

# Who killed the Princess? Description and blame in the British press



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**ABSTRACT** We examine the British newspapers' coverage of the death of Princess Diana and its immediate aftermath. Our main focus is on how the press dealt with the issue of their own potential culpability, as a feature of news reporting itself. The press deployed a series of descriptive categories and rhetorical oppositions, including regular press vs paparazzi; tabloid vs broadsheet; British vs (various categories of) foreign; supply vs demand (for its content); and a number of general purpose devices such as a contrast between emotional reactions and considered judgments. The study has two major aims: (1) to analyse the textual workings of the press, as a medium of factual reportage operating within a range of normative requirements for factual objectivity, public concern, responsible journalism, meeting readers' demands, etc.; and (2) to contribute to a generally applicable discourse analytic approach to how factual reports are assembled, used, and undermined, in an interplay of description and accountability.

**KEYWORDS:** *accountability, blame, discourse, factuality, media, press, rhetoric*

Who killed Diana?  
 I said the tabloid  
 With such loving devotion  
 I killed Diana.

Who saw her die?  
 I said the paparazzo,  
 With my little eye,  
 I saw her die.

Who'll be the judge?  
 I said the broadsheet,

From vantage on high,  
I'll be the judge. . . .

And all the people of the press,  
Began to sob and sigh,  
When they heard the church bell tolling  
For poor Princess Di.

### Narrative

On 31 August 1997 Diana, Princess of Wales, died in a car crash beneath the Pont de l'Alma in Paris. According to media reports, the car she was travelling in went out of control and smashed into the central reservation of a tunnel alongside the Seine. Diana, her companion Dodi Fayed, and the driver Henri Paul were killed. Trevor Rees-Jones, Fayed's bodyguard, was seriously injured but survived the crash.

For several weeks before the accident the news media had been particularly active in their coverage of Diana stories, publishing reports of her romantic involvement with Fayed, pictures of them on holiday together (taken with long-focus lenses), and speculation on the future of their relationship. Intimate details of, and interpretative glosses on, Fayed's private life were headline news. 'WOMANEATER' headed the *Mirror's* main story of 14 August with 'Everything Di needs to know about her Dodi's sex life – by his Best Man' the caption to a blurred video still of Fayed on his honeymoon, 'biting' the leg of his former wife. Prices for surreptitious photographs of the couple were reputed to have been sold world-wide for over a million pounds (*Daily Telegraph*, 9 August p. 3).

The initial focus of media attention, with regard to who might be held responsible for Diana's accident, was on the 'paparazzi' photographers allegedly pursuing the car on high speed motorcycles in order to get pictures of the couple together. Press reports named the paparazzi as directly responsible for Diana's death.

In this article we develop two general and related themes concerning the media's handling of fact and responsibility with regard to these events.

- (1) We examine how the description 'paparazzi', and various related categories, worked to disassociate the newspapers, especially the tabloids, from a range of alternative categories under which the papers themselves might be held culpable for the princess's fate. We show how the newspapers' potential involvement in the events they reported was discursively managed through the ways in which various actors and events were described. These devices included distinctions between paparazzi and the 'regular press', invocations of national identity and character (British and foreign), the rhetoric of supplying the demands of the newspapers' own readers, and various ways of distinguishing between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers where factual

accuracy and the moral high ground need not reside with the latter. We point to how the terms and positions taken up in debates about the press figured as an intrinsic part of, or concern in, event reporting in the press itself.

- (2) We examine the way that the reporting of factual content, and the textual management of press responsibility for that content (theme 1) was directed at wider issues of press freedom and potential legislation to curb intrusion into people's private lives. After the crash there was a flurry of discussion and self-examination, as the papers reported calls for new privacy laws governing press behaviour. The newspapers were able to display concern for public opinion while forwarding their own positions on the matter, together with responses ranging from admissions of responsibility (e.g. *News of the World*, 14 September p. 6) to indignation over 'kneejerk reaction' calls for privacy laws (*Sun*, 2 September p. 8).

### *Analytic approach*

This study applies a kind of discourse theory and method that deals with issues such as: how factual descriptions are assembled and made factual, through a range of rhetorical devices; how various kinds of stake, motive or interest are marshalled in ways that undermine factuality; and how factual descriptions and narratives routinely handle and manage the causality and accountability of actors in events, and of speakers/writers of texts. It is an approach to talk and text that has developed out of various perspectives including ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, sociology of science, and rhetoric, and their applications to topics in social and general psychology (Antaki, 1994; Billig, 1987; Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and more broadly (Billig, 1992, 1995; Potter, 1996). Our approach in this article is inductive, where induction is a normative analytic aim and principle rather than some kind of naively empiricist description of the research process (Lynch and Bogen, 1994). It amounts to avoiding the use of systemic coding categories or interpretative schemas, in favour of examining the details of the texts as found, and tying analytic claims closely to those details. Technical analytic categories are drawn from conversation analysis, rhetoric, linguistics, and other literature on discourse, in so far as they help explicate those analytic claims.

We place this study of media texts alongside, but also partly in contrast to, a wide range of studies of media discourse characterized by the identification of grammatical categories and structures, and how their uses are shaped by ideological interests (e.g. Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991; Hodge and Kress, 1993; Van Dijk, 1995; see also Bell and Garrett, 1998). Our analysis focuses on the details of textual extracts, on rhetoric more than grammar, and on specific words and their uses rather than their grammatical category membership. The relevance of a wider explanatory and ideological context – press ownership, political economy and manipulation, legal frameworks guaranteeing and restraining press freedom, the press's normative, democratic role in conveying facts, serving

public interests, mediating between government and public, and so on – arise for analysis to the extent that the press invokes, handles and manages them within the content of press coverage itself. It is not that we believe this to be the only way of studying such things – far from it. Rather, it is a principled restriction upon the kinds of inferences we draw from the specific materials analysed. Our interest stems from the ethnomethodological observation that normative, ethical, and political issues concerning press reporting are not only widely discussed and analysed outside of the activity of news reporting, but are also, and importantly as far as its readers are concerned, attended to in various analysable ways as an endemic feature of press reporting itself.

It is important to emphasize that we are not aiming to *explain why* the papers write what they do. It is a principled feature of the analysis, rather than an oversight, that we focus on explicating *how* the texts do what they do. Relevant contexts are a resource for explicating what the texts mean, rather than explaining why they were written. Indeed we see the question *why* as bringing with it various interpretative problems, briefly summarized as follows: (1) Much effort at answering *why*, in discourse studies of the mass media, takes the form of general declarations. The empirical grounding remains the textual analysis itself, rather than any systematic study of social organizations (Fairclough, 1995, 1998; Fowler, 1991); (2) the additional materials we would want to examine, to address *why*, would be a further series of accounts, descriptions, stories, explanations – that is, textual materials available for analysis, rather than external resources for explaining the texts being analysed; (3) much of what is collected under the issue *why* can be dealt with under *how*, by formulating the issues as not necessarily external to, underlying, or explaining the texts under analysis, but, in various ways, handled and managed *in* those texts (cf. Billig, 1992), and approachable as the discursive management of fact and accountability (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996); and (4) it is a feature of how discourse works, that is emphasized by conversation analysts (Schegloff, 1989) and discursive psychologists (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992, 1993; Potter, 1996), that *why* issues, both for events *and for their reporting*, are endemically implicated and attended to in factual stories and descriptions. Our analytic task is to explicate how this works, rather than to join in with those causal accounts by providing our own alternative explanations.

