a chaste woman-child (Brunt 26) with such observations as, “Lady Diana seems to have no former boyfriends who are eager to come forth with tales of past romances, another point that is strongly in her favor” (Borders). That portrayal was given some credence years later when a former private secretary of the Queen was quoted in the press saying, “.....the Prince of Wales had to marry a virgin” (Meares). The degree of veracity in such representations, however, is less significant than the matter of where the press focus was applied; the point is that this presumption of chastity was an early milestone in a chronology asserted here as consistently comprising sexual content. The preamble to the observation on the teenaged Diana’s lack of petticoats in the introduction of her to the Canadian newspaper audience stated that, “Britons got a look yesterday at the girl who is the latest hot favorite to be their future queen. They saw more of her than most had bargained for” (Webster). How much had they bargained for and how much did they see of this “hot favourite”? This remains for readers to conjecture, to enter what Baudrillard called in broader context “the seductive mode of abstraction and of spectacle” (“Mass” 71).

Making the point that this tone of coverage was not limited to Canadian publications traditionally associated with “tabloid narrative” (Lull and Hinerman 45), the account on Diana as “hot favourite” ran in Canada’s self-styled national newspaper of record and was written by a senior correspondent who would later become its editor-in-chief. A long newspaper tradition features the strategy of heightening the beauty and sexual allure of a young female news figure such as Diana, who in sober academic observation was modestly pretty with an attractiveness more largely predicated on news positioning (Punt 99). Despite dramatic life changes and altered media positioning in other regards, Diana as a sexualized celebrity object can be seen to carry forward through years of eating disorders, suicide attempts and adultery scandals, all of which emerged with “the vivid account...of a marriage gone awry” in a book by Andrew Morton (Cox News Service). Both as text and subtext, sexual issues were suggested to underlie the approaching divorce as “the romance that began with a lavish wedding had deteriorated into an ice-cold alliance” (Reuters, “Palace denies”). The matter of the temperature of the physical love in Diana’s marriage was thus applied to an inducted member of the monarchy whose function was to ensure a line of succession. That task was completed by this stage in the chronology but Canadian press coverage was candidly concerned with the interpersonal dynamics in the conjugal relationship: “Now the world is watching as the Windsors’ celebrated marriage disintegrates into a loveless mismatch” (O’Connell). While the pressure of press scrutiny has perhaps triggered psychological trauma and unraveling among many kinds of celebrity figures, Camille Paglia’s reference to the “voyeuristic laser beam” to which Diana was subjected makes an evident sexual allusion

and dovetails with Paglia's analysis that the princess was struggling with "ancient archetypes of conventional womanhood" (Brunt 33), perhaps most significantly the expectation that she would endure her husband's infidelity without disturbance in her public façade.

Even as Diana may have laboured under such expectations from the family into which she had married, the fracturing of the façade was clearly an important focus for press scrutiny. Whatever shifts in her allure this may have entailed, that there was allure was always a given. Even her suffering was eroticized in the media, with Lacan cited in an observation of "the truly Sadean nature of the press relationship with Diana" (S. Wilson 43). The Sadean theme here is of public "desire for Diana being sustained throughout her adult life expressly through news media accounts of her suffering through the aforementioned revelations and even, finally, in her 'beauty' at the time of death" (*ibid*). In the de Sadean world, it has been asserted, "clearly eroticism and death are not opposites....they are natural companions" (Schubart 225). And so the sexual focus only reaches its closing phase at the time of her decease, when Diana was conflated with Mother Teresa who had died the same week (Maitland). At that point, Diana was positioned as "an icon of sexy saintliness" (Burchill qtd. in Brunt 36), a human vehicle of "quasi-sacred eroticism" (S. Wilson 43). Because of her psycho-sexual turmoil during her marriage and her violent death, Diana presented "moral" conflicts as an object of sexual interest even while her relentless description in the press and the consumer avidity associated with her would seem to demonstrate what Wilson terms the consumer market's "vicious circle of desire, whose apparent satisfaction only widens the gap of its

dissatisfaction” (52). Some academic observers believe the dilemma found its resolve in the “sainthood” conferred upon Diana by the press at the end of her life and which she had herself positioned through her public life, “gliding through the AIDS wards as a Madonna of the Damned” (Cockburn 29). Consumption of Diana in death becomes for Wilson an ironically consumerist gesture of charity, invoking “the ritual of Christian consumption” (45). His positioning of Diana as a sexualized religious icon by the time of her death places her in this view as what Lacan terms an “object *in* desire” someone who like the saint provides access to others to a form of sublimated longing through their suffering (45, author’s italics).

CHAPTER 3: SENSATIONALISM IN THE DIANA/KARLA NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

The Diana and Homolka chronologies were reported in the Canadian press with established methods of shaping news content to prompt affect, examined here as mechanisms of generating reader intimacy with news-story protagonists and cueing reader reaction with sexual references. In such stories, a rudimentary information-disseminating function of the press is apparently present but primarily serves as a vehicle to purvey feeling and sensation in the observation of contemporary sociologist Gitlin: “We do live in an ‘information society’ but no less, if less famously, it is *a society of feeling and sensation*, toward the furtherance of which information is sometimes useful” (36, author’s italics). To contextualize this ongoing urge to sensations, the triggering of which will be seen to be a longstanding press function, it is salient to briefly revisit here how this society emerged. As he acknowledges, Gitlin’s findings rest on the work of Simmel (Gitlin 41), who described key elements of the societal context referenced in this thesis. A society primed for rapidly-shifting sensations is tethered to the advent of modernity as described by Simmel, who “thought the decisive force in people’s lives is ‘the power and the rhythm of emotions’” (Gitlin 37). Simmel observed a growing intensity of affective life in the modern urban setting due to a plethora of stimuli, even as the objective demands of society required a channeling of emotional responses away from public interactions; these latter were conducted within “a sphere of mental activity which is least sensitive and which is furthest removed from the depths of the personality”

(*On Individuality* 326). The calculating society employs media to provide sensation in a “safe” manner (Gitlin 92) where direct personal interaction with others need not be involved. For Simmel, the stimulation-laden psychological life of the city is thus “a series of compensations” for the subjectivity which is suppressed by the pressures of objective culture and a money economy (Weinstein and Weinstein, “Dimensions”). Gitlin further invokes Simmel’s “helpless urgency” of the modern city dweller impelled to seek a swiftly-changing menu of stimulations (51). While the modern metropolis offers many cultural and recreational stimuli – entertainments -- the individual residents there experience an alienation from their own identities, as these are submerged in coping with the demands of the new environment (Simmel, *Conflict* 379). There is a rudderless aspect to the urban dweller in Simmel’s descriptions, a lack of fixed meanings for which modern culture provides an inadequate series of answers but an ongoing access to sensation.

