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*THE PRESIDENT IS DEAD:
AMERICAN NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY & THE NEW LONG JOURNALISM*

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In the past century, the daily American newspaper remade itself and, in the process, redefined journalism. Victorian newspapers displayed an arbitrary, sometimes disordered jumble of brief items; the import of each item went unremarked by its reporter; and the overall newspaper was loosely organized and arranged with little hierarchy. By the 1920s newspapers were beginning to array themselves according to topic and priority, so that their visual appearance amounted to a map of the social world.

The transformation in presentation did not occur without a corresponding change in the style of reporting. Traditionally, the job of reporters was authorial. They presented a visually specific account of events, emphasizing the who, what, when, and where of the news. After the turn of the century, however, they traded in the role of author for that of expert. They began to concentrate more on the why of the news, shuffling off detailed visual description in favor of interpretation.

Although not usually viewed from this perspective, the entry of photography into the newspaper occurred in parallel with the overall shift in newspaper form and meaning. We propose a close examination of news reports and pictures over time to show whether, just as reporters turned away from detailed visual description, photographs began to take over that function.

This study explores the role of news photography from these two perspectives. It tracks the various trends and phases in the introduction of pictures and examines the mutual redefinition of picture and text as one aspect of the development of the new journalism of interpretation.

previous studies

In our previous research we identified shifts in newspaper design as an aspect of changing journalistic styles and meanings of the newspaper (Barnhurst & Nerone, 1991). Newspaper design moved through three distinct periods during the century, beginning with the Victorian form already mentioned, passing through a period of experimentation, and finally reaching its modern form as a social map. The late nineteenth century corresponded to the era of Victorian newspapers. The period of transformation was well along in the early decades of the twentieth century, and the fullness of modernism had arrived by the 1940s (Nerone & Barnhurst, 1995).

Over the same period, journalistic styles moved to longer and more explanatory formats (Barnhurst, 1991). This new long journalism was the trend in news reporting away from the description of events, and toward what various scholars describe as analytic, interpretive, or thematic coverage (Steele & Barnhurst, 1996; Hallin, 1994; Patterson, 1993; Graber, 1993; Iyengar, 1991; Schudson, 1982). Observers have noted the trend for both television news and newspapers in both long- and short-term studies. They have also measured the phenomenon in newspaper reporting on a variety of news topics, not only politics (the coverage most often studied) but also crime, employment, and accident stories (Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997).

The long journalism shifted the emphasis to groups instead of individuals and relied more on the authority of outside experts. Journalists became less concerned with reporting the event itself than with explaining it by referring to other time periods, most often historical. Stories expanded in their geographical purview, referring less often to a particular place such as a street address and more often to larger regions. News emphasized the how and why over the who, what, and when of events (Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997).

The evolving newspaper also was a prime site in the invention and emergence of news pictures. The history of photojournalism has had many retellings, principally by photojournalists themselves but also by art historians and critics and as a footnote to larger histories of photography. These have been summarized elsewhere (Barnhurst, 1994).

The most common account underlines technology, the slow progress of inventors and scientists toward two creations: the portable camera and the halftone. A small camera capable of working at high speed with ambient light became the prime tool of the photojournalist. The halftone, as a physical means to translate the continuous tones of the photograph into the solid blacks and whites, became the tool of newspaper publishers. In this story, all roads lead to the modern form of photojournalism. The visual side of the press goes largely ignored before the two technologies of pictures emerged; pre-photographic visual reproduction is viewed as a stunted or embryonic stage of photojournalism.

In a more-sensitive telling, the history identifies three periods. The first was typographic culture, in which newspaper editors misunderstood pictures as versions of paintings and resisted their entry into news pages (Hicks, 1952). To be reproduced, photographic images first had to be remade by engravers, who inhabited a stratum below painters in the hierarchy of pictorial art.

The second period accompanied the emergence of the graphic newspapers, such as the *Mirror* in London, the *Daily Graphic* in New York, and *ABC* in Madrid, around the turn of the century. Journalism of the era established a sort of apartheid, in which text and pictures co-existed as separate but (perhaps) equal content (Baynes, 1971). During this period halftones became a practical reality, although the pictures usually could capture only a single shot of static scenes or people in stiff poses (as the large cameras and explosive flashes required). For publication, pictures were corralled into their own neighborhoods by mounds of frothy lines, borders, and decorations.

Modern photojournalism, the third period, emerged by the 1930s as pictures gained the status of content, fully integrated into the journalistic enterprise. Newspapers bragged about their pictures, the latest and newest, in the same way they trumpeted their news scoops. New cameras allowed candid photography to capture action and emotion, and these became the primary values of news pictures (Szarkowski, 1966). The photograph gained respect as seemingly objective documents, and editors would no longer permit retouching or decorating the image.

The emergence of modern photojournalism thus paralleled the emergence of streamlined modern press pages. As front pages came to feature fewer, longer stories that were more often in an explanatory mode, the pictures in a newspaper also increased in size and narrative impact. And as reporters effaced themselves in objective news accounts, pictures also acquired an aura of objectivity, as if they were unauthored.