This study is part of a large scale project which has routinely monitored, on a daily basis, all British national newspaper and broadcast news content between October 1996 and September 1998. The project's aim is to bring various methods to bear on defining and assessing the adequacy of news media content for informing a democratic citizenry (Edwards et al., 1998). Part of that larger project includes a series of more detailed discourse analytic studies (e.g. MacMillan and Edwards, 1998), and one focus of those studies is on how the press provides a kind of self-commentary on its own adequacy and workings. This self-commentary appears not only in overt editorial and specialized articles, but as an endemic and often implicit feature of press reporting in general. Press coverage

following Diana's death was selected for the rich vein of self-commentary that was embedded in those reports, given the controversy over the press's possible role in the event, and the context of legislation and possible statutory enforcement of a press Code of Practice.<sup>1</sup>

We started with all the Diana-relevant articles in the British national newspapers, in the month (September 1997) following her death, focusing mainly on an intense two-week period from 1 to 15 September. We then selected the main news reports, columns and editorials dealing with that event and its implications, excluding (somewhat arbitrarily) items such as retrospective features on Diana's life, and readers' letters and reminiscences. This resulted in more than 500 press articles. These were reduced further as we developed the various themes and topics analysed in the following sections. These themes derived inductively from the materials themselves, from our general discourse-analytic interest in fact construction, accountability, rhetoric, the discourse of reality and mental states, and the management of stake and interest (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996), and also from our more specific, project-related interest in how the press handled their own involvement and responsibility. The extracts selected for analysis are ones we consider typical and illustrative of press methods for managing, as a feature of news reporting, that reporting's adequacy and accountability.

## Analysis

### THE PAPARAZZI AND THE PRESS

Before Diana's death, the British tabloids<sup>2</sup> had been competing for the most 'exclusive' stories and pictures of her and Dodi Fayed, printing pictures ranging from readers' snapshots (e.g. on the front pages of the *Daily Mirror*, 13 August and the *Sun*, 14 August) to those taken with long-focus lenses by professional photographers. The *Sunday Mirror*'s editorial, a fortnight before Diana's death (17 August p. 4), quoted national news reports announcing that 'the Sunday Mirror has won the battle to publish the Di pictures', comparing their '16 stunning photos, taken by Italian paparazzo Mario Brenna' favourably to those of the *News of the World* who were 'reduced to printing an embarrassing series of computer-generated fakes' (*Sunday Mirror*, 17 August, p. 4). Immediately after the car crash, however, the obtaining of such pictures, and the people involved in that, were widely denounced in the national media and (according to the media) by the general public. From the outset the photographers who pursued Diana's car were defined as 'paparazzi', using a variety of descriptions that produced a clear distinction between these photographers and the regular press:

1. 'They are predominantly freelance – not employed directly by newspapers – and sell their scoops to the highest bidder' (*Express*, 1 September, p. 14)
2. 'a small but determined group of photographers actuated by greed to the point that they have lost all sense of humanity' (*Daily Mail*, 1 September, p. 12)

3. 'sick cameramen' (*Daily Star*, 1 September, p. 4)
4. 'foreign celebrity-snappers' (*Sun*, 2 September, p. 6)
5. 'a band of freelance cameramen whose stock in trade is to snatch celebrity photos, often after prolonged pursuit and harassment' (*Express*, 9 September, p. 10)
6. 'photographers who specialise in snatching pictures of celebrities' (*Daily Mirror*, 10 September, p. 8)
7. 'jobs with cameras masquerading as photo-journalists' (*News of the World*, 14 September, p. 6)
8. 'most of them are the journalistic equivalent of cowboy mini-cab drivers and some are not even real photographers – they simply flash off their expensive gear and hope for the fuzzy best' (*Daily Mail*, 4 September, p. 12)

Such descriptions of the photographers – that they work freelance, specialize in celebrity photographs, are 'jobs', 'cowboys', 'sick cameramen', technically incompetent, dishonest ('masquerading') and lack humanity – depicted them as a recognized 'group' or 'band' possessing these shared characteristics, and engaged in regular activities that are uncharacteristic of press photographers generally. The definitions are not merely descriptive, but rhetorical, countering various otherwise plausible possibilities (Billig, 1987; Edwards and Potter, 1992). Denials presuppose the plausibility of what they deny. By maintaining that the paparazzi were 'not employed directly' by the press (item 1), the *Express* dealt with the possibility of its being seen as more directly involved, as an employer of those people and user of their pictures (see Greenslade, 1997, for an airing of those possibilities). Other details are also rhetorically significant: the modifier 'predominantly' makes the *Express's* generalization not a gross, all-or-nothing one, but something ostensibly more careful, acknowledging possible exceptions, thereby ensuring that any exceptions remain exceptional, proving rather than disproving the rule (cf. the *Daily Mail's* 'most of them', and 'some', in item 8). Further, it is the paparazzi who, in all the quoted definitions, are the grammatically active agents (cf. Fowler, 1991; Hodge and Kress, 1993; Trew, 1979), who take the pictures and sell their scoops. The rhetoric is in what this denies, that it might be the press itself who actively seeks them out, buys and prints them, and even, as the *Sunday Mirror* had in an earlier context (before the crash) put it, 'win the battle' to do so, and claim credit for it.

In an article in the *Daily Mirror* Kent Gavin distinguished his own practice as a press photographer, taking pictures of Diana, from the behaviour of the paparazzi and their treatment of her. 'They could swear abuse at her. They would provoke her. They put her children under intolerable strain' (*Daily Mirror*, 1 September, p. 17). Gavin described how the press (with himself as 'chief photographer' and thus a representative and authoritative voice for bona fide press photographers) knows how to draw the line between decency and intrusion.

**Extract 1** (*Daily Mirror*, 1 September, p. 17; article by photographer Kent Gavin)

1. At times she was confused.

2. And the line became blurred.
3. But there was a standard of privacy and
4. basic decency which did prevail.
5. The same, we now know only too sadly, did not hold
6. for those photographers called "the paparazzi"

Extract 1 distinguishes the regular press photographers, whose standards of privacy and decency it promotes, from the paparazzi. 'Standard' (line 3) and 'basic decency' (line 4) construct the regular press as conforming to a shared moral code, while the 'basic' and the 'but' (line 3) and the blurring (line 2) attend to the notion that such decency and standards might not always have been clearly evident. Note how the behaviour of the press is bound up with that of Diana herself, while avoiding any direct responsibility on the press's part. The vagueness of the descriptions ('blurred', 'confused') manage to engage Diana as an agent in how the press treated her, while at the same time avoiding specific and, in the context of her death, distasteful accusations against her. The participles 'blurred' and 'confused' avoid attributions of agency, in the way critical linguists have shown (Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991), and their objects ('she', 'the line') avoid any potential agency the press may have had, in producing such blurrings and confusion. It is not clear what Diana was 'confused' about (line 1), where the 'line' was (line 2), nor what the blurring of that line would entail. But it is the very fuzziness of such descriptions, the vagueness of 'confusion', the blurring of 'blurring', by which the press's agency, in overstepping their basic standards, is dissolved into a two-way interaction with Diana herself. The link between Diana's confusion and the blurry line (lines 1–2) is fleetingly reminiscent of the old Diana, the one the media had frequently accused of press manipulation,<sup>3</sup> with the ambiguity of the description ensuring, moreover, that Gavin himself does not overstep the mark, by implicating her too strongly.