The challenge these culturally-provided stimulations address (or rather offer “compensations” for) is that modernity, in the view of Weber, foments “a continuous breakdown of a coherent *weltanschauung*” (Marshall 52). The argument is made by Owen Barfield that modernity’s paucity of meaning for the general population actually began with the advent of the Scientific Revolution, which started a rational cataloguing of the natural world, together with the spread of literacy, by which written language put individuals at a remove from direct experience (64). Barfield finds in this the basis of the “objective-subjective or outer-inner” split of modernity which makes the social citizen an onlooker in the natural world and those elements within it to which he or she was once viscerally and spiritually connected. The proposed status of the individual as onlooker in

a culture providing an ever-broadening range of affect-prompting entertainments ultimately gestures to such absolute contemporary claims as those of Neal Gabler, who asserts modern life has become a show staged for the media (97). In this paradigm where entertainment compensates for modernity's challenge of access to meaning, it does so by satisfying certain audience desires in providing consumers with "stimulation and relief" (Winch 21). Newspapers, as we'll see in examining their history in this regard, have been seen to align as a form of entertainment from at least the mid-19th century within a Simmelian panoply of sensation-making amusement parks, vaudeville performances and dime novels (Thussu 17). It should be noted here that the social value of entertainment receives a wide range of assessments; when it comes from engagement with printed stories, for example, the assertion has been made that for readers the importance of experiencing emotional resonance with the feelings of the characters can rise to the level of enabling "our effort after meaning" (Oatley 103). Our purpose here is not to fix on any assessment of the value of the sensation-making afforded by entertainment, however, but to situate sensation-making as a significant function of the modern newspaper, one for which an identifiable sociological context has been furnished by Simmel.

The foregoing description of modernity's challenge broadly describes the outlines of the foundation from which Gitlin states that we are now coming into a,

"society of nonstop popular culture that induces limited-liability feelings on demand – feelings that do not bind and sensations that feel like, and pass for, feelings.... What I am arguing, following Simmel, is not that human beings suddenly began to feel, but that, in recent centuries, they came to experience, and crave, particular kinds of feelings—disposable ones" (41).

This reference to disposability has special resonance for the historically ephemeral news-producing function, wherein today's newspaper, notwithstanding current means of digital archiving and retrieval, is colloquially described as tomorrow's fish wrap. Disposable, serial sensation can be shown to conjoin very effectively with the rhythm of the news media, which in being driven through such self-declared values as the highlighting of conflict, human interest and novelty (Whitaker, Ramsey, and Smith 14) require continuous movement to fresh revelations. Disposability of the prompted sensations comes into particular relief in the major news pieces examined here: in Diana's chronology, where we see that the initial rush of affect was ironically tied to an idealized romantic permanency; and in Homolka's, where new iterations of the same essential scandal continue to emerge to this day, each superceding the previous as if breaking fresh ground. Disposability in both chronologies can be seen to act as a clearing of the affective palette to make space for fresh experiences of sensation of the kinds news media have historically provided. Press sensationalism is described as "the inclusion in news of elements meant to shock and provoke strong emotional responses among readers" (Kitch 29), although less intensely media can also confer sensation through "a frisson of commiseration, a flash of delight, a moment of recognition...." (Gitlin 23).

Notwithstanding that the Diana and Homolka chronologies went on for many years, we will see that they each registered in Canadian newspapers an ongoing series of sensations through scandals, shocks, "a frisson of commiseration" and other manner of greater and lesser affective spikes. These arrived in fulfillment of the trend to which Simmel led Gitlin: "We have come to care tremendously about how we feel and how readily we can

change our feelings. Media are means” (Gitlin 5).

NEWSPAPERS AND THE TRADITION OF SENSATIONALISM

Two centuries ago, even literate Americans were already noted to be more engrossed in newspapers and political pamphlets than books, with the visiting French intellectual Alexis de Tocqueville remarking that such media “are circulated for a day with incredible rapidity and then expire” (Postman, *Amusing* 37). There is in this conflation with the materials of pamphlets support for the notion of the early newspapers as an extension of public discourse (Kovach and Rosensteel 137), an ongoing conversation about issues of the day carried over to print from Habermas’ coffee houses in Europe. Whatever the substance of the material carried by such publications, however, a contrast with the book has always been apparent, as from their origins “books were rare and costly” (Lyons 12) and were thus intended for longevity with a much more select readership. Newspapers gaining a broad social reach with a short period of currency for each edition can be seen to combine with an historic trend of the last two centuries of often situating the product more as an entertainment than a public journal of record on matters of state. The culture of the continent de Tocqueville was examining was already by 1830 “sensational, emotional, melodramatic, and informal” (Gitlin 43) as was expressed through early media. A widespread popularizing of newspaper content was established by the middle of the 19th century, when creators of the so-called penny press, which reached a large and diverse readership with a low cost product, “invented the concept of news because it was the best way to sell their papers in an entertainment

environment” (Gabler 51). News’ role as entertainment was trenchantly noted in an essay marking the centennial of the *Daily Mail* in 1896: “Tickle the public, make ‘em grin/The more you tickle, the more you’ll win/Teach the public, you’ll never get rich/You’ll live like a beggar and die in a ditch” (Thussu 15). From this comes the point that “news as entertainment has a long and venerable tradition” (*ibid*).

That news (and its entertaining sensations) is an inherently ephemeral thing is suggested in its name. When Edward Jay Epstein interviewed a number of established journalists asking what the definition of news was, almost all responded that news is what occurs this very day or which signals some new change in a societal or community situation (30). Epstein’s focus was television network news, which could be seen as extending the same temporal dynamic that applies to newspapers, that is, content that is rapidly superceded by the next presentation of the news. Significantly, network executives reported that audience share for their news programming depended on their share for the fictional comedy and drama that bracketed the newscast (Epstein 94-95). Entertainment programming, then, situated the consumer choice of news reporting and to the extent that a conscious choice to seek a specific newscast was made, the industry assumption was that the leading criterion was attraction to a specific news commentator (Epstein 96). Like the entertainments that bracket newscasts, there is in news a quality for many people of “diversion” and “escape from their own problems” (Gans, *Deciding* 227). News stories have been analyzed by academics as outlets for fantasy and wish fulfillment (Bird 105); even the reporting on such dire acts as sex crimes has been seen to comprise “entertainment rather than serious information” (Greer 188). The premise that the news

media are today largely driven to provide a constantly-refreshed series of stimulations and thus are based on the same principles as entertainment (Turner, Bonner, and Marshall 175) is often presented as a contemporary phenomenon but rather we can see it here as the reinvigorating of a dynamic which has long been entrenched in the newspapering function.

The sensation-prompting of scandal and the shock of violent crime were deeply ensconced in the North American newspapering of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, with the latter's *The World* from the time of his 1883 ownership bearing an historical claim to have "ushered in the modern era of mass communication" (Morris 2) expressly in its organization around serial sensation. The commercial rivalry between the two newspaper moguls is noted to have pushed a significant portion of the continent's newspapering "into a spiraling descent of sensationalism, outright fabrications...." (Morris 3), that is, making many newspapers largely a commodity of sensation-making predicated on hyperbolized reporting or even fiction. Sending his reporters into the most blighted neighbourhoods to seek out personal tales of human pathos, "for Pulitzer, a news story was always a *story*..." and this approach increased *The World's* circulation by 35 per cent within weeks of Pulitzer's takeover (Morris 214, author's italics). That the notion of "story" as an affect-prompting entertainment was a different priority from the early informational role of the press can be seen in the corresponding erosion of that latter role in this period. The sketchy reliability even of the core factual basis for stories from the Pulitzer-Hearst era was an open secret in a defining time when newspapers were "riddled with errors, omissions, and pranks" (Burns 2). This foundation of manipulated