We might speculate, then, that the emergence of long journalism and the development of photojournalism were mutually dependent. Photojournalists came to depict events in apparent immediacy, depriving reporters of much of their authorial function and freeing them to become experts and explainers.

This study seeks to explore this relationship between text and image. Did verbal descriptions of scenes, actors, and events decline as news photography emerged and acquired the capability to

show places and persons in action? Through what forms and styles of presentation did pictures evolve in relation to the changing mission of journalism?

m e t h o d s

News photography developed in newspaper markets where two broad categories of newspapers reigned. Typically, photography was introduced into a particular market by an innovative newspaper, often a start-up, often part of a chain (the Hearst newspapers were especially important). These photographic pioneers were often more demotic in character than their older competitors. The competitors would respond to the invasion of the market by adopting some of the techniques of the invader and adjusting some of their other practices. They might, for example, begin to use photographs and then slowly adjust their reportage.

To observe both sides of journalism over time, we selected one daily newspaper from each: the inevitable *New York Times* and the more interesting *Chicago Daily News*. The period began with the late nineteenth century. The *Times*, once even grayer, was notable throughout the period for completeness of coverage as well as for stylistic conservatism. The *Daily News*, somewhat less voluminous, was more innovative, especially in illustrations. It was demotic, whereas the *Times* aimed for an elite readership. Any patterns of change common to these contrasting newspapers likely occurred throughout the news media.

Our study examined news coverage of presidential deaths in office, an opportune choice because such deaths occurred at regular intervals: James A. Garfield in 1881, William McKinley in 1901, Warren G. Harding in 1922, Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944, and John F. Kennedy in 1963. Unlike inaugurations and other political or state occasions that have been studied, presidential deaths come closer to the core definition of news: the unexpected and startling as against the routine.

Although the old, event-centered journalism was imaginative and engaging, reporters did not hold modern notions of objectivity based on facts. They sometimes told stories as if they witnessed them when they did not. The Victorian newspaper paid little attention to sources, attribution, and the notion of verifiability. Choosing to examine the deaths of presidents avoided the difficulty of truthfulness and reliability of the reports. Journalists confronted events of great historical moment, much too important to treat lightly or with too much invention, regardless of their practices for less important stories.

The death of a sitting president, this biggest news imaginable, inspires the most comprehensive reporting by the best available correspondents and artists, who cover developments in the greatest possible detail. At the same time, the deaths occur on what might be described as a beat — and the most important one at that. The news media are sure to be there ahead of time, resources in place to cover events fully.

In another sense the death of a president in office might seem a counterintuitive example for examining change. The oldest, most senior staffers would also be the least likely to adopt new styles and definitions of reporting. Subject matter of such weight and seriousness would tend to dampen innovation, encouraging reporters to resort to the tried-and-true. As news events, the deaths provide the most understated, conservative estimate of the process of change.

Reporting on presidential deaths is highly comparable over a long period. Events follow a standard story line. Each death, whether by assassination or by natural causes, features similar characters: a grieving widow, a team of doctors, a cabinet, a successor. Each puts these characters through similar paces: the swearing in of the successor, an elaborate funeral, the journey to a final resting place. Each death motivates reflection on the past — the dead president's career and

previous presidential deaths — as well as anticipation for changes in the personnel and policies of the federal government. Each offers the occasion for representing the people: the people in the business districts of cities, hearing and telling the news; the people bordering the streets to witness the procession; the people lining the railroad tracks to watch the funeral train go by; the people pausing in the middle of their daily routines, stunned by grief, eager to touch greatness, morbid with desire to see the presidential corpse.

In sum, the death of a president is shocking and devastating. It happens at the epicenter of journalism, raising all sorts of fears and doubts about the security of society and the continuity of the nation. It demands a seriousness and thoroughness from journalists, who record each detail as faithfully as possible, fully conscious of history. The event follows consistent dramatic tableaux. It is unmatched as moment to contemplate the meanings, purposes, and definitions of journalism.

Our study focuses narrowly on the life of the story, from the first report of the president in danger to the “final resting place.” In the case of Garfield, that was too long. Months of inept doctoring intervened between his shooting by disgruntled office-seeker Charles Guiteau and his actual death. Fortunately, as newspapers grew thicker and more fulsome, the story’s life abbreviated. FDR and JFK died suddenly and were buried quickly.

Even in a study limited to two newspapers over relatively short periods of time at roughly twenty year intervals, a mountain of coverage remained. Our final analysis included more than a thousand pages of text and hundreds of images. We entered the material from two perspectives, text and images. Through the images, we examined the trajectory of form over the period and its presentation of the emerging stock narrative of events. This perspective revealed the ways pictures interacted with the surrounding text. Through the text, we examined recurring visual motifs in the stories themselves. These motifs led back to the images as the relationship of text to pictures changed over time and between newspapers.

t h e v e r b a l r e p o r t s

Within the overall shift from the authorial to the expert voice, reporters began to de-emphasize some forms and adopt others. Nothing disappeared entirely from their repertoires, at least in the case of so important a story. In fact, the ritual and momentous nature of a presidential death seemed to inspire journalists to look toward the past and dust off older forms of reporting. Nevertheless, clear patterns of change are apparent.