This delicately assembled two-way relationship, between Diana and the basically decent corps of legitimate press photographers, is then contrasted with the behaviour of the paparazzi. The rhetoric is accomplished grammatically, via pro-terms and deictic expressions (Mulhausler and Harré, 1990). 'Those' paparazzi (line 6), are contrasted with 'we' (line 5) who are decent and sad. The pronoun 'we' conflates photographers such as Gavin, his newspaper and its readers, into what Perelman and Obrechts-Tyteca (1971; see also Billig, 1995) call the 'universal audience', who 'now know' (line 5) what sorts of people the paparazzi are. The term 'those' places the paparazzi outside of 'we', and beyond the sadly enlightened. The deictic 'now' (line 6), of course, is crucial. It is something 'we' know *now*, after the fact, not earlier, when paparazzi pictures were being bought and given front-page prominence, and even fought over, in the *Daily Mirror's* own journalistic 'battle' for scoops.<sup>4</sup>

Immediately after her death, Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, issued a prominently reported statement condemning the press. In subsequent reports, however, Spencer's statement was reformulated in such a way as to shift the focus of blame toward the paparazzi. Spencer's statement, spoken and broadcast on tele-

vision, included the words: 'I always believed the press would kill her in the end. But not even I could imagine they would take such a direct hand in her death as seems to be the case' (Earl Spencer, on *News at Ten*, ITV, 31 August). Although this speech was repeatedly broadcast, and quoted in all of the national papers the following day, it got formulated and repackaged in various interesting ways. On the one hand, various parts of the press (the tabloids in particular) glossed Spencer's condemnation as aimed directly at the paparazzi, whereas other sections of the press (mainly broadcast news and the broadsheets) depicted it as condemning the tabloids themselves. For example, a BBC Radio 4 news report (at 8 AM, 8 November) of an interview with Earl Spencer quoted him as 'still' condemning the 'tabloid press as evil'. In contrast, the *Daily Star* formulated<sup>5</sup> him as directly blaming the paparazzi for his sister's death:

**Extract 2** (*Daily Star*, 1 September, p. 4, by journalist Macer Hall)

1. Yesterday, Diana's devastated brother, Earl Spencer,
2. revealed he had a premonition the paparazzi would
3. play a part in the Princess's death.
4. He told reporters: "I always believed the Press would
5. kill her in the end."

A comparison between the *Daily Star's* gloss on Spencer's statement (lines 2–3), and the quoted words (lines 4–5, and as broadcast), shows three important changes which frame how Spencer's words should be understood. First, Spencer's expression 'I always believed' (line 4) is introduced as a 'premonition' (line 2). 'Premonition' is a word associated with mysterious kinds of divinations and warnings, omens and intuitions, rather than, say, inferences based on and justified by observed events. It alternates with categories such as 'prediction', for instance. So the category 'premonition', as an interpretation of Spencer's 'always believed',<sup>6</sup> subtly loosens any justified, observational basis his belief might have had. Second, the word 'paparazzi' is substituted for 'press' (cf. the *Daily Mirror*, 1 September, p. 4: 'Princess Di's brother Earl Spencer has accused paparazzi over her death'). This effectively interprets the word 'press' in such a way as to redirect its referential aim, deflecting blame away from the newspapers themselves. Third, 'kill' (line 5) is downgraded to 'play a part in' (line 3). Thus press responsibility in the princess's death is descriptively downgraded, shifted to the paparazzi, and its rational basis undermined. All this is produced not as any kind of disagreement with Spencer, but as a version of what he actually said. The rhetorical upshot is to distance the *Daily Star*, as part of 'the press' in general, from the force of Spencer's accusation, this being accomplished in the very process of reporting it.

Extract 3 shows how the *Daily Mail*, on the same day, also presented Spencer's statement as a condemnation of paparazzi photographers, rather than of the press as a whole.

**Extract 3** (*Daily Mail*, 1 September, p. 12; by political editor David Hughes)

1. Even as he spoke, pictures of the princess lying
2. mortally wounded in the wreckage of the car were

3. reportedly being peddled round the world.
4. Taken by the French paparazzi who had pursued her.
5. they were being touted to foreign newspapers and
6. magazines for as much as \$1million, more than £600,000.
7. The News of the World said last night a French photographer
8. had tried to sell pictures of Diana trapped in the car for £200,000.
9. It had refused the offer.
10. Earl Spencer's sombre words had a devastating impact and
11. were seen by Ministers as presaging a wave of public revulsion
12. at the activities of paparazzi photographers.

Extract 3 contains a striking description of events, with the activities of 'the French paparazzi' and 'paparazzi photographers' set ironically against a series of contrasting scenes. One of these scenes is Spencer, in the very act of uttering his words of condemnation – 'even as he spoke' (line 1). Another is the princess herself, poignantly depicted 'lying mortally wounded in the wreckage of the car' (lines 1–2). In contrast to these scenes we have the mercenary, pursuing paparazzi, whose terrible pictures were being 'peddled' and 'touted' (menial terms, signifying shady deals) for large sums of money. The role of the press was a passive one (being the objects of such peddlings and toutings), and indeed a noble one, exemplified by the *News of the World*, reportedly refusing the trade (line 9).

The citing of the *News of the World* as having done the refusal is interesting rhetorically – why that paper, and not the *Daily Mail* itself? Apart from any notion that this was merely how things happened, one thing that citing another paper's refusal does is to avoid any notion that the *Daily Mail* is priggishly and interestedly blowing its own trumpet (see Edwards and Potter, 1992, on the discursive management of 'stake'). Moreover, the *News of the World* is a Sunday tabloid not generally known for its sensitive handling of potentially intrusive stories; if *even it* refused these pictures, then certainly the *Daily Mail* would have, and perhaps the British press generally. More subtly still, the fact that it was the *News of the World* that was offered the pictures in the first place, rather than the *Daily Mail*, says something about that paper, and distances the *Daily Mail* yet further from all these sordid dealings with paparazzi. On an analytical point: we are not claiming that these rhetorical trajectories are textually realized in Extract 3 (though we do claim that for most of the analyses we offer), but rather, that they are the kinds of trajectories that the overt content of Extract 3 makes relevant and available, for readers and analysts alike.