fact or partial fiction or outright fiction gestures toward a basis for the disposability of reader response; one may cry over the pathos of a family dog dying in a tenement fire while having no need to think further or act, while a detailed and specific account of unsafe working conditions in a local factory might seem to call for sustained citizen concern and even action. Journalism historian Eric Burns argues that dating back to medieval minstrels, whose sung tales were evident inventions and whose “news was a show” (9), newspaper reporting’s tenuous relation to actuality could be seen even in 18th century parliamentary coverage by the eminent Samuel Johnson, who attended virtually no sessions of parliament and simply made up even the contents of politicians’ speeches (17). While Johnson was making sport of the politics of his day, the principle that news stories could have varying degrees of factual content, and thus informational purpose, while fulfilling some other kind of need, would persist and the assertion that news is more made than gathered (Postman and Powers 14) has extensive academic reference. Factual veracity is less germane here than the point that the data or inventions of these news stories was angled and inflated to generate sensation; the priority in the modern newspapering era as brought to saturation by Pulitzer and Hearst was to “amuse, amaze, or shock...” (P. Morton 10). The raw materials to accomplish this were traditionally plentiful: semioticians point to a “history fabrication effect” wherein a news medium, “literally fabricates history by inducing the impression in viewers that some ordinary event – an election campaign, an actor’s love affair, a fashion trend, etc. – is a momentous happening” (Danesi 143).

In the case of the defining competitive battle Pulitzer and Hearst waged with their New York papers at the turn of the last century, the editorial content of the continent's biggest press outlets was based on "political scandals, tenement murders, society gossip, popular advice columns and romance stories" (P. Morton 19); even business and political reporting were largely made by Pulitzer to fit the sensationalized framework of crime and scandal reports (Ponce De Leon 41). A corresponding tabloid tradition would grow out of the period, with Canadian publications such as *Midnight* and the *National Examiner* following the method of their American brethren in generating stories from markedly odd or pathos-filled personal accounts or simply "spun out of whole cloth" (P. Morton 87). Whatever the degree of the factual basis of such reports, or public confidence in their authenticity, it is in news' attention to the sensational, as in crime and scandal reporting, that news "satisfies the rhetoric of emotions" (Van Dijk 85). Moreover, a number of observers find that there is an appreciable extent of consumer awareness of this process at work; media academics, critics and pollsters do not usually find that the readership for the press takes everything presented at face value and is simply unaware that they are partaking of an entertainment in which hyperbole, embellishment and even invention are employed. Rather, we find observations there is a widespread public understanding that much journalism pursues "sensation at the expense of complexity" (Schickel 247), and that consumers usually sense they are not expected to take the news very seriously (Postman and Powers 161).

Whether content is factually accurate or not, the media thrives on "a *constructed aesthetic* rather than an *immediate aesthetic*" (Abercrombie & Longhurst 63, authors'

italics), notwithstanding that one of its key products is called *actualité* in the French word for news. Even more categorically, "...*all* media practices blur the boundary between fact and fiction" (Grindstaff 189, italics added). Yet the informational depth and reliability of what's reported are often not germane, for "the buzz of the inconsequential is the media's essence" (Gitlin 9), one in which the dressing up of the material in trumped-up momentousness may be observed as a reflexive matter of formatting, traditionally with the aforementioned tabloid tradition but latterly across the press much more broadly (Kitch 30). In the most stark expression of this premise of news reporting as a staged entertainment, *news-making* is said to be the business of journalism (Wykes 188); that is, while some tenement murder actually occurred, it was a Pulitzer who sent a reporter to cover it, who directed that personal details be emphasized and emotionally charged in the writing, who gave the story prominence and urgency by placement and headlining in the newspaper. This sensationalizing even turns the reporting on crime and punishment into an entertainment which functions in some views as a "reality avoidance mechanism" (Osborne 37), while others find a purpose of emotional catharsis and social instruction in it. Such an evaluation is outside the scope of our purposes here, however. Moreover, the foregoing is not to deny any continuing informational purpose and even public service function for the press, which retains such elements from its origins as market news, commodity prices and government pronouncements, as well as some modern, spasmodic efforts to expose corruption and depict social injustice (efforts which can also be made personal, scandalous and sensationalized). But the most popular news

media chronologies, to which the two major examples examined in this thesis belong, “are essentially melodramatic, emphasizing morality and excess” (Bird 107).

We will see the invocation of “morality” as a necessary partner to the press’s use of scandal in this framing, and the affective responses such stories may stir. Scandal is a key tool in news sensationalism for news scandals potentially generate affective prompts to their audiences in the manner of soap operas (Tomlinson 69); and so there is in the Pulitzer tradition of the press until today, an active effort to turn news stories into scandals (Lull and Hinerman 9). A century after Pulitzer, Lull and Hinerman assert that “the prevalence of scandals [in the press] can be seen as a distinctive sign of the ‘Murdochization’ of modern media” (1), alluding to a contemporary press mogul widely deemed to work in the tradition established by Pulitzer and Hearst and so reflecting a continuity in the significant role of sensationalism and the use of scandal in newspapering. Scandals proffer revelations of private behaviours that contravene what is understood to be the “idealized, dominant morality of a social community” (Lull and Hinerman 3); they are the “public disclosure and narrativization of private transgressions” (Grindstaff 166). Even when the “transgressions” relate to the public arena, as in the Crown’s plea bargain with Karla Homolka which we will see has kept scandal alive in relation to her for two decades after the commission of her crimes, we find that the decisions were made closed to public view first and that scandal erupted upon their public revelation subsequently.

J. Thompson links the role of contemporary scandal framed by media to Durkheim’s views on how exposure of transgression and public retribution play a central

role in religion's setting out of morality (57). Due to this implicit invocation of public morality in reporting transgressive behaviours, the readership can be seen as an active partner in the creation of scandal within news stories (J. Thompson 16), that is, affective response to the information is intrinsic to what defines the boundaries of scandal. In this way, news stories function like the stories of folklore which "validate norms" (Bird 105). While the casting and expression of scandalousness thus has an oft-cited role in articulating what public morality is, what is significant to our purpose is that the media's generation of scandal relies on making the consumer emotively "participatory" (*ibid*), meaning the presumed affective response on the readers' parts underlies it. The transitory or rapidly replaceable nature of those responses comes from the way this invocation of moral concerns is at the same time entertaining, relatable and distant, giving, in an echo of Simmel, "the interpretants a viable and safe channel through which to release psychic tension" (Lull and Hinerman 23). Even as the dramatized personal chronology positioned as scandal in the news holds some societal function in the raising and examination of mores, then, at core for news organizations is that reporting scandal fits a general commercial agenda to stimulate audiences (Grindstaff 188). This is because as we have seen in the hedonic response to references to the prohibited realm of sexuality, scandal serves not only to invoke presumed moral norms but generates a diverse affective response that comprises a form of consumer pleasure:

A simultaneous confirmation and subversion of consensual moral order are....accomplished by media scandal, operating first to trace the boundaries of acceptable behaviour through a process of (essentially Durkheimian) public

shaming and the attachment of a 'deviant' label, only to compromise the integrity of this structure of conformity and deviancy by eliciting a response of private moral ambivalence and guilty pleasure..." (Rowe 205).