At the outset, the variety of description and relation was all relatively lay. The reporter aimed to describe events so that readers could place themselves at the scene of the action. Reporters tended to notice things a reader would notice and find significant, and they tried to convey the emotional force of these significant details. Reports of presidential deaths emphasized dramaturgy, demeanor, and visual detail. Long narratives were frequently constructed like scenes from a novel, with extended descriptions of the faces and emotional states of key figures and lengthy catalogs of, say, the people present at a scene or the floral arrangements around the catafalque. One particular way of relating detail, walking description, gave an account of the visual impact of a scene as told by an observer strolling around it. This form was used to describe the mourning scenes in city streets, for instance.

Over time, much of this initial repertoire fell into disuse. Detailed descriptions of floral arrangements became redundant in the age of the photograph, as did descriptions of the emotional state of the widow. Dramaturgy and walking description, along with the stance of the author, declined as well. These narrative modes did not advance the role of the expert analyst that reporters adopted.

For a time, breaking news became formless. In some *New York Times* reporting and much of the *Chicago Daily News* coverage by the turn of the century, breaking stories consisted simply of a pile of Associated Press bulletins arranged in reverse chronological order. One example concerning McKinley's "sinking spell" entered into the lore of the *Times*: Tommy Bracken, a night clerk working in the newsroom long after the reportorial staff had left the building, put together an overnight report from A.P. dispatches. "Tommy and the composing room and the pressroom crews worked until daylight, adding A.P. matter as fast as it came in. They put out three editions, all told, before sunup" (Berger 1951, 141). The anecdote illustrates a relatively unedited manner of reporting breaking news, a raw updating that disappeared into television coverage in the 1960s, as newspapers yielded the function of alerting the people.

Instead, reporters increasingly used the form of news analysis. They probed the implications of events surrounding the death of the president, usually by means of quoting experts or officials. Such news often used the future tense and typically ran under a byline. The story engaged readers not by putting them at the scene of action but by supplying the tools needed to imagine the truth behind the facts, the structure underlying action. In consequence, certain tasks redounded to the photographer: describing physical appearances, conveying emotional states, and supplying dramaturgy. These all share the present tense. Photography also took on much of the memory function of news. One tool could not only crystallize current events — abbreviate them for memory — but also relate past events (merely by reprinting): photographs.

t h e v i s u a l r e p o r t s

Photography of the period changed in several dimensions. The scale of the images grew over time in relation to the page size and columns. The number of images grew dramatically as well. The images became more timely, both in the sense of the age of the image and in the sense of the delay to publication. The immediate context given the photograph also changed, with the growth of captions, the rise of photographer and agency credits, and the emphasis on the photograph as a photograph. The decoration around the photos increased, then vanished altogether as these other contextual cues emerged. With the numbers of pictures increasing, the relations among photographs also became more complex and elaborated. Finally, shots generally shifted toward the close-up.

These changes emerge most clearly in the portraits or "mug shots" of the deceased presidents. The two newspapers studied follow a similar pattern, with the *New York Times* lagging behind (usually by one president) the changes at the *Chicago Daily News*. For simplicity's sake, this section describes only the *Daily News* portraits of presidents. At the time of Garfield's death, his portrait appeared several days after the event, paired with the picture of his successor. No other images of any sort ran in the subsequent coverage. In contrast, McKinley appeared in the same stock picture three times. Harding's image ran on the first day of coverage and continued to appear in various shots. Each president thereafter followed the pattern of Harding: appearing in portrait on the first day the story broke and taking the primary position at first, with his picture higher, larger, or closer to page one but with the passage of news days losing importance relative to images of the new president.

The numbers and sizes of portraits grew gradually. Garfield appeared only once, in a picture smaller than two square columns. By the end of the period, Kennedy appeared in five portraits, the largest running across four columns. The type of image entering the stream of coverage also changed. The early portraits were stock pictures of the same sort used routinely as campaign icons, much like the souvenir engraved portraits that street hawkers sold of the dead president. Harding's coverage began a pattern of showing portraits of the president as a young man. This trend reached its apotheosis in the *Daily News* in 1944 with a series of eight mug shots illustrating how

Roosevelt had aged. By FDR's death the pictures had taken on a different quality, appearing more as personality studies than as generic icons.

Photography took the foreground as the newspaper emphasized the freshness or exclusiveness of its coverage. This first appeared after the death of Harding, when the *Daily News* announced that its portrait of the president in youth was "previously unpublished." With Roosevelt's death, the paper ran the "Last Picture of F.D.R." and did the same again with Kennedy's death. In both cases the newspaper advertised on page one that its interior included full pages of pictures. The Kennedy coverage included a remarkable photograph of school children gathered before a teacher and a page of the *Daily News* bearing a portrait of Kennedy. The teacher is teaching the young to mourn through the mediation of the newspaper.