#### BRITISH AND FOREIGN

One salient feature of Extract 3, and of tabloid press reports generally, was the use of categories such as 'foreign' and 'French' (Extract 3, lines 4, 5 and 7). As Billig (1995) shows, the press deploy a range of everyday images and expressions, including the pronouns 'we', 'they' and 'us', in ways that presuppose and reinforce a persistent, taken for granted, 'banal nationalism'. The category 'foreign'

served in this context as part of the separation between press and paparazzi, part of how responsibility was assigned and avoided. The Italian word 'paparazzi' is an immediate sign of foreignness for British readers, deriving from the nickname of a 'prying society cameraman' (*Guardian*, 1 September, p. 3) in Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita*. In Extract 3 the taking, selling, and buying of pictures of Diana was done by foreigners and their press. The named exception, the *News of the World*, was offered the photographs by 'a French photographer' (line 7), and refused them. In the context of all this foreignness, the *News of the World* becomes emblematically British, a racy tabloid maybe (see later), but one with standards.

Having established that it was the paparazzi who were active in obtaining and marketing pictures of Diana, and that both they and their market (with the noted exception of the *News of the World*) were foreign, the *Daily Mail* then (Extract 3, lines 10–12) invoked Spencer's statement. Once more, Spencer's words were treated as emotional ('sombre') and portentous ('presaging'), rather than, say, grounded in repeated empirical observation; and again they were glossed as directed specifically at the paparazzi (line 12) rather than the press. Note how the *Daily Mail* referenced this interpretation as coming from 'Ministers', and from the general public (line 11). This quoting of official sources (Ministers), and of general public perceptions, lends authority to the *Mail's* version of things (see Goffman, 1979, on 'footing', and various related treatments of quotation, category entitlements, and the like reviewed in Edwards and Potter, 1992, and Potter, 1996). Like the *Daily Star* (Extract 2), the *Daily Mail's* report, in covering Spencer's attack on the press, managed to reformulate and re-situate his statement as a condemnation of the paparazzi. Further, the emphasis on the *nationality* of the photographers constructed a division between them and the British press. Thus the newspapers were able to shift the focus and implications of Spencer's statement from the category 'press', which includes them, to the foreign press which does not, and in particular to the paparazzi.

Initial reports of Diana's death in the national press focused not only on the paparazzi's actions, but also on the *type of people* they were. Like the *Daily Mail* in Extract 3, the *Daily Star* (Extract 4) emphasized their national identities, and other associated characteristics. The *Daily Star* explicitly linked foreignness with the activities that resulted in Diana's death, and contrasted this conduct with that of the British press:

**Extract 4** *Daily Star*, 1 September, pp. 4–5; reporters John McJannet, Henry Macrory, Peter Bond, David Newman ([. . .] indicates omitted text)

1. **HOUNDED TO DEATH**

2. Ruthless foreign paparazzi are being blamed
3. for the death of Princess Diana and lover Dodi Fayed.
4. Last night, six French snappers and a Greek
5. were being quizzed by Paris cops [. . .]
6. Former BBC Royal correspondent Michael Cole,
7. spokesman and friend of Dodi's father, Mohamed,
8. slammed the paparazzi's conduct.

9. **He said British photographers would not have**  
 10. **behaved in the same way.** [original emphasis]

The *Daily Star*'s report placed blame firmly with the paparazzi. Its emotive headline (line 1) deployed a hunting-by-animals metaphor for the photographers' actions. The strong accusation, that they were directly responsible for Diana's death, was assigned passively ('are being blamed', line 2), as though the *Daily Star* were merely relaying this information, rather than making the judgement itself. Relaying a judgement in this way (another rhetorical use of 'footing') requires a lesser burden of support for it, than offering it directly as one's own. Again, the people 'being blamed' are not the press (including the *Daily Star* itself) but the paparazzi, and clearly not British but foreign. Furthermore, not only are they foreign, they are ruthless (line 2). This contiguous description ('ruthless foreign') ties foreignness to ruthlessness in a manner reminiscent of wartime rhetoric and propaganda. The *Daily Star*'s story of press involvement in Diana's death was that it was essentially, not merely contingently, foreign (O'Donnell, 1994). This is supported by a quote from Michael Cole, stating that 'British photographers would not have behaved in the same way' (lines 9–10). This quotation nicely captures the *Daily Star*'s set of alternating categories, contrasting 'foreign' with 'British', and 'paparazzi' with 'photographer'.

Cole was invoked as a 'former BBC Royal correspondent' (Extract 4, line 6), and therefore *relevantly in that capacity* (Jayyusi, 1984; Sacks, 1992). He was thus positioned as an authoritative source, in a position to know, and entitled to speak, on various relevant fronts – on the media, the royals, and the Fayeds (as 'friend', notably, rather than, say, employee, which would invoke a different set of interests) – and recruited as such by the *Daily Star* in support of its distinction between British press and foreign paparazzi. The *Sun* also, in an article the same day headed '7 FACE DEATH RAP IN CRASH PROBE', described how the photographers, 'six French and one Macedonian' (see Extract 4, line 4, 'six French snappers and a Greek') had been arrested for allegedly chasing Diana's car. Cole was directly quoted as follows: 'The paparazzi are a major problem in France. They pursue people. Fortunately the British press does not do that. There is more responsibility here' (*Sun*, 1 September, p. 2). Similarly the *Daily Mail* (1 September, p. 12) quoted Cole's description of the paparazzi as a 'Gallic kamikaze faction. . . The market for these pictures is not just France but next door in Italy and Germany. Overall the British press doesn't do that'. Just as 'paparazzi', for a British readership, has foreignness built into it, so 'Gallic' makes that the relevant thing about them (Edwards, 1998), while 'kamikaze', the Japanese suicide bombers of World War II, contributes a graphic imagery of foreign fanaticism, ruthless pursuit, and death.

The British press, as self-depicted in the tabloids, stand in stark contrast to the paparazzi: aloof, moral, trustworthy and condemnatory vs an unprincipled foreign-ness, with the press at one with its British public against the foreigners, us against them (Billig, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998). This rhetoric draws a sharp contrast

between press and paparazzi, British and foreign, while at the same time obliterating other relevant and active lines of division, such as a distinction between intrusive tabloid journalism (including the paparazzi) on the one hand, and the respectable world of broadcast news and the broadsheets on the other hand. That was a distinction, however, that the broadcasters and broadsheets actively drew, becoming particularly evident, as we show in the following section, in the immediate aftermath to these events, when the press started to deal more overtly with calls for legislation against intrusive journalism.

#### NO NEED FOR LEGISLATION?

After Diana's death the news media reported renewed calls for privacy laws and for stricter regulation of press activities when obtaining stories and photographs. This coverage included proposals by newspapers themselves, announcing their intention to regulate their own behaviour by, for example, no longer buying or using 'intrusive' pictures of Diana's sons, Princes William and Harry, and by publishing freelance photographs only if they complied with the newspaper's Code of Practice. This made relevant something that tabloid invocations of 'the press' had avoided, which was the scope for a division between broadsheets and broadcasters on the one hand, and the tabloids on the other hand. Whereas the tabloids made various appeals, as we have shown, to 'the press', 'the regular press', 'the British press', and so on, including themselves within those categories and excluding the paparazzi as 'foreign', 'freelance', etc., the broadsheet papers were able to distance themselves from blame for Diana's death by drawing the crucial line between themselves and the tabloids. Thus the *Daily Telegraph* quoted a 'senior' Tory politician describing tabloid proposals for future self-restraint as offering 'as little as possible', with the promised changes being prompted by 'public revulsion at press intrusion' (note the operative category 'press'). According to the *Daily Telegraph* (9 September, p. 4) the tabloids' new restraint was brought about by 'repeated attacks by Earl Spencer and some politicians' – Spencer now being recruited against the tabloids, rather than against the paparazzi or the press in general.