That the experience of such stimulation is an ephemeral one, consonant with the ephemeral quality of news and the disposability of physical newspapers themselves, is apparent in the deployment we'll trace of serial sensation in the Diana and Homolka chronologies. The use of traditional tools to generate renewed waves of media and presumptive public reaction over many years can be made apparent, notwithstanding some differences in the handling of these stories. The scandal associated with Homolka, for example, is essentially not much changed in character over two decades yet can be periodically revisited by the Canadian press at any time with fresh intensity for it has achieved an "iconicity that enables the continuous invocation of a scandal that has passed its original peak media flow" (Rowe 216). Diana's chronology is one that pivots from the ephemeral nature of each media persona bequeathed her, each iteration of the protagonist generating different colourings of sensation ranging from idealized longing to scandalized dismay and back. Both stories are bound as news media chronologies repeatedly rendered to prompt consumer affect through means that share a long history in newspapering.

KARLA: EVERY REFERENCE A SCANDAL

Nineteen years after Karla Homolka was convicted of manslaughter for her role in the murders of teenaged girls and seven years after she completed her prison sentence,

she was again the object of a sudden flurry of Canadian news reports positioned as describing scandal and tacitly petitioning for public outrage. A 46-page ebook titled *Finding Karla: How I Tracked Down an Elusive Serial Child Killer and Discovered a Mother of Three* by Canadian journalist Paula Todd was reported as rhetorically asking, “does the woman who killed three children now have three of her own?” (*Toronto Sun*). Canadian newspaper coverage couched in the language of shocked disapproval that Homolka had made her way to an “ordinary” life included a *Toronto Star* online article that opened with the sentence, “Fact: Karla Homolka is a serial schoolgirl killer and depraved human being” (DiManno, “Journalist”). The article suggested Canadian readers would be scandalized at the report of Homolka’s apparently tranquil domestic life and came to a morality-invoking conclusion: “She was a succubus. She is a killer. It’s not a story she’ll tell her kids, tucking them in at night. But they’ll learn of it, someday.”

This new tempest of Homolka stories in the Canadian press was the latest iteration of an ongoing scandal that had erupted with intense drama during the court proceedings of 1993, when it was revealed that Homolka and her lawyers had successfully achieved a plea bargain with the Crown that granted her a 12-year prison sentence in exchange for a guilty plea to manslaughter and cooperation as a Crown witness in her husband’s trial. “In Canadians’ eyes, Homolka has yet to be tried” (Mathias) ran a headline in the days after her conviction, the article stating that, “Homolka was convicted of manslaughter with shocking speed.” That Homolka was to be eventually freed created in the families of the teenaged victims “a level of frustration

and hurt that is indescribable,” their lawyer was later quoted in the press (Agrell). Ever since becoming known, the legal arrangement would routinely be referred to as the “notorious plea bargain” or similar variant, even as an historic and unprecedented travesty of justice (*Winnipeg Free Press*).

This widespread presumption across the Canadian news media that Homolka had never been fairly or adequately punished for her crimes would frame virtually all references to her in the succeeding years as scandal, reaching the Ontario legislature upon Homolka’s release when the Attorney-General was assailed by opposition critics for the plea bargain with “an unusual level of personal invective” (M. Campbell). As public spectacles of retribution such as executions in the town square subsided just as newspapers became a mass medium (Hall et al 2), Homolka’s presumed inadequate punishment has continued to be reported as if the public has remained outraged by an inadequacy of retribution. As evidenced by ongoing threats and hate invective against Homolka which can be readily accessed on online blogs (Todd), this public affect rises for numbers of people to the extent observed in other such cases of news consumers wanting to kill the transgressor (Greer 100). Writing of the role of the transgressive character for a public readership, University of Toronto cognitive psychologist Keith Oatley notes, “our role as moral monitors and arbiters is invoked, and inner emotions of anger and punishment can come into effect with all the justification of social legitimacy” (136). While Diana’s chronology created serial sensation and scandal against changing tableaux in the contextualizing of its protagonist, Homolka reports largely remain

prompts to an unchanged but continuously reinvigorated affective response of anger and outrage. Based on sensationalism driven by commercial motives (Osborne 38), crime reporting maintains reader engagement by “arousing horror and indignation” (Knelman 40) and neither of these has substantially subsided in Homolka’s case after two decades; Canadian press reactions to every revelation of Homolka having access to the resources of “normal” life can still be seen to be couched in the terms of sensation and scandal. Already during the earliest period of police investigation into the crimes with which Homolka would ultimately be charged, the Canadian press began to traffic in “the reporting of non-events in emotional terms” (Davey 18). Later, while Homolka was incarcerated in a federal penitentiary, revelations of her taking post-secondary correspondence courses (Wente) or participating in routine social interactions occasioned more rhetoric of shock and outrage in the reporting, such as a piece headlined, “Karla Homolka lives life of birthday cakes and baseball in ‘adult daycare,’ inmate says” (Cherry). The release of a small commercial movie called *Karla* again prompted newspaper assertions of a general scandalized response across the country, as in the headline, “Canada greets ‘Karla’ with outrage” (Neville). From early on, Homolka’s chronology was poised to purvey affective response “like episodes of a television soap” (Davey 42) and this was borne out at each subsequent stage. Virtually all reference to Homolka in the past two decades has positioned even the most mundane aspects of her life as upsetting to the public, invoking the plea bargain which released her from prison as well as the original crimes. Those crimes, as we have already seen in examining the sexual content of the news chronology, comprised several of the strongest possible

referents of transgression and scandal, attaching the sexual violation and murder of minors to a young and conventionally attractive female perpetrator. This constituted extreme sexual deviance and, “when sexual deviance becomes criminal or violent it is doubly news valuable as the personal, secret and illicit gains drama, rarity and negativity” (Wykes 192). Crime reporting of this nature always directly targets the realm of sensation because news consumers’ responses to it are “deeply irrational” (Osborne 31) and violent sexual crime is “a signifier of immense power, flexibility, fascination and eroticism” (36). Notwithstanding that all industrialized societies have some ongoing degree of violent crime, news of such crime always communicates as a disruption in the social order and “the consensual moral framework....and (is) thus dramatic, sensational” (Hall et al 3). In a blunt summation of violent crime reports’ capacity to generate sensation, a London street hawker of the 19th century is recounted to have cried, “There’s nothing beats a stunning good murder” (Knelman 32).

Yet while serious crime itself is in most instances inherently scandalous in being comprised of acute private transgression brought into the light of public disapproval, newspaper reporting such as that in the Homolka chronology can often be seen to consciously further augment the scandal and sensation attached to it. Journalists perceive sex crimes in particular as “highly newsworthy and extremely potent commercially” (Greer 97) and design their reporting on these “to shock rather than educate” (188). While Davey makes the case that the Homolka-Bernardo crimes bore a relation to known social dysfunctions including sexual exploitation and misogyny, for example, he states that Canadian news services rather made everything about the crimes so exceptional as to

obscure who the perpetrators actually were (119). As we previously saw with “deviance amplification” in the Homolka chronology, the scope to intensify sensation in crime reporting is considerable, a touchstone of this point being journalist Lincoln Steffens’ boast of a century ago that he could create a menacing crime wave at any time just by reporting all the crimes that normally occur within a month in any major city (Postman and Powers 23). We have also noted that an aspect of the sensation and scandal in crime reporting is achieved through heightening the innocence of the victim and evil of the perpetrator or contrasting the sometimes unremarkable, apparently law-abiding public façade of the criminal with her transgressive behaviour (Greer 128). To polarize the descriptions of perpetrators and victims in the Homolka chronology as much as possible, Davey has argued that salient matters in the case were not simply overlooked or ignored but actually excised from the ongoing media narrative, with the teenaged victims idealized “into being versions of the Gothic maiden in distress...The difficulties [teenaged victim Leslie Mahaffy] and her parents had experienced immediately before her disappearance were written out of newspaper accounts within a few months, never to appear again” (57). Before Kristen French’s abductors had even been identified, a *Toronto Sun* article projected of both the girl and her presumed-male assailant, “She is as gentle as he is savage. She is a parent’s dream. And a monster’s fantasy” (Mandel).