Beginning with the side-by-side portraits, Garfield on the left and his successor on the right, the *Daily News* photography took on greater narrative work. The ordering and placement of the two pictures suggested the passage from time before to time after. McKinley appeared on page one whereas his successor, Theodore Roosevelt, followed on page five. By the death of Harding, the *Daily News* added a younger portrait along with a more recent one, and these ran with shots of the president in various settings and poses typifying his life. Here the representation invited the viewer to examine the before and after in light of the president's life record — an elaborate narrative task. The full pages of pictures used in the Roosevelt and Kennedy coverage surrounded the portrait (usually quite large) with even more images from specific stories relating the events of the death, the funeral, or the earlier career. Photography then carried a replete narrative load.

In sum, the portraits from the *Daily News* illustrate several moves: from small to larger, from posed and static to active and "candid," from artsy-decorative contexts to journalistic ones, and from simple to complex and detailed narratives. The tasks the photograph undertook were by and large those left off by the textual report. To the timeless portrait and label, pictures and their captions added other elements drawn from the present tense of breaking news. At the same time, photography also adapted in ways parallel to the text. Both contributed to the overall redefinition of news, expanding its purview to include history, memory, and complex narrative relations that implied an interpretation through juxtaposing images. Photography began the period as another item in the newspaper cornucopia. It ended elsewhere, occupying a firm place in the map of news content, differentiated from text in essential ways but also bearing a family resemblance to other components of the modernist newspaper.

Visual Motifs in Text & Pictures

The process of change did not occur independently in either the text or the image but emerged from the interaction of the two. Reading the photography together with the accompanying text made several motifs immediately apparent.

One was the cross-country train ride. The tradition began with Abraham Lincoln and continued for all but one of the deaths in office. Garfield and McKinley died after being shot and doctored in Washington and Buffalo, respectively. They had funerals in Washington, then went by train to northern Ohio for burial. Harding, also an Ohioan, carried the train ride to extremes. He died in San Francisco, traveled to Washington in a cross-country marathon, and then went on to Ohio. All three took the same route from Washington across the mountains and mining country of West Virginia through the manufacturing region around Pittsburgh and into the rolling cornfields of Ohio. Roosevelt died in Warm Springs, Georgia, had a quick ceremony in Washington, and then took the train ride to New York State for burial in Hyde Park. Kennedy, breaking the tradition, flew directly to Washington for burial across the Potomac in Arlington.

Other common motifs were the grieving widow, the team of doctors, and the body of the president. The spouse of any president automatically becomes a public figure, but always of a particular kind: an icon of spousehood, required to live out the dominant notions of what a woman of her class ought to be. Especially at the point of death, the widows, while scrutinized and storified, have typically remained mute. By contrast, the team of doctors speaks with authority. Notably, the president's personal life, although always thickly populated, is represented in death by the lone figure of the wife, while his lonely body is represented through the multiple voices of a medical team. The doctors insert their expert vision into the public gaze, for which the president's corpse and his widow's grief are twinned objects.

The oath of office is yet another motif. In every case, the administration of the oath is dramatic, especially in contrast to the festive and elaborate ritual that typically accompanies the president's Inauguration. The fact that the oath of office in such cases is an emergency measure makes it all the more exciting. Unlike death, which must occur in presidential surroundings, swearing in a successor can happen anywhere. Teddy Roosevelt, who succeeded McKinley, was hiking in the Adirondacks when the news came and took the oath after a hurried trip to Buffalo. Calvin Coolidge, who succeeded Harding, was sworn in at the family farm in Vermont by his father, who happened to be a notary public.

A final motif might be called the news of the news. In each case, the story was itself another story: the way the news spread like a contagion through the public, the way the news people covered it. Ironically, while the observer disappeared from the news report, the news people made of themselves yet another story. These motifs provide opportunities for divining what tasks the news in its various manifestations was expected to perform.

t h e v i e w f r o m t h e g r a s s y k n o l l

A stricken president is always a big story. In 1881 the shooting of Garfield was told as an eyewitness account, full of dramatic detail. Similarly in 1901, when anarchist Leon Czolgosz shot McKinley, an anonymous report in the *New York Times*, typical of the reporting style in that era, described the action after the shots rang out:

There was an instant of almost complete silence, like the hush that follows a clap of thunder. The President stood stock still, a look of hesitancy, almost of bewilderment, on his face. Then he retreated a step while a pallor began to steal over his features. The multitude seemed only partially aware that something serious had happened.

Then came a commotion ("President Shot at Buffalo Fair: How the Deed was Done," 7 Sept., 1.)

In this typical piece of reportage, the story is told like a story. It flows in a narrative from beginning to end, following the sequence of events, at least after a brief summary lead. It is, moreover, written with the same range of observation found in a novel. The reporter feels free to report authoritatively the mental and emotional states not just of the crowd but of the President himself. To bolster his assessment, the reporter records the details of demeanor, such as McKinley's pallor, with the confidence of a novelist on one hand and an eyewitness on the other. The fulsomeness of detail in this four-column report implies at every point a reporter physically present and quite near the president at the moment of the shooting.