Declarations of future self-regulation, whatever their bases or intent, were also a resource in resisting externally imposed legislation. For example, the *Daily Mail* announced that it 'leads the way in banning paparazzi pictures', quoting Viscount Rothermere, its owner and company chairman, to the effect that he had 'instructed my editors no "paparazzi" pictures are to be purchased without my knowledge and consent' (*Daily Mail*, 8 September, p. 2). Rather than competing for their publication, the *Daily Mail* was now winning a different competition ('leads the way') for non-publication. The broadsheets' scepticism about such declarations focused on how it remained unclear what would count as a paparazzo photograph, and on how statements such as Lord Rothermere's signified no necessary change in what the paper would actually print (Greenslade, 1997).

Declarations of self-regulatory intent enabled papers such as the *Daily Mail* to display themselves as respectable newspapers even when, or indeed especially

when, and in the act of, acknowledging having bought paparazzi pictures in the past. The *News of the World* announced its determination ‘that jobs with cameras masquerading as photo-journalists will be cut off forever from the respectable newspaper world’ (14 September, p. 6), implying its own inclusion within the category ‘respectable’. It declared that it, and ‘EVERY SINGLE newspaper in Britain’ (original emphasis) had been responsible for supporting the paparazzi at some time, ‘including those posh and preachy broadsheets’. Note how the inclusion of itself as ‘respectable’ is contrasted not only with the paparazzi (‘jobs masquerading as photo-journalists’), but also with the ‘posh and preachy’ broadsheets. The *News of the World* thereby attends to its reputation as a racy and unreliable tabloid, to which the term ‘respectable’ might not obviously apply. Hence the rhetorical emphasis on ‘every single’. It is the broadsheets to which epithets such as ‘serious’ and ‘respectable’ normatively apply.

By characterizing them as ‘posh and preachy’, yet included by ‘every single’ as past users of paparazzi pictures, the *News of the World* was able to ironize any aloof, sober, factual accuracy that the broadsheets might claim for themselves. They are papers with attitude, like the rest, and unable to hog the title ‘respectable’. They are socially positioned and condescending (‘posh’), moralizing (‘preachy’), and hypocritical (being included in ‘every single newspaper’). The *News of the World* thus positioned itself as a kind of demotic honest broker, part of the ‘respectable newspaper world’, all the more trustworthy for openly declaring, rather than hypocritically hiding, its past involvement with paparazzi pictures, and for announcing its intention henceforward to restrict its dealings with them. Its vehement condemnation of the paparazzi fingered *them* as the real agents in Diana’s death. The role of the press, as a market for whatever sensational pictures the paparazzi had to sell, was thus minimized, with the line drawn firmly between press and paparazzi, rather than between one section of the press and another.

The tabloids’ announcements of various kinds of self-regulation, nicely defined in terms of restraint on the use of paparazzi pictures (rather than their own reporting practices), had a twin rhetorical edge. They re-asserted the separation between press and paparazzi, thus denying involvement in Diana’s death, and they also served, along with that separation, as bases for rejecting calls for legally enforced controls. The tabloids claimed to be misrepresented and misunderstood by the politicians, broadcasters, media commentators and broadsheet journalists who were making those calls. In a report condemning the call for privacy laws, Keith Waterhouse of the *Daily Mail* attacked those he claimed were purposefully misleading the public. Extract 5 is part of that report:

**Extract 5** (*Daily Mail*, 4 September, p. 12; by columnist Keith Waterhouse)

1. OUR URGE IS ALWAYS TO BAN SOMETHING
2. [...] That disinterested party David Mellor was
3. first off the mark in slaving for a privacy law.
4. The BBC assiduously stirred the pot all day Sunday by
5. consistently referring to the paparazzi as Press photographers,
6. for all that most of them are the journalistic equivalent of

7. cowboy mini-cab drivers and some are not even real photographers
8. – they simply flash off their expensive gear and hope for the fuzzy best

The headline (line 1) is worthy of close analytic scrutiny for the way it constructs calls for legislation as irrational. These calls are characterized as expressions of an ‘urge’, which is to say, an impulse of some kind, rather than, say, a conclusion derived from rational and objective thought. Further, it is ‘*our* urge’, which is to say, something affecting all of us including Waterhouse himself – he is not priggishly positioning himself above such urges, but recognizing them for what they are. We (whoever that deictically includes and excludes – he and his readers, the nation as a whole, the universal audience maybe, but not the paparazzi) are in this together, and Waterhouse is one of us (etc.), our sympathetic guide to rational judgement. The term ‘always’ reinforces that sense of a shared urge or impulse, giving it the character of a regular, routine reaction, rather like a bad habit, but in any case a matter of routine reaction rather than something carefully considered with each case taken on its individual merits (see Pomerantz, 1986, on the rhetoric of ‘extreme case formulations’ such as *always*; and Edwards, 1997, on the uses of ‘script formulations’ in normalizing actions and events). And the object of such routine, irrational reactions is the marvelously vague and general, anything-will-do, non-specific category ‘something’. Again, ‘something’ reinforces what an irrational urge it is – we don’t stop to consider the specifics of whatever it is we are dealing with. We just move to ‘ban’ it, an entirely negative reaction at that. It is a headline of exquisite rhetorical design in all its details, providing an interpretative frame for the rest of the article.

David Mellor (line 2) was well known as a Minister in the previous Conservative government, who resigned his post following a sex scandal that was exposed in, indeed was produced by, and amounted to, its coverage in the British press. The description ‘that disinterested party’ is heavily ironic, signalling its opposite – that Mellor had a vested interest in calling for privacy laws. The deictic expression ‘that’ signals something given or known about Mellor (his recent and prominent experience of press expos – or intrusion), that the reader is being directed to make relevant. It succinctly implies that Mellor’s opinion on the issue was unreliable, a product of personal involvement (again, see Edwards and Potter, 1992, on how formulations of a speaker’s ‘stake and interest’ work against their factual credibility). The metaphor ‘slavering’ reinforces the irony for anyone who may have missed it, being an index of emotional, irrational involvement (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; and ‘urge’ in line 1). Similarly ‘first off the mark’ (line 3) casts Mellor as motivated, quick to judgement, primed for such a reaction. It helps categorize his call for laws against press intrusion as an expression of personal stake, emotional involvement, prejudice, rather than a considered appraisal. The *rhetorical* use of Mellor in Extract 5 is evident not only in these ways in which his views are ironized and rendered irrational, but also in the fact that his words were available elsewhere for alternative, less ‘slavering’ kinds of formulations. Mellor had written in the same newspaper three days earlier (*Daily*

*Mail*, 1 September, p. 12), ‘some will call for a privacy law; but that is the bluntest of blunt instruments, likely to cause as much damage as benefit to a free society. It may come to that but I hope it won’t.’