This sensationalizing tenor to the reporting on Homolka has never abated. The most recent report telling of Todd’s search for Homolka’s whereabouts refers to her on its first page as “Canada’s most despised and feared female serial killer” and shortly thereafter cites the “repulsion of an entire nation” (Todd, location 48). The moment at

which journalist and former convict first see one another is rendered as, “A wave of amazement sweeps over me....I have found Karla Homolka, and I’m not sure which of us is more shocked” (location 354). Homolka’s activity at this instant of amazement and shock is washing dishes at her kitchen sink (*ibid*).

DIANA: SHIFTING SHAPES, SERIAL SENSATIONS

A long middle period in the Diana chronology was thick with the reporting of scandal on matters of adultery, eating disorders and suicide attempts but sensation in her story began as something quite different: the elated expectation of permanent happiness, with the happiness presumed as shared with a large readership and the permanency of that happy state through marriage being key to the affect-prompting signals of the press. Within a week of the announced betrothal of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer in February, 1981, the Queen of England allowed that the usual constraints on the use of the royal insignia by British manufacturers of souvenirs would be lifted (Associated Press, “Restrictions”). In relaying that news, however, the Queen’s Lord Chamberlain underlined to the media that mementos of the betrothal, “...must be permanent keepsakes...” (*ibid*).

However ironic this expectation of permanency appears in hindsight, Canadian (and global) newspaper reportage of the day featured repeated invocations of the idea that the betrothal emblemized the permanence of a happy “fairy tale” and was a model for wide public aspiration, as in this characteristic example in a *Globe and Mail* editorial: “The fairytale romance of Lady Diana Spencer, who is young, beautiful, slim, graceful

and privileged, but not royal, has just enough roots in ordinary life to inspire the dreams of legions of shopgirls and schoolgirls, not to mention kindergarten teachers” (“The Royal Wedding”). Selected details echoing such expectations were offered in bulk to a readership presumably rooted in the cited “ordinary life” and hence presumed in many cases to be sharing the sensations inspired by the unfolding of these “dreams.” Diana was melodramatically quoted in a *Globe and Mail* headline saying, “It cannot go wrong if he’s there with me” (Plommer). The reporting of commercial activity further enhanced the sense that something of great moment was occurring, as the very day of the news of the afficement came another announcement declaring that Viking Press would produce a coffee-table volume called *The Royal Wedding* two months in advance of the event itself. Britain – as if in its entirety – was reported to be “exhilarated” at the planned nuptials (B. Morris) while residents of Guelph, Ontario were reportedly staging their own simulation of the impending royal wedding with a headline that again generalized affective engagement across a national population (Mangiacasale). Reiterating the key press tropes of the early part of this chronology on the eve of the wedding, under the headline, “Months of preparation ending as Diana’s dream comes true,” the *Globe and Mail* would set out yet again the expected prevailing emotions: “Like a princess from the fairy tales, Lady Diana Spencer lives the dream of every English schoolgirl tomorrow when she marries the Prince of Wales in a resplendent ceremony at St. Paul’s Cathedral” (Simpson, “Months”). A front-page headline the next day in that paper declared, “Britain hails spectacular ‘marriage of the century’” (Simpson) while, sealing the language of the press into the actual proceedings, the Archbishop of Canterbury remarked as he officiated

the wedding, "Here is the stuff of which fairy tales are made" (Sell).

Notwithstanding that Diana was a teenager who had been "known" to the public just five months before the affiance was announced, such projections seemed to confidently position the news protagonist and the press readership as experiencing (the latter vicariously) a thrilling moment of satisfaction in "resplendent" circumstances. Some Canadian readers were even stirred at the notion of important, traditional values being upheld in perpetuity with Diana as the model; as M.J.L. Blake had written in a letter to the editor of *The Globe and Mail*, "How thankful we can be if the Queen announces that the Prince of Wales intends to marry Lady Diana Spencer, a lady with an impeccable background. The Monarch will once more set the standard which is so essential to family life, and which we admire and expect from *Fidelis Defensor*." Permanency was itself sensationalized in an Associated Press headline that declared, "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer."

Yet Tuchman notes in an echo of the Pulitzer ethos that news accounts and fairy tales are both stories (5), the sense being that story elements ("facts" for newspapers) are marshaled as their first mandate to seek affective response (Oatley 16). For example, even with the initial Diana romance story at its height, many in the press were aware that Prince Charles at the time of his wedding to her was in a long surreptitious involvement with another woman (Bedell Smith). There was also a common sense among journalists that the selection of such a young, inexperienced woman for a royal spouse related to cold calculation that the bride must be free of past scandal and even sexual experience,

with Lord Charteris, the queen's former private secretary, later commenting, "The pity is, the Prince of Wales had to marry a virgin" (*Reuters*, "Charles"). If this was not the story creation from whole cloth of Pulitzer-era reporting, such evidence suggested that the positioning of Diana's betrothal and early marriage as a "fairytale" in the press was a conscious manipulation that entailed willfully overlooking evidence that undermined the desired story; Bedell Smith observes at several points that members of the press were observing Diana's tenuous mental hold on her situation even while the storybook romance continued to inform the reporting. Gesturing to an alternate, unreported chronology in which the emotional import of the wedding was antithetical to that crafted by the press, a former aide to Prince Charles would later observe of Diana that "she was finished on the day of the royal wedding" (Bedell-Smith 362). While this initial telling of the chronology generated enormous public response as noted in the attention given to Diana's wedding, changes to the protagonist and the story were not long in coming, for even when a news account evokes great passion, "each hot, breaking, unsurpassed, amazing, overwhelming event fades, superseded by sequels...." (Gitlin 175). After the courtship and wedding were positioned in the Canadian press as the satisfaction of an assumed universal urge for happy permanence, the chronology that later unfolded in the news media gave way to a series of other bids for public sensation, culminating in a series of scandals attached to the couple's separation, as in "Dispute Erupts with Palace On Princess' Title" (Barbash). Canadian-run news stories referenced "an embarrassing year that aired an excess of dirty royal laundry" (Sell) and carried such headlines as "Charles Admits Adultery But Will Still be King" (Kelly) and the melodramatic "Diana

turns 31 as her marriage turns to ashes” (Cox). The press readership was often addressed directly as stakeholders in the affective tumult, playing its participatory role in the creation of scandal with such devices as public surveys on who was to blame for the couple’s marital difficulties (*Toronto Star*, “Charles, Diana together”). The Canadian public was also directly addressed in provocative, response-prompting headlines such as “Chuck Vs. Di: Can You Just Imagine the Alimony?” (Kornheiser). In such ways, the initial tidal wave of sentiment on the emblematic victory of romance was followed by news of love’s betrayal, its defeat, its reification, its link to subplots flush with anguish and hope, each of these in turn producing its own wave of affectively charged reporting summarized in such vivid accounts as:

....the prince and princess, who arrived and left separately, could do little to quell stories published here saying Diana has tried as many as five times to kill herself and has suffered from bulimia, a disorder characterized by binge eating and self-induced vomiting. Today, the *Mail on Sunday* newspaper reported Diana and the Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, "had a private pact to leave their husbands at the same time" (*Toronto Star*).