This kind of reporting has a clear task in mind: to recreate the scene of the crime for readers. Doing so is a subjective venture: the reporter offers an experience of events for the reader's appropriation. The report could not work if reporters limited themselves to verifiable facts and sourced observations. No way exists to verify "a look of hesitancy" or the multitude's merely

partial awareness of the gravity of the moment. The reporter is telling the reader that this is what *the reporter* observed. Giving readers a compendium of others' observations would not have recreated the event for them, although a reporter might think that he or she was supplying the raw information to do so.

By contrast, the deathbed descriptions show the limitations of the fact-telling mode. Reporters actually witnessed none of the deaths, though they were always nearby, and always in a pack. Here, an anonymous eyewitness tells the story of Garfield's death:

Long Branch, Sept. 19. — At 10:35 o'clock, Dr. Boynton was sitting in the office of the Elberon Hotel talking with some newspaper men about the case. Suddenly a man's form appeared at the side-door and beckoned to the Doctor, who sprang to his feet and went outside. He returned in a minute and said, "The President is now sinking very rapidly." At the same time throwing up his hands with an expressive motion. A dispatch was instantly sent to the West End Hotel, and in less than a minute 40 carriages filled with newspaper correspondents were dashing through the darkness in the direction of the Elberon. Hardly had Dr. Boynton disappeared than Capt. Ingalls, the commander of the guard, ran across the lawn. . . . In the meantime the newspaper men had swarmed into the hotel. For a short period they were compelled to remain in suspense. Then, at 10:33, Mr. Warren Young, the Executive Secretary, appeared. . . . He was surrounded by the eager crowd, whom he scattered like chaff by the announcement, "It's all over. He is dead." Back at break neck pace the carriages flew over the shockingly bad road, and in less than five minutes a hundred dispatches were flashing the news to all parts of the country and the world. ("The First News of the Event: How the Newspaper Correspondents Got the Announcement," *Times*, September 20, 1881, 1)

The story available for first-hand report consists of little more than "they told us this and we ran there, then they told us that and we ran back here so we could tell you." Their physical absence did not prevent reporters from trying to recreate the deathbed scene with the same dramaturgy as a first-hand account, but they had to rely on others for details. The same *Times* correspondent described the death scene in a verbatim transcript of the doctors' press conference and followed up with a catalog of the people present, including an unattributed quotation from one of them:

Mrs. Garfield sat in a chair shaking convulsively, and with tears pouring down her cheeks, but uttering no sound. After a while she arose, and taking hold of her dead husband's arm, smoothed it up and down. Poor little Mollie threw herself upon her father's shoulder on the other side of the bed and sobbed as if her heart would break. Everybody else was weeping slightly.

Unlike the stories of the initial attack, these deathbed scenes did not usually succeed as dramatic accounts for two reasons. Not being present at the time, the reporters had to piece together the event from various sources and therefore had trouble conveying the experience of a first-hand observer. In this example, the source, expected to describe everyone's actions, does give a fairly compelling rendition of two of the actors, Mrs. Garfield and her granddaughter Mollie, but leaves everyone else "weeping slightly." The *Chicago Daily News* report of Garfield's death ("It Is Ended: The Death-Bed," September 20, 1881, 1) used contrasting excerpts from the *Times* and the *New York Herald*, consisting primarily of a catalog of those present: family and cabinet members, servants and doctors. This is only the cast. When it comes time to set the cast in motion, all they do is watch.

Even physical presence may not have allowed the reporter to overcome the banality of these deaths. All death is banal, but these deathbed scenes were extraordinarily lacking in drama or

meaning. The dying presidents themselves said nothing memorable. Garfield's dying words were, "It hurts." McKinley, according to the *Daily News*, said, "Good-by all, good-by! It is God's way! His will be done!" before lapsing into incoherent mutterings, thought to be snatches of the hymn "Nearer My God to Thee." (Staff Correspondent, "Whole Nation in Grief," *Extra*, September 13, 1901, 1). Harding, who died while his wife was reading to him from an article full of praise for his leadership, uttered these un-memorable dying words: "That's good. Go on. Read some more." (Associated Press, "Death of President Comes Suddenly as Wife Reads to Him," *Daily News*, August 3, 1923, 1, 3.) FDR, who usually rose to the occasion, managed only, "I have a terrific headache" (Associated Press, "Last Words: I Have a Terrific Headache," *Times*, April 13, 1944, 1.)

In the Kennedy assassination, the photographic images of the shooting along with the endless simultaneous television coverage displaced the first-hand authored account. The moment of death was captured and conveyed first in photographs and then in stills from Abraham Zapruder's film. These canonical shots were perhaps not as lucid as one might suppose. They are not as graphic as the verbal descriptions of bystanders, for instance; nor are they as compelling as the photographic images of the various funeral observances to follow.

Moreover, while the photographic images displaced the verbal, they did not eliminate it. Both the *Times* and the *Daily News* reports of Kennedy's death were full of eyewitness accounts, by both reporters and bystanders. These carefully label the observer's subjectivity so as not to be authorial in the old sense. The stance of omniscience was reserved for the objective report. The single most gripping piece is an omniscient, objective account of the emergency room action when the president was brought in. The reporter was not in the room and does not proclaim an authorial presence, but in the best tradition of objective narrative composes a story full of drama and action, culminating in the tragic moment when the First Lady bids the body good-bye:

Electrodes from the machine were attached to Mr. Kennedy's left arm. But the green pinpoint of light on the scope did not waver the tiniest fraction of an inch. . . .