Waterhouse’s second target, as a damaging source of misinformation about the press, was the BBC (lines 4–5). The BBC not only ‘stirred the pot’, which is to say, engaged in some kind of verbal trouble-making, but they did so ‘assiduously’, an adverb that reinforces the deliberate, motivated nature of that stirring. Indeed they did so ‘all day Sunday’ and ‘consistently’. Whereas a single reference to the paparazzi as ‘press photographers’ might be excused as mistaken or casual, ‘assiduously’, ‘all day Sunday’ and ‘consistently’ emphasize something purposeful about the confusion, with the BBC deliberately and mischievously linking press and paparazzi together. Both Mellor and the BBC (cf. the *News of the World*’s depiction of the hypocritical, ‘posh and preachy’ broadsheets) are thus implicated as irrational, unreliable sources of information and opinion, rather than the informed and authoritative sources they might otherwise be taken to be.

Having undermined voices which identified the paparazzi with the press, Waterhouse provided a condemnatory set of descriptions that clarified who and what the paparazzi were (lines 6–8). In contrast to the BBC’s mischievous category ‘Press photographers’ (line 5), they were akin to ‘cowboy mini-cab drivers’, ‘not even real photographers’ and ‘people who flash off their expensive gear and hope for the fuzzy best’. These descriptions were prefaced not only by an undermining of the BBC’s version, but by the innocuous-looking expression ‘for all that’ (line 6). This packages what Waterhouse had to say about the paparazzi as ‘given’ information – as uncontroversial, matter-of-fact, common knowledge (Edwards, 1997). Waterhouse’s pejorative condemnation not only of the paparazzi, but of both Mellor and the BBC, signalled the importance for the press itself, including the *Daily Mail*, of the threat of new legal restrictions on press intrusion. Should measures be introduced to ‘stop press harassment and invasions of privacy’ (*Independent*, 26 September, p. 4), not only might tabloid press activity be restricted, and possibly their market appeal, but it would imply that they were indeed culpable of the kind of persecutory behaviour of which they had accused the paparazzi – even of hounding Diana to her death (*Daily Star*, 1 September, p. 4).

The rhetorical linkage between the ‘tasteless’ standards of the foreign press, their purchase and publication of paparazzi pictures, and the groundless nature of calls for restrictions on (British) press freedom, were directly made in a *Sun* editorial the day after the initial accident reports were published (Extract 6). The upshot is clearly spelled out in line 7:

**Extract 6** (*Sun*, 2 September, p. 8; original emphases)

1. **Tasteless**
2. [...] The point is reinforced in the most tasteless way
3. by the publication in Germany’s biggest-selling
4. paper yesterday of a front-page picture of rescuers
5. battling to free Diana from the wrecked car.

6. No paper in Britain would have bought or published that photo.
7. **We don't need privacy laws to teach us how to behave.**

Distinctions between press and paparazzi, British and foreign, honest reporting and expressions of stake and interest, blame and innocence, were thus marshalled with regard to calls for, and resistance to, restrictions on press reporting.<sup>7</sup> As with the *Daily Mail* (in Extract 5) a report in the *Sun* also cautioned against making misinformed and misguided connections between paparazzi and press, quoting 'showbiz legend' Cliff Richard's warning not to 'tar' the press 'with the same brush' (*Sun*, September 9, p. 9). Richard was quoted in support of a strong distinction between the paparazzi and 'regular press' (Extract 7, line 4).

**Extract 7** (*Sun*, 9 September, p. 9; reporter Tim Miles; original emphasis)

1. **Don't pick on the Press, says Cliff**
2. Showbiz legend Sir Cliff Richard yesterday warned celebrities
3. and public figures not to make the Press "an easy scapegoat."
4. [...] He said "The regular press ought not to be confused with
5. the paparazzi who chase cars into tunnels.
6. We need the Press and they need us.
7. But right now, in our grief, we want to find an easy scapegoat."

There is no doubt here about the kind of things that the paparazzi do – they 'chase cars into tunnels' (line 5). This delightful phrase upgraded a single incident to the status of a repeated pattern, indicative of the dispositional nature of the actors (see Edwards, 1997, on 'scripts' and 'dispositions'). Those actors were singled out as 'the paparazzi', and explicitly contrasted with the 'regular press' (lines 4–5). As we have noted, the description 'regular press' does two things; it conflates the *Sun* with the rest of the press (cf. the *News of the World's* 'respectable newspaper world', quoted earlier), and it obliterates such distinctions as tabloid vs broadsheet. Any conflation of press with paparazzi, on the other hand, was deemed a matter of confusion (line 4). Again, these categories and distinctions were marshalled towards an upshot (lines 1 and 7), this being that efforts to blame the press (and by extension, to curb its freedoms), were unjustified.

'Sir Cliff Richard' (his formal, more authoritative title), or else the familiar 'Cliff', was cited in his capacity as a 'showbiz legend', and as such not only well known to the public, but also familiar with the behaviour of press reporters and photographers, and thus someone entitled to know what he was talking about. This kind of 'knowledge entitlement' (Potter, 1996) lent credibility to the warning that the press were in danger of becoming 'an easy scapegoat' (line 3). In coming from a reputable, well-known, independent source, outside the press, the quotation deflected from the press's self-interest in emphasizing the difference between themselves and the paparazzi (see Edwards and Potter, 1992, on 'stake management' and 'he would say that, wouldn't he?'). Thus resistance to legislation could be presented not merely as a predictable tabloid position, but as a position warranted by respectable independent opinion, and as a corrective to various mistaken associations between respectable British journalism and its unprincipled foreign counterpart, paparazzi included.

Extract 7's notion of 'an easy scapegoat' (lines 3 and 7), which 'right now, in our grief, we want to find', is reminiscent of the concept of an 'urge to ban' (Extract 5). It constructs the blaming of the press, and the calls for legislation, not only as irrational, but as understandably so. It disarmingly sympathizes with the very view it rejects. Public 'grief' is proper and understandable, and shared by us all ('our grief'), but it clouds judgement. Emotion categories such as 'grief' generally provide for judgements of irrationality (Edwards, 1997, 1999), together with the notion that they have a properly limited duration and applicability ('right now', line 7) that rational judgements need not. Attributing emotions of grief to 'celebrities and public figures' (lines 2–3), works nicely to align with that grief while undermining the rational, long-term basis of any conclusions that such people – as potential victims of the very kind of intrusive journalism that is at issue – might come to. Diana was herself such a person, of course, and the notion that 'we need the Press and they need us' (line 6) undermines the kind of one-sided 'hounding' that the press were being accused of, and that Earl Spencer had invoked. Indeed, eight days earlier, the *Sun's* coverage of Spencer's condemnation of the press also cited 'the depths of his grief' (*Sun*, 1 September, p. 10) in a way that undermined his conclusions while sympathizing with his state of mind: 'In the depths of his grief, Diana's brother is entitled to be bitter about her death . . . At such a harrowing time, we can understand his emotional outburst'. The category 'emotional outburst', together with the *Sun's* understanding of it, diminishes the reliability of Spencer's statement as a reflection on the real state of affairs regarding press intrusion.