At each of these stages, the press can be seen not only to have formed its “constructed aesthetic” but even in Britain to have played an active part in roiling the lives of the protagonists: “The press played an especially damaging role by building (Diana) up one minute and knocking her down the next” (Bedell Smith 361). As we have already observed in examples of reporting from Diana’s period of eating disorders, marital separation, renewed efforts to find love, her death and beatification, her chronology in the

press was that of a woman whose life was continuously subject to a series of elevations, shocks, scandals, redemptions, all reported to afford a measure of entertaining sensation in the readership. "The Princess of Wales lived out a life of brilliant fictions; the media not only told her story, it wrote and re-wrote that story according to a variety of familiar genres – fairy tale, romance, soap opera, morality play, tragedy and so on" (S. Wilson 40). If its first bid for attention was as a happy romance representative of permanent satisfactions, Diana's story quickly moved onto the requirements of all outsized celebrity chronologies to be "fast-moving, action-packed, suspenseful and full of instantly apprehensible sensation" (Schickel 289). Comparisons of Diana would later be made with the screen star Marilyn Monroe, who also seemed continuously to yo-yo in the press between elation and tragedy (Schickel 120).

News that upon Diana's death mass rites of grieving were occurring in cultural outposts completely distant from Britain and the West itself made the point that the affective framing of her chronology had been successfully transmitted entirely through the news media. In Tonga, for example, a traditional wake was organized upon news of Diana's death among a people whose knowledge of the woman came entirely from Western reporting:

"Diana was a very kind princess who helped poor people in all the nations, poor people like us in Tonga," said wake organiser and songwriter Kilisimasi Mouna.

"We have read the stories in the newspaper about her work with children. She loved all mankind in the world," he said (Reuters, "Asia").

The shifting of instantly apprehensible emotion, moreover, did not remain still after the expressions of mass grief and loving remembrance that were reported at the point of Diana's funeral. Planned remembrance ceremonies in Britain for Diana one year after her death were dropped due to public apathy (Punt 87). While there continue to be sentimental anniversary publications of remembrance produced of Diana 15 years after her death, the funeral was largely the end of the line for "a transparently ordinary person invested with a star quality that was a self-evident stimulation" (Punt 99). For whatever the size and intensity of the public outpouring coalesced around a media-framed chronology, "media-stoked passions prove evanescent...sentiment is as fitful as coverage. The salience of an issue spikes dramatically, then sinks just as dramatically" (Gitlin 172-3). Just as the story had begun through sentiment focused on the appearances and trappings of splendour at the wedding, so it would be such ceremonial appearances that were again ascendant in summoning affective response at the end:

Britain bid farewell to Princess Diana yesterday on a sparkling sunny morning with a grand tribute as rich in popular pageantry as it was in regal pomp. The Princess of Wales' coffin, wrapped in the maroon and gold royal standard and borne by Welsh guards in their scarlet tunics and bearskin hats, rested on a catafalque in Westminster Abbey, scene of coronations and burials of Britain's leaders, while the soaring heights of the Gothic nave rang with the heraldic sounds of high church ceremony.... (Hoge).

As the day after the royal wedding had featured a headline declaring "Love, pomp, splendor. It was perfect" (Simpson), so was the pomp and splendor of the funeral described in such terms.

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION: THE CULTURE OF AFFECT

What has been indicated in the foregoing is that contemporary Canadian newspapers can choose to construct major news narratives with mechanisms of emphasis, detail selection and language use that are established means of that medium to prompt affect. It is superfluous here and not addressed by this evidence to assert that the prompting of affect is the conscious intention of a current generation of Canadian publishers and editors, or that their readership consciously delineates affect as a significant response to the consumption of newspapers. An extensive deconstruction of the dynamic between Canadian newspaper producers and consumers is not within the purview of this paper but a tacit assumption that meshes with a number of references here on the relation between commercial viability and sensation-making is that both parties have a role in shaping the product. "Media scholars...have learned from folklorists and anthropologists that culture is participatory, rather than coercive," states S. Elizabeth Bird in a reference to the popular power of scandal as presented in news media (105). Without making claim that the transaction of affect is a dynamic always present in current newspaper chronologies, this paper does gesture towards the substantive breadth of its presence. A significant dimension of the approach of this thesis has been its emphasis on evidentiary material chosen almost entirely from "serious" broadsheet publications, a context in which it may be suggested that sensation, scandal and the prompting of affect are expressly not declared elements within the mandate of these newspapers, which are self-positioned in contrast to the putatively low-grade commercialism of "tabloid culture" (Gronbeck 132).

In declared distinction from the ostensible sobriety of the broadsheet, “In the world of the tabloid, there is little in the way of cause-effect relationships, no flow or continuity, no attempt to impose even a spurious sense of logic on life. One gets one’s bearings there very largely through imagery” (Schickel 50). I have alluded to the traditional division of standards of reliability and seriousness between broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, and one conclusion from the work here is that while there may be differences in blatancy in the resort to affect-prompting mechanisms between these modalities of publication, essential elements of intimacy generation, sexual reference and sensationalism are held in common among them. To this extent, the material in this thesis challenges implicit pretensions that Canadian broadsheet newspapers are not engaged in purveying a form of entertainment tethered to the generating of sensation. Indeed, numerous academic observations cited here on the historical development of the newspaper medium assert in sum that the prompting of affect has been a core newspaper function largely across the last two centuries. C. Wright Mills could in this view have added newspapers to his litany of modernity’s entertainments:

Commercial jazz, soap opera, pulp fiction, comic strips, the movies set the images, mannerisms, standards and aims of the urban masses. In one way or another, everyone is equal before these cultural machines; like technology itself, the mass media are nearly universal in their incidence and appeal. They are a kind of common denominator, a kind of scheme for pre-scheduled, mass emotions (Danesi vii).

Analysis of the two major chronologies which are the focus here has pointed to continuity with the historic trend that positions news stories as a means to generate sensation and afford a form of consumer entertainment. There is again no express assertion that one can extrapolate from the selected stories to state that all news chronologies are constructed to function in this manner. Yet the choice of two of the most widely publicized stories of recent decades and furthermore stories that contained protagonists and events ostensibly set in contrasting storytelling genres has been intentional. The concluding points here, then, are that news accounts constructed to prompt affect can belong to the most widely disseminated and popular stories in the medium and thus are not exceptional or marginal to the editorial and commercial context in which they are housed; and that traditional means of prompting affect are applicable to the most widely divergent news chronologies and thus not simply representative of a certain reporting niche isolated from the broader editorial context. Both the idealized romance of Diana's affiancement and wedding, and the acute scandal attached to Homolka's aberrant acts contain what we have seen here to be a myriad of established tropes within the newspapering tradition across several English-speaking cultures and many generations.