Mrs. Kennedy stood up. Two White House aides stood on either side of her. She walked toward the cart where her husband lay. The aides stayed outside.

At the foot of the cart, Mrs. Kennedy stopped. The President's feet were flush with the end of the cart, uncovered by the sheet that had been pulled over his face.

Mrs. Kennedy reached out, touched the right foot then bent down and kissed it. Then she walked along the cart and stood by the President's right shoulder. . . .

The priest turned the sheet down.

Mrs. Kennedy bent over and kissed her husband's right cheek. Then she picked up his right hand, held it in both of hers, and pressed it to her left cheek resting it on her husband's chest her head on it, as the priest intoned, in Latin, the last rites. (Bruce Miller, UPI, "Team of 15 Doctors Strove to Save Kennedy at the Hospital," *Times*, November 30, 1963, 10.)

This story gets told so well because of the authority of doctors. Because the setting is medical, the aura of science provides an incontestable verity despite the story's absurdity — all the action performed on a body that all of the doctors agreed had already died before they started. The medical setting also allowed the detachment necessary to convey such intimate details.

Doctors were present as interpreters or exhibitors of the president's corpse in all these deaths. In Garfield's case, the illness was so protracted that the team of doctors, quoted on a daily basis, became well known, almost like O.J. Simpson's legal team. So naturalized was the medical discourse that it comes as a shock to read a simple eyewitness description of the corpse:

The body is so greatly shrunken that artificial means had to be resorted to to give the clothes an appearance of fitting. In addition to the natural shrinking from his illness, the operations connected with the autopsy has left the body in an even more emaciated state. A plaster cast was taken of his face yesterday, as well as of his right hand. In taking the cast of the hand it was somewhat discolored, so that his hand will not be seen. The effect of the oil used upon the face prior to taking the cast disfigured the features somewhat, and slightly altered the color of the face, so that the appearance is very much less natural. ("The Last View," from the *New York Evening Post*, in *Chicago Daily News*, September 21, 1881, 1.)

The reports about McKinley's corpse also featured remarks on decomposition. By contrast, the presence of doctors allows one to forget that a corpse is gruesome. In the more recent deaths reporters refrained from describing the corpse. In Kennedy's case, reports repeatedly referred to his living appearance — his youth and vigor, his smile and stride. In the emergency room story, JFK is just a body made available for observation by doctors. The real drama comes from the evocative description of the very much alive Jacqueline Kennedy hailing this body as a dead person.

t h e g r i e v i n g w i d o w

In all the deaths, reporters paid unwholesome attention to the First Widow. They anatomized her grief for the edification of the nation, applying the same values over time. She underwent scrutiny for the proper balance of emotion and self-control. Expected to grieve, even to make a display of grief, she also had to maintain composure and conduct the complicated funeral arrangements with skill and grace. Ida McKinley was too emotional. Weakened by a recent illness, under medical care, and thoroughly drugged, she could not fully participate in the funeral activities. Florence Harding, perhaps, and Eleanor Roosevelt, certainly, were too controlled. Roosevelt's obsequies were too abbreviated and Harding's too protracted for optimal grief. Anyone presiding over a four-thousand-mile funeral train ride with her husband's corpse would pace her grieving too slow. In the middle of a world war, FDR's corpse could not be gotten out of the way quickly enough. Jackie, though, was just right: the most beautiful, the most capable, and the most tragic of the widows.

Reporters' attention to decorum seems indecorous. In the earlier deaths, they sounded like gossips describing the widow — not common gossips but especially pompous and disingenuous ones. Here is the *Times* on Mrs. McKinley:

For an hour this morning she remained watching the body. . . . During that hour she gave herself up wholly to her grief. While the short funeral service was progressing in the Milburn home, although she remained in her room surrounded by members of the family and friends, her paroxysms of grief were pitiful, and her lamentations almost unceasing. . . .

Secretary Cortelyou, when asked by a reporter for the *New York Times* this evening whether there was any truth in the oft-repeated statement that Mrs. McKinley had become to a certain extent mentally irresponsible through the administration of drugs and opiates, replied, "It is an infamous lie." (Special to the *New York Times*, "Mrs. McKinley's Grief Is Uncontrollable," September 16, 1901, 2)

The reporter asked a question on the order of the old saw: "And have you stopped beating your wife yet?" As intrusive as this scrutiny seems to today's reader, it was every bit as proper in its context as descriptions of floral arrangements and decomposing corpses, and arguably less intrusive than the camera's eye.

Later reports were less moralizing and less intimate. Although one can read between the lines that reporters considered Mrs. Roosevelt too cool a widow, they clearly did not scrutinize her grief

in the same way they scrutinized Mrs. McKinley's. Similarly, Mrs. Kennedy was incessantly photographed and equally copiously described, with constant reference to her fortitude and dignity, and provided a conduit for the nation's grief. But the reporters did not gossip. The emergency room story, quoted above, gives an account of her actions that is heart-rending yet does not pry into her psyche. It simply registers a series of ascertainable facts. The pictures were the gossips, but the pictures were not as eloquent.

