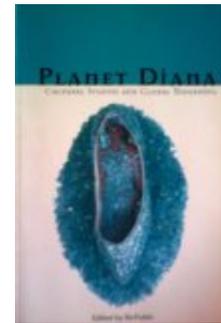




Ien Ang, ed. *Planet Diana: Cultural Studies and Global Mourning*. Kingswood, NSW (Australia): University of Western Sydney Press, 1997. AUD \$24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-86341-506-4.

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The Death of Diana: Instant Scholarly Analysis of Popular Culture?

In her preface to *Planet Diana: Cultural Studies and Global Mourning*, Ien Ang refers to the death of Princess Diana as “one of the most unanticipated and arresting global popular cultural events of the late twentieth century” (p. v). The media attention devoted to the Princess’ death was unprecedented, and most analyses of the aftermath of Diana’s death came from standard news sources and popular magazines. *Planet Diana* aims to “bridge the gap between flash journalism and the careful scholarly reflection that cultural studies can offer in our attempts to understand” the death of Diana“ (p. v).

The editors’ “alias,” Re:Public, which intentionally resembles the subject line of an email message, designates “a critical space at the intersection of journalism and academic writing” (p. vii). The goals of Re:Public are reflected in the methodology of the essays; in addition to citing academic journals and monographs, the contributors refer to email lists, newspapers and popular magazines, and the World Wide Web. Several of the writers also reflect on their own reactions to Diana’s death.

The book consists of twenty-nine relatively short commentaries, including an introductory essay. The diversity of opinion and the wide range of topics considered in *Planet Diana* are the book’s greatest strengths. The contributors, most of whom are Australian academics, articulate diverse perspectives on the death of Princess Diana and the subsequent global mourning. Among the topics discussed are the role of the press in shaping Diana’s public image, Diana’s impact on the future of the British monarchy, her relationship to femi-

nism and women’s identification with her, the reaction of her “constituency” of marginalized people, her role as a gay icon, her canonization by public figures and the media, and the “global mourning” of her death. Particularly in light of the number of issues analyzed by the contributors to *Planet Diana*, the book’s quick production is to be commended.

However, the theoretical rationale for the swift publication of *Planet Diana* also raises questions. The “critical space” between journalism and academic writing theorized by Ang implies a critical difference between the two, and, in general, journalism and academic writing are quite different in purpose, methods, and audience. However, newspapers and popular magazines do provide a critical space for cultural studies, particularly by public intellectuals. Furthermore, academic email discussion lists, some of which are cited in *Planet Diana*, offer an equivalent to “flash journalism.” Perhaps the critical space theorized by Re:Public already exists, at least potentially, on the Internet.

These are important questions to be addressed by publishers in the age of electronic media, but the burden of answering them should not be placed on Re:Public and *Planet Diana*. The collection is an important contribution to cultural studies. In *Planet Diana*, Re:Public has provided a framework for the academic study of the ramifications of the death of Princess Diana.

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