It is a specific contribution of this paper that these historic tendencies of the newspaper medium have been examined expressly within contemporary Canadian newspaper culture, something which has not occurred extensively to date relative to the academic attention paid to the British and American traditions. Davey observes of even the popular Canadian fascination with the Homolka chronology that, "some had to do with Canada's long history of ambivalence toward the United States, and its difficulty in

viewing violent crime as something which Canadian society could produce” (4). The assertion there is that, aside from scholastic analysis of the treatment of such material, there has been a gap even in apprehension of the aberrant crime-scandal genre as an acknowledged trope emanating from within Canadian culture. As previously stated, apart from Davey’s own book on the Homolka news chronology, there has been very little academic treatment of it in Canada outside the realm of women’s studies, for example. There is logically a strong connection to academic feminist concerns with the news coverage of this protagonist, but without seeking to diminish that point, this paper also finds in the Canadian newspaper treatment of Karla Homolka a continuity with long-established elements of sensation-making that apply across a broad range of prominent figures. That the Homolka case unfolded entirely within a circumscribed region of Southern Ontario; that the protagonists sprang from recognizable social ground for Canadians; and that Canadian legal and media institutions were wholly involved in the explication and prosecution of the case, fixed the many story-making tropes within its newspaper coverage in this country as something *sui generis* as well as common to English-language newspaper traditions. This in itself gives a systemic effort to examine such coverage, I am proposing, academic value and it would be a salutary impact of this effort if it would be encouraging of further attempts along these lines. The aberrance of Homolka’s deeds and the rapacity of press interest they precipitated in Canada were exceptional but not unique; and being so have afforded an opportunity to place Canadian newspaper responses within a larger tradition that has been more extensively explicated in press histories centred outside this country. Diana’s story is contrastingly set in Britain,

and both the most avid press coverage and the lion's share of the academic examination of that coverage -- many significant examples of these being cited in this thesis -- are also centred in Britain. This, however, does not speak to the many noteworthy and distinctive points of cultural connection with her chronology within Canada, firstly as a Commonwealth nation which shares in the emblematic positioning of the British Crown as its head of state. While Canada has developed substantively over the last several decades as a multicultural society, it remains one of the Commonwealth nations with the highest ongoing level of attachment to British royalty with recent indications that support is again growing (Canadian Press, "Support"); in contrast to news media interest in Diana's story in the United States, of which there was a good deal in the generic manner of celebrity news, Canadians were actually stakeholders in the matter of Britain's monarchical succession. Without making her chronology a Canadian story, the foregoing positions Canadian press interest in it, particularly from a starting point of three decades ago, as culturally pertinent in a way that merits the kind of examination which has been done here. While I have made free use of British academic reflection on Diana's case, this thesis extensively cites Canadian press rendering of the story which connects it to wider newspaper traditions while offering the particulars of its crafting by publications in Canada.

It is importantly the combining of these ostensibly disparate chronologies for close comparison that is germane to this research effort's claims to have furthered understanding of the press mechanisms examined. Diana's "beatification" in the press upon her death in the same week as Mother Teresa considered against Karla Homolka's

status as one of the most intensely loathed criminals in Canadian history may at first glance have seemed to afford solely contrast, even antithesis, as sources of press material and their crafting. When I wrote in *The Globe and Mail* in 1993 about Canadian press coverage of the Homolka trial, I was sharply rebuked by professional colleagues for suggesting that news media attention to the case both reflected and prompted public excitement, and that such excitement was apparent within the Canadian press corps itself. Yet while both working journalists and ordinary newspaper consumers may have had reasons to deny finding entertainment value or experiencing some desired interplay of emotions within their responses to the distressing content of the story, this was what the professionals I interviewed – psychiatrists, psychologists and criminal lawyers – averred. Four years after the trial of Karla Homolka with the death of Diana Spencer came another striking outpouring of what seemed initially to be a uniform emotional response as anecdotally observed among members of the Canadian public and in the Canadian press's treatment of the event. As apparently different as the triggering news chronologies were, I was struck rather by their similarity as both prompts and receptacles for mass engagement featuring a readily identifiable emotional colouration to both the newspaper coverage and anecdotal expressions of reader response in Canada. To interrogate how this dynamic unfolded in both chronologies seemed a clear opportunity to seek similarities in the mechanisms by which newspaper journalism renders major stories notable for generating a widespread and sustained affective response. The more the evidence has been scrutinized, the more the linkages have become apparent. As has been explicated here, the two key protagonists could be seen even to occupy at times the role

of the other, Karla Homolka referred to as a “princess” in school, tending to expressions of romantic idealism and wanting to consciously emulate Diana at her own wedding (Pron, *Lethal Marriage*), while Diana’s behaviour goes through an extended period of generating scandal, not insignificantly from violating lines of sexual propriety (Bedell Smith). In the analysis of this paper, such elements do not comprise superficial coincidence but provide a significant base from which Canadian newspaper mechanisms have been able to create intimacy with the protagonists, deploy sexual reference to prompt sexual response and generate scandal. As has been examined here at some length, the shared quotidian features of the protagonists and their lives provided a ground from which Canadian and other newspapers could similarly amplify both Karla Homolka’s deviance and the romantic idealism of Diana’s wedding.

In making central these two chronologies to explore the questions raised in this paper, there has been the prospect of criticism for setting out what could initially appear as a provocation, given the distance of acknowledged public appeal and moral acceptability between the protagonists. It has clearly been no part of the purpose here, however, to suggest any moral comparison or accounting at all between these women, who are here examined as malleable vehicles for the furnishing of data from which the newspaper chronologies were crafted. In finding similarities in the deployment of detail selection for both, what has been achieved has been an exposition of the universality of traditional press mechanisms and their sustained application in a contemporary Canadian context. If the shapely attractiveness and sartorial style of a young, blonde woman can similarly be identified as journalistically significant details at a sex-crime trial and a

British royal wedding, then newspapers may be seen to have a mandate other than the imparting of legal information about a criminal justice proceeding or politically salient developments regarding the British crown.

This also gestures toward the prospect of further research pursuant to this paper. It may be noted that the Homolka sex-crime case featured an ostensibly attractive young blond who wasn't Karla Homolka, namely the male to whom she was an accomplice. That press interest has long been weighted much more heavily to Homolka than Bernardo; that the dynamics of aberration are implicitly presented as more acute in Homolka's case than her husband's; that the romantic idealism of Diana's wedding was focused on her rather than her new husband; that Diana's emotional travails were almost entirely the focus during the turbulence in the marriage of Diana and Charles; all this suggests a great deal of material for a feminist analysis concerned with how female protagonists are depicted in Canadian press accounts and with emphasis on what aspects of their lives. Even to the degree that clothing and hair were repeated points of reference in both stories can lead us to a myriad of questions to be examined concerning female figures in the news as continuing objects of sexually-tinged inquiry in a way that male figures are not. We have seen that Homolka's aberrance experienced a "deviance amplification" in the Canadian press firstly because she was a woman. A women's studies-based inquiry into the chronology of Diana could look at how her sex played into the evolving press themes of her innocence, her suffering, her sexually scandalous behavior, her death, the tenor of the reporting of all these appearing from the outset to have been greatly reliant on her gender.