There appear to be six categories of pictures or picture content of the widows. The first to emerge was the portrait. Mrs. McKinley was first represented in portrait in the *Chicago Daily News*, once (next to the president's portrait) when news broke of his being shot and then again (next to her successor as First Lady) when he died. A portrait of Mrs. Harding appeared once in the *Times*, alongside Grace Coolidge on an interior page. The *Daily News* also published a close-up of her, taken from a file story rather than a formal medium shot in portrait style.

Portraits appear to have a conservative or traditional place as icons of the women in their official roles. Thus they disappeared from the *Daily News* but continued on in the *Times* until Mrs. Roosevelt, who on the first day of coverage appeared in a page-four studio shot — the last formal portrait of a First Widow. Portraits thereafter gave way to action shots in news style, such as the close-up of Mrs. Kennedy at the moment she received the folded flag from the coffin (*Times*, November 25, 1963, 3).

A second, much more important, kind of imagery showed the First Lady accompanying her husband during the events leading up to his death. It first emerged during *Daily News* coverage of McKinley in the form of a September 13, 1901, sketch of his wife leaving the Milburn residence in Buffalo after he appeared to be surviving the assassination attempt. Such images became stock coverage with the death of Harding. His wife appeared in the Rotogravure section of the *Times* on August 5, 1923, in half a dozen shots of their trip to Alaska, the strain of which was blamed for his falling ill. The *Daily News* also ran two of the shots on August 3. It was by far the most extensive visual representation of the First Lady in any of the deaths until Kennedy's, when his wife appeared again and again in pictures of the limousine just before and after he was shot. These came first from the wire services, then a second wave came from the snapshots bystanders took, and a third wave came from the home movies acquired by *Life* magazine. A scattering of pictures also recorded her at a series of political events earlier the same day, in each case smiling with her husband or others.

The third kind of First Lady image illustrated stories of the presidents' political lives. Mrs. Harding appeared in shots with her husband campaigning as a candidate and also arriving at the Executive Mansion after the Inauguration (*Times*, August 3, 1923, 3). The *Daily News* showed Mrs. Roosevelt in a family shot as they traveled to Chicago, where FDR would accept his party's nomination. Mrs. Kennedy appeared in a *Times* portrait of JFK with his parents after winning election. She also appeared in a file picture of her husband's swearing in. Such pictures participated in the general move toward narrative in photojournalism, with the wives playing the role of minor characters or props in stories about rising a political star.

The fourth and most important pictorial coverage of the widow showed her during the various funeral rituals. This type of picture first ran in the *Times* coverage of Harding's burial in Ohio and provided the only current shot of Mrs. Roosevelt in either newspaper. The coverage of Mrs. Kennedy began as she accompanied the coffin to Washington. The *Times* showed her with the Johnsons; then boarding the hearse, her stockings still stained with blood; and finally with Robert Kennedy — all on the first day of coverage. In the *Daily News*, such images began when she appeared on Sunday, first accompanying her children outside the White House and then kneeling at the casket in the Rotunda (from normal and bird's-eye views). The *Times* showed these images as well as pictures of her with her children during the eulogy and later upon their leaving the

Capitol. The Monday funeral services and burial at Arlington saw her in various views in both newspapers, entering and leaving the Cathedral and standing at the graveside. The newspapers repeated each other, relying on images from wire services, and the *Daily News* repeated the image of her kneeling at the coffin — the first from United Press International, the second from the A.P.

The extent of coverage suggests the growing reliance on pictures for describing the grieving widow. The space given over to these images, which had already been seen in other papers, on television, and even in the newspaper's own pages, shows how central they were considered to the narrative. They also suggest that the invasive curiosity characterizing earlier reports in the text eventually got transferred into pictures. Photojournalists in their roles as paparazzi could capture every moment of Jackie's grief, every gesture and facial expression, seemingly without responsibility. The picture itself swallowed up any responsibility for humane treatment or respect for privacy.

Another, less important, type of image of the widow illustrated the personal life of the deceased president. This started late with the image of Mrs. Roosevelt at her wedding, which ran on page five the first day of the *Times* coverage in a group of pictures illustrating FDR's life. In the case of Mrs. Kennedy, both newspapers showed pictures of her on her wedding day. Both also published a more recent shot of her and the family at Easter. (These follow a longer tradition of showing the president in various intimate moments, with children or a family dog, for example.)

The sixth, and final, type of image showed the widow engaged in the political life of her husband's successor. These appeared only in the case of Mrs. Kennedy, who figured prominently in the pictures both newspapers ran of Lyndon B. Johnson swearing the oath of office in the airplane on the Dallas tarmac.

