

A psychic visitation by the White Goddess, courtesy the media

by Frank Zingrone

Diana Spenser Windsor, the Electric Princess, is dying forever in the Seine River underpass, her heart crushed by opulent steel. All the elements of her violent, untimely death conspire to confer mythic status on this woman, who has broken the hearts of millions. To the last, she bled images. As a media event, the impact of her crash has registered with an intensity that has stunned a world mourning electronically. Was she a one-er and this a unique event?

Actually, this has all happened before, if not with quite the same degree of media inflation. We should have expected this repetition compulsion of coverage by network television, which is achingly vacuous of arresting contents and falls like a junky on a fix given an event of such epic news potential.

Fundamentally, electronic communication can manage the public consciousness of billions, instantly, if the event truly has global scope. Diana was nothing if not global in her appeals and presence. We see her everywhere, even walking away from the camera hand-in-hand with Mother Theresa, whose fortuitous death underscored the legendary potency of them both, one as goddess, the other as saint.

It is difficult for death to annihilate a billion images; they have, when networked electronically, a synergistic effect – something much more significant than the parts predict. Under electric conditions, anywhere is everywhere and anyone in the Net is all of us – as in a mystical body. This makes it easier for us to live vicariously through the professionals who live our lives for us. (Nobody on television is watching television.)

We weep for our own mortality, and with almost hysterical cultural focus in the case of media deaths. In these surreal incidents, we lose more of ourselves than we can easily replace: James Dean, JFK, Marilyn, Elvis, John Lennon – these are big losses of individuals who characterized an era, a powerful cultural theme of past life-ours. Thus we mourn ourselves in our networked mourning for them.

She may have been
vain, petty,
manipulative and
shallow, but how many
deities do you know
that are any better or
more beautiful?

In certain cases, the losses are deeper. Electric conditions are paradoxical, everything is both itself and something else; this is the condition of myth. Electric media transform history into myth by driving memory and its strategic inhibitions to the speed of light, till we lose all sense of an event's reality. As simplifying devices, media collapse complex relations into child-like structures – fairy tales.

Stars thus rendered myth by media are figures sitting atop very deep, resonant grounds of the psyche. Media make myths by forcing the implosions of eons of experience into single moments redolent with archetypal power

that connects us to the deep river of psychic flow – the genetic continuity of the memory of the race.

Myths are not merely reminders of childish mindset; they are nodes of collective psychic reality. Now that we have made psychiatry medical and have denatured our religions, our only method for accessing archetypal power is through media – with their instant, trans-racial, global reach.

Diana's death may be a true instance of a psychic visitation by the White Goddess, made possible on a mass scale by media extensions. Having been translated into so many photos and moving pictures, she has become separated and isolated from her surround until she truly becomes (like anyone operating with unknown others in the Net), a Discarnate Reality – a person who no longer needs a body.

What part of our psyche does she inhabit? The part of a Circean femme fatale, tricking those who would catch her up with protean transformations. And Diana does fit the part well.

The goddess is a lovely, slender woman with a hooked nose, deathly pale face, lips red as rowan berries, startlingly blue eyes and long fair hair. She will suddenly transform herself into sow, mare, bitch, vixen ... mermaid or loathsome hag. Her names are innumerable. In ghost stories she often figures as "The White Lady," and in ancient religions ... as the White Goddess. (Robert Graves, The White Goddess)

Her medium is poetry and she is the muse of the greatest poets, just as Diana inspired paens of lyric press by her demure and coy demeanor.

The test of a poet's vision ... is the accuracy of his portrayal of the

White Goddess. ... The reason why the hairs stand on end, the eyes water, the throat is constricted, the skin crawls and a shiver runs down the spine when one writes or reads a true poem is necessarily an invocation of the White Goddess. (Graves)

Keats says of her, "everything that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear." She is the woodland goddess, otherwise known as Diana.

In our trivializing age, her manifestation as the White Goddess is accessed by us through the image of Snow White, the victim of deadly jealousy by a powerful, evil Queen. Diana as Snow White is a terribly confused one, thinking a wastrel provocatively named *Do Di* could be her prince charming with the resuscitating kiss – after being too long suspended in her glass coffin with the press pecking in.

This is either the best or the worst thing that media do – the creation of a network of massed emotion to produce celebrations (and mournings) on a global scale. This is the technology that finally can articulate the continuous flow of the memory of the race and refurbish its exemplary models.

But the power of the image may be approaching critical mass. In fact, the image is now beginning to lose credibility through its digital controls. Seeing is no longer believing. We may soon have to revert to secrecy, like cultural militias, in order to regain the sacred iconic power of ancient archetypes, which we had almost lost – but for Diana's timely reminder.

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