#### RECRUITING THE PUBLIC

Press descriptions of public emotions following Diana's death provided for various rhetorical moves with regard to fact and blame. They provided an explanation for the irrational blaming of the press by Spencer and others, and for confusions between paparazzi and the genuine press, and they explained, rather than justified, calls for legislation to prevent future press intrusion. They also provided a basis for rejecting those causal attributions and conclusions as irrational. A related move was to indirectly blame the public itself, the newspapers' readers – a notion that required some delicacy if it were not to offend and alienate that same target readership (that is to say, the papers' markets). An early editorial in the *Daily Star* introduced the idea thus:

**Extract 8** (*Daily Star*, 1 September, p. 8; original emphasis)

1. *But where does the blame end?*
2. With the media?
3. With a world-wide public which
4. could never see enough of Princess Di?

Note some of the details, in how the idea of public responsibility for the manner of Diana's death is raised. It occurs rhetorically, following line 2, as an alternative to the notion that the press might be blamed. Even so, the category

'the media' (line 2), as we have noted with regard to 'the press', has a much more diffused range of application than, say, 'the tabloids' or even 'the *Star*'. It also arises as part of a series of unanswered, and possibly unanswerable, rhetorical questions, implying the difficulty or impossibility of ever seeing where the blame should 'end'. These are not offered as an agenda for investigation, a set of lines of inquiry, but rather, as a set of imponderables, or unknowns. The category 'world-wide public' (line 3) is nicely judged, in that it deflects from the *Daily Star's* own specific readership, and even from the British public generally, locating the demand for Diana stories as international, and even universal, and hence not something for which any specific group of people might be held accountable (cf. Sacks, 1992, on 'everybody does'). The description 'Princess Di' (line 4) is both respectful (Princess) and informal (Di), signalling these as features of the public's interest in her. The expression 'could never see enough of', attached to the description 'Princess Di', reinforces the affectionate nature of this universal, insatiable public demand. We (the universal public) only wanted to see the pictures of 'Princess Di' because we loved her so, and the media only provided them because that was what its public wanted.

What we have here, recognizably despite the absence of frequency data, is a standard 'supply-and-demand' response to criticisms of the tabloid press. The press (indeed the media generally) avoids criticism of its content by claiming a role in a free, democratic market of information, supplying what the public wants. A similar move was made in the *Express*, in a column written not by a staff journalist, but by 'Ben Pimlott, historian':

**Extract 9** (*Express*, 1 September, p. 12; by Ben Pimlott, historian)

1. Blame can also be shifted from the drivers to the editors and proprietors
2. whose profit-seeking put the paparazzi on the trail in the first place.
3. Yet to blame the Press misses the point.
4. [...] the same editors can point to the hypocrisy of their accusers.
5. For if the marketplace for pictures of the Princess and her latest boyfriend
6. produced an unseemly and ultimately fatal scramble,
7. that manifestly reflected a public demand.
8. In other words, it is we the public – who insisted on a daily diet
9. of royal scandals and royal bodies and souls stripped bare –
10. that in the end share some of the responsibility for getting our grim reward.

The *Express's* use of an article by Pimlott was comparable, though in a more elaborate manner, to the *Sun's* quotation (in Extract 7) of Sir Cliff Richard. It was the voice not directly of the *Express* itself, but of an independent, authoritative observer. Pimlott's status as 'historian' entitled him to put these events and controversies into their proper context, while implying a degree of academic independence from the newspaper in which his article was printed. That status enabled what might otherwise look like a rather interest-ridden defence of the *Express* in the *Express* (again, under the generalized category of 'the Press', line 3), to carry the status of an independent and authoritative judgement.<sup>8</sup> Further, the article's implied independence from the newspaper that carried it made room

for a rather more direct and blaming formulation of public culpability than that provided by the *Daily Star*'s editorial (Extract 8). Pimlott dealt more directly with the issue of press responsibility (Extract 9, lines 1–2) and public responsibility (lines 4, 7–10). Even so, rather than dealing directly with the *Express*'s publishing record, or any accusations it might make against its readers, those categories were softened into 'the Press' in general, 'editors' in general, and a hypocrisy in others they 'can' rather than do point to (line 4).

The readership for its part was glossed impersonally as 'the marketplace' (line 5) and as 'we the public' (line 8), anonymous, generalized, and again (as with the *Daily Mail* in Extract 5) inclusive of the writer. 'We' were to blame, for reaping 'our grim reward' (lines 8–10) – we the public, not you the readers of the *Express*. In using this pronominal footing 'we the public', the blaming of the public was accomplished, not as the *Express* shifting blame to its readers, but as a piece of self-blame by the public itself. Note also how 'the marketplace' took on the role of grammatical agent in these narrated events, having 'produced' (line 6) that 'fatal scramble' that led to Diana's death. Again, the notion that the press merely supplies a public demand emerged, not simply as a potentially correct or naive observation about how the press actually works, but as a rhetorical element of reportage and accountability within the press itself. Indeed it was offered in Extract 9 not as any kind of controversial or potentially naive point of view, and not even as a point of view, but as 'manifestly' the case (line 7).

## Conclusion

The circumstances surrounding the death of Princess Diana offered a rich opportunity to examine various ways in which the press handled their own availability as agents in the events they were reporting. Various descriptive and rhetorical devices were used in assembling factual narratives and explanations, and in assigning and avoiding blame. These included the rhetorical deployment of a series of interrelated category distinctions: between paparazzi and press; between the actions and motives of the press and of Diana herself (see discussion of Extract 1); between British and foreign; between 'we' and 'them' generally; between broadsheet and tabloid; between the press and its readers; and between rational judgement and various categories of prejudicial motivation, or understandable, emotional reaction (urges, grief, and so on). We highlight the ways in which the press sub-divided the relevant agents of news production, either between 'regular' press and freelance paparazzi, or between tabloid and broadsheet press, where the latter move was undermined, by the tabloids, as hypocritical and motivated.

A major feature of our analysis (MacMillan and Edwards, 1998) is the focus on how these issues of fact, blame and the need for legislation were played out in the newspapers themselves, as part of their reporting, rather than in external media-analytical commentaries about them. In focusing on newspaper content, we also emphasize how the various kinds of categorization and rhetorical opposi-

tion were accomplished through matter-of-fact descriptions, formulations, and factual narratives, rather than through overt accusation and defence. This is a feature of factual discourse generally: the way that narratives and descriptions are rendered factual by the management of whatever might be at stake in producing them (such as motives, personal involvement, self interest, prejudice, emotional investment, etc.); and the way that appeals to stake, interest, emotional investment, and so on, are constructed and put to work in undermining the factual status of rival claims (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992, 1993; Potter, 1996). Thus Earl Spencer's denouncement of the press (Extract 2) was countered, both by reformulating it verbally (and thus reconstituting the nature and object of his complaint), and also by depicting it as stemming from an outburst of grief.