In general, then, the First Widow emerged slowly, first as an icon in portrait but quickly as an actor, present and witnessing the events leading up to her husband's death and then, most prominently and extensively, as the image of grieving. Pictorially, that role did not take on its full importance until the assassination of Kennedy.

when lilacs last

The funeral sequence following the President's death is always a journey through a national landscape. Usually it has been a physical journey through a geographical mosaic. In Kennedy's case there was no long train ride; still, the mosaic was represented as a kind of metaphorical journey. Lining the route are the people, and the funeral journey always calls for descriptions and depictions of the variety of people that, although increasingly divided by race, class, region, age, religion, and political persuasion, are united now by grief into one People.

In a sense, the reporting of a President's death was for a century an extended gloss on Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," written on the occasion of Lincoln's death. Here he depicts the breaking of the news:

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and the farmers preparing their
crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and the storms,)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children and
women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd, And the summer
approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labor,

And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its meals and minutia of daily usages,
And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the cities pent — lo, then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail, And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

Whitman begins and ends with the observer. In between, he builds a vast and varied landscape, a large and disparate social world, and a booming, throbbing economy — a naked nation with millions of stories now all interrupted by a cloud of death.

The same ingredients played in all the verbal descriptions of the presidential deaths. First, the initial news, striking like a thunderbolt, interrupts daily activity and hails everyone into the same story. With Garfield's and McKinley's deaths, newspapers were the prime media of diffusion. It was the custom for daily newspapers to maintain streetside bulletin boards where they could post the latest news. In the case of breaking news, street-vendors hawked issue after updated issue as extra editions. The following example places the newspaper itself at center stage when describing news of McKinley's death:

[news of the shooting] was duplicated on the bulletin board of the *New York Times*, and a few moments later on the boards of every journal on Newspaper Row. The casual passer-by glanced at it, stopped, rubbed his or her eyes, and read again. After that, like the shifting grains of sand in an eddying stream, the crowd gathered along Park Row . . . , and many hundreds hurried off to tell it to their fellows

A little later and the great down-town buildings began to empty their hordes of workers for the day, and then City Hall Square became a great sea of upturned faces, shifting and eddying in s struggle to get nearer the bulletin boards ("How the News Was Received in New York," September 7, 1901, 2.)

Here the faces are all the same, although the anonymous reporter does note women in the crowds. They flow like water — a sea of faces, an eddying stream. But they are faces — not until the Kennedy death did we find the crowds described as ants.

Newspapers at first positioned themselves as one with the people. Just as the people mourned and wore black, so too did newspapers. With Garfield the only visual evidence of grief was the turned column rules. These appeared only once in the *Daily News* and twice in the *Times*, when he died and when he was buried. The *Times* also composed one portion of text, the order of the funeral procession, in the shape of an urn. All these were particular or local expressions, as when an individual decided to wear a black arm band or a company draped its store front in black.

McKinley's death saw a change in the turned rules. They appeared only on the first day in the *Times* and not at all in the *Daily News*, replaced by other signs of mourning. At the *Times*, the heavy rules shifted to the page edges, becoming a thick border with rounded corners that ran for six consecutive days. The *Daily News* turned to decoration, showing the deceased surrounded by an elaborately drawn frame carrying representations of several objects: ears of wheat to symbolize ripe grain ready for the harvest (a sign of death drawn from the Bible), and the federal shields (the stars and stripes) to represent the national character of the life's service and of its mourning.

These signs slowly disappeared through the following presidential deaths. The *Daily News* used turned rules only on the day of Harding's death, and none of the decorative symbols appeared after McKinley. The *Times* likewise used turned rules throughout the edition announcing Harding's death. Since the time of Roosevelt, the heavy borders appeared, if at all, only surrounding the deceased's portrait. Instead, advertisers picked up the custom after Roosevelt died, some of them

enclosing their space in the *Times* in heavy mourning rules. A few included an “In Memoriam” message, but many announced that the store would close on the official day designated by presidential proclamation. The custom also persisted into the Kennedy era, although not universally. Many advertisements running next to coverage of Roosevelt’s death announced their cheery spring fashions and offers. The Kennedy coverage ran with similar advertising geared to the holidays. This sort of juxtaposition had always existed, but in the emerging social map of the modern newspaper, it provided a jarring reminder of the older form of news, with its unrelated elements jostling for space.

Over time, descriptions of the initial spread of the news changed with the media of diffusion. News of Harding’s death was the first heard by radio, and news of the Kennedy assassination via television. With each new medium, the spontaneous crowds of the era of contagious diffusion diminished further. In 1963 people learned of the assassination in a variety of private and semiprivate settings: in their homes and cars, in their offices and schoolrooms. This still left many non-spontaneous occasions for the people to assemble as spectators before the great national drama of mourning. Initially such gatherings were depicted as decentralized, the rites of mourning occurring all over. With Garfield’s assassination, major newspapers carried reports from every city in the nation. Over time that changed into a national audience watching events in Washington and perhaps in one or two secondary locations, and the grief of leading men replaced public expressions of mourning.

After Garfield’s and McKinley’s deaths, cities literally draped themselves in black, making a visible display of mourning. The black banners on buildings were foregrounded in verbal descriptions, through the technique of walking description. Here is how the *Daily News*, described Canton