The handling of these chronologies in the Canadian press, as discussed, also invokes questions on the traditional division between tabloid and broadsheet publications. As previously cited here, a number of observers today assert that broadsheet publications are no longer clearly discernible from tabloids in their employment of sensationalism and such claims bear further examination. The implications of the assertion are that the entertainment-providing functions of newspapers have been extended and that affect-prompting mechanisms are receiving greater emphasis than in at least the recent past. Correlated to that would be an examination of arguments that the contemporary press has been weakened in its self-described mandate to bolster the democratic process through sober attention to legislative issues, the exposure of political corruption and the support of an informed citizenry (Kovach and Rosenstiel). Such an examination in the Canadian context could have the function of distinguishing what has, again, most frequently been stated in the American and British contexts from what the state of the medium is in Canada. More broadly, future queries could use this discussion as a starting point to examine what academics such as Gitlin assert is a culture of affect, with the latter predominately provided in their estimation by popular culture and news media in particular. To what extent affect has been commodified by the news media and what are the implications of such a trend represent important academic subjects going forward. If the celebrity is a leading vehicle for prompting consumer affect in the modern era, as suggested across a range of writings in celebrity studies, then the trend line of increasing focus on personalities may auger important things for the notion of affect being

commodified. Already under early 20th century press mogels, Pulitzer and Hearst, who operated before the advent of television and the internet, celebrities,

...were more prominent than ever, serving as symbolic exemplars of newsworthy ideas, institutions, and developments. 'Personalizing' the news became one of the most common rhetorical strategies used to attract readers and make a variety of subjects interesting and accessible to a mass audience (De Leon 42-43).

Our relationship to these constructed figures, notes Marshall, is integral not only to the machinations of the news media but are supportive of an entire cultural structure, what I am here referring to, following Gitlin, as a culture of affect. A century after Simmel saw the alienation of modernity take its consolations in the fast-moving entertainments of urban culture, the furtherance of mechanisms to distract with disposable emotions have grown to a pervasiveness, in the understanding of celebrity scholars like Marshall: "The celebrity can be seen as instrumental in the organization of an affective economy. The affective economy, where there is reduction of meaning to psychological motivations, has become central to the way in which our politics and culture operate" (247).

NOTE ON CITATIONS

At the outset of work on this thesis, it was proposed by an academic advisor that either American Psychological Association or Modern Language Association guidelines could be used for identifying and organizing citations. While APA style is normative for the scholarly work in social sciences which this thesis draws on, particularly sociology and psychology, I have opted for MLA style for several reasons. First, notwithstanding the citation of numerous academic sources from the social sciences, there is, counter to the usual contexts in which APA style is employed, scant reference here to numerical data, no reliance on statistics and in general a qualitative rather than empirical approach throughout. Because the central methodology here, as previously discussed, is discourse analysis, this thesis works largely with a language-based analysis which is hence well in keeping with MLA style practices and contexts in the humanities. The raw materials under examination here are newspaper texts which are deconstructed for patterns of detail selection and language use, an effort which bears closer relation to the forms of linguistic and literary analysis common to MLA contexts than the quantitative approaches typical of APA. Moreover, MLA's own self-reference to being "generally simpler and more economical than other styles" (167) suited the nature of the work here because of the necessarily frequent citations in this thesis of newspaper texts; the MLA emphasis on the briefest of parenthetical citations within the manuscript text (referring to full citation in Works Cited at the end) created the least disruption within the reading of the paper.

Yet there are specific and relatively acute challenges in setting out citations for

this work which would pertain to any of the available academic styles. Foremost among these is the widespread advent of web-based sourcing for academic citation, particularly germane here as databank archives of Canadian newspapers were a primary source in this work. Web-based materials are frequently not set out in the manner of print sources, with the latter's clearly demarcated editions, dates and page numbers. Moreover, it is today the practice with both MLA and APA for citations of web-based material to identify the date on which the information was electronically accessed, given that web content is subject to ongoing change and does not usually leave earlier iterations of such material intact. The great portion of the web-accessed material cited in this thesis, however, entirely predates such guidelines, which in the case of MLA were only formulated with the release of the third edition of the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (2008). The work of this thesis began with the extensive search and apprising of the content of Canadian newspapers before that time through the Dow Jones/Factiva online data service then freely available to me as a regular *Globe and Mail* contributor. The databank afforded searchable access to scores of Canadian (and hundreds of international) newspapers and for the purposes of this paper a broad archive of such materials was downloaded and stored from the two major news chronologies examined here without reference to the dates on which materials were accessed, a form of citation not yet in use at the time. References to articles can nonetheless be in virtually all cases successfully cross-checked and made use of through citations here of the reporter's byline, article title, newspaper of publication and date of publication. While many web-based materials have fluid identities that could become unavailable for access with the

passage of several years, it is major Canadian publications which are cited here and the citations can be independently sought with the data provided. As a matter of the nomenclature required in the Works Cited portion of the paper, I have frequently employed reference to “Dow Jones/Factiva” as the web source and “Prior to 2008” as the date of retrieval. References in the text to newspaper articles, as per current MLA standard, are flagged with the author’s surname alone, with the page number found in Works Cited if such a number pertains and is available. In the instance of a wire service or news service story without byline, an unexceptional occurrence, the citation in the text may read solely “*cbc.ca*” if that source is only used once, or “Canadian Press” followed by an abbreviated form of the article title if that source is used more than once; in both such cases, details of date and other details are found in Works Cited with the listing taking the news organization name first in the alphabetical listing. This corresponds to MLA stated guidelines to keep parenthetical citations in the text as spare as possible while dependably referring the reader to the detailed information in Works Cited. In instances where a bylined reporter’s name or news agency name with headline is given in the text of the manuscript, no parenthetical reference follows as per the *MLA Style Manual* and the reference can be found in Works Cited under either the author name or news organization (further flagged with headline if there are multiple listings for that agency). Whether in Works Cited or parenthetical reference in the text, newspaper names such as the *Toronto Star* are italicized while news agency names like Canadian Press are not.

A further complexity not specifically addressed by the *MLA Style Manual* (nor the APA guides) is that Canadian newspapers typically run articles derived from a number of wire-based services alongside the work of their own reporters. As previously discussed, these are treated as Canadian newspaper stories for my purposes here even if the text originates elsewhere, given that a Canadian newspaper has chosen to publish and disseminate the work in question to a primarily Canadian readership. However, page references to the original appearance of the piece are not always available in such circumstances. Indeed, since such articles are sometimes made available through a Canadian newspaper's online site and not necessarily with the published paper product itself, such materials may not have any place on a numbered page in the Canadian product. In the instances where the location of a text can only be determined to be as part of an online site and not necessarily in the paper edition of the Canadian product, its medium of origin for the purposes of citation here is called "Web" in contrast to "Print." All this is imperfect and would seem to have an improvisatory nature but the *MLA Style Book* itself expressly makes allowance for such circumstances, noting that "while aiming for comprehensiveness, writers must often settle for citing whatever information is available to them...MLA style is flexible, and sometimes you must improvise to record features not anticipated by this manual" (212). What is most important here is that there is no citation in this manuscript which cannot be independently retrieved through the information given, even if the web-based route of retrieval has changed with the passage of time.

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