Spencer's grief figured as one of a series of appeals to the irrationality of whatever view was being countered. Emotion categories provide a rich rhetorical vein for such factual undermining, though they are rich and flexible enough to provide for the rational basis of conduct also, when used differently (Edwards, 1997, 1999). Besides Spencer's 'grief' there was Waterhouse's 'urge' and Mellor's 'slavering' (Extract 5), and various less direct appeals to the impulsive and irrational that we did not highlight (such as 'insisted' and 'scramble' in Extract 9). Another feature of our analysis is the importance of details such as these, of specific descriptions, and the way that these categories, in the contexts where they are used, contrast with alternate ones that are at issue for the events recounted, in a rhetoric of fact and agency.

Those descriptive details include a series of reportings, where what was being reported was another person's words, or their version of events. Quotations, voicings, and categorizations of their sources, were used in the press both to support the independence or authority of a position (e.g. 'showbiz legend Sir Cliff Richard', 'former BBC Royal correspondent Michael Cole, spokesman and friend of Dodi's father, Mohamed', 'Ben Pimlott, historian'), and also to undermine the credibility of a rival source (e.g. the 'posh and preachy broadsheets', and the 'slavering' David Mellor). As we showed with the case of Earl Spencer, both the respectful relaying of an opinion, and its undermining as unworthy of serious consideration, were possible almost simultaneously. Further, through various uses of 'we' and related terms of inclusion and exclusion (Billig, 1995; Hall and Held, 1978; Van Dijk, 1991), the press were able to position themselves as part of a universal (but especially, or equivalently, British) sympathy, and part of a public condemnation that might otherwise, if not carefully countered, be successfully directed at themselves.

In outlining our analytic approach, we drew attention to the focus we place upon the conceptual content and contrastive, rhetorical deployment of specific words and expressions. This was shown in our comments on 'assiduously', 'premonition', 'paparazzi', 'in our grief', and so on. Although they often proved useful, we did not start with the presumption that formal linguistic categories and structures (syntax, morphology, etc.) provide the essential framework we need for expli-

cating what people are doing with the words they use. In fact, they sometimes cut across and obscure an analysis of discourse's performative business. The constructive, rhetorical, and performative business of discourse is often accomplished by what the specific words are, and their particular context of use, rather than by what grammatical category or kind of syntactic structure they are part of. This is a general feature of rhetoric and conversation analysis. The way words occur as parts of sentences or 'propositions' (Van Dijk, 1998) is crucial. But it need not be a grammatical analysis, of what *kinds of* sentences they are, that delivers the rhetorical goods. Pervasive, performative discourse phenomena such as 'extreme case formulations' (Pomerantz, 1986), 'footing' (Goffman, 1979) or 'formulations' (Heritage and Watson, 1979) are not grammatical categories.

Take, for instance, how Spencer's *always believed* was formulated as a *premonition*, and how his words *the press* were substituted by *the paparazzi* (see analysis of Extract 2). We identify the crucial thing about *premonition*, not, for instance, that it nominalizes (makes into a noun) what was originally a verb phrase (see Fairclough, 1995, and Fowler, 1991, for useful observations on nominalizations). It is, in any case, a different lexeme altogether, rather than a transformation of that kind. Rather, it is the implications about the nature of thought processes and their rational or irrational basis, in how we ordinarily understand and use these words, that can be achieved by substituting a word such as *premonition* for *belief*, and by deleting or re-working *always*.

Similarly, *the press* and *the paparazzi* are lexically unrelated. The fact that one is a collective noun (the press) and the other plural (the paparazzi) may permit some speculative, Whorfian kind of notion about mass and count nouns, objectification, and so on. But the point is surely simpler and less technical than that, and based on what any user of the words can be expected to know. They invoke different collections of people, where what they categorize (Edwards, 1991; Jayyusi, 1984), including the rather non-specific, generalized, catch-all nature of *the press*, is crucial to how they work in dividing the world into relevant agents and onlookers, the blameworthy and the guilt-free, while glossing over the kinds of distinctions that could be, and were, drawn between different, nameable sections of the press, such as *tabloids vs broadsheets*.

#### NOTES

1. The 'Code of Practice' was, at the time of these newspaper reports, a document drawn up by Britain's newspaper and periodicals industry, ratified by the government's Press Complaints Commission on 26 November 1997. It defines a set of principles on matters such as accuracy, intrusion into privacy, and 'harassment or persistent pursuit'. As several of our extracts show, the impending possibility of statutory enforcement, or a tightening of the Code's principles, was something the press attended to in its news coverage, as well as through whatever lobbying it might be doing of government officials and commissions.
2. The terms 'tabloid' and 'broadsheet' are categories used in, as well as of, the press, and could be studied for the constructive and rhetorical work they do. We do not pursue

that here. In this study the terms distinguish a newspaper's size and shape, as well as invoking conventional notions of quality and content. Of the papers used for this article, the *Daily Star*, *Daily Mail*, *Express*, *Mirror*, *Sun*, *Sunday Mirror*, *Express on Sunday*, and *News of the World* are 'tabloids', and the *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Times* and *Independent* are 'broadsheets'.

3. The satirical magazine *Private Eye*'s 'Gnome' column (5 September, p. 5) announced: 'In recent weeks (not to mention the last 10 years) we at the Daily Gnome, in common with all other newspapers, may have inadvertently conveyed the impression that the late Princess of Wales was in some way a neurotic, irresponsible and manipulative troublemaker. . . We now realise as of Sunday morning that the Princess of Hearts was in fact the most saintly woman who has ever lived . . .'
4. The *Daily Mirror* was prominently involved in an earlier incident in which Diana had sued the paper's owners for publishing pictures of her in a gym, taken with a hidden camera – a matter recalled by the *Daily Mail* on the same day (1 September, p. 12).
5. For a discussion of 'formulations' in the sense used here, as rhetorically active glosses on, and alterations of, what somebody has said, see Heritage and Watson (1979).
6. The 'always' makes Spencer's expression an 'extreme case formulation' (Pomerantz, 1986). Pomerantz notes the rhetorical uses of such devices, in legitimizing claims. Additionally, extreme formulations are recognizably and hearably extreme, and this provides for various kinds of ironic production and receipt of them, as more than might be accurately said, as not literally the case, and thereby as expressing some kind of attitude or investment on the part of the speaker/writer, or as being ironically intended (Edwards, forthcoming). It may be that these latter affordances of 'always' provide a resource for reformulations of 'belief' as something less reliable or grounded, such as 'premonition'.
7. The *Sun*'s editorial was thus parodied in *Private Eye* (5 September, p. 19, original bold-face and italics): '**The Mirror Says** Do not blame the Mirror for this tragic event. The sleazy foreign paparazzi are entirely different from the good honest British snappers who provide pictures for decent newspapers like the Mirror. These paparazzi are filth. They are frogs, wops and assorted spivs who will stop at nothing to get their disgusting pictures of our beloved British Royalty. We at the Mirror would not stoop so low. We just buy the pictures from them. *Reproduced from the Sun with the name changed.*'
8. We should emphasize that the point of these remarks is not to question Pimlott's genuineness, or freedom from editorial control, but to analyse the rhetorical nature and force of what he wrote and where he wrote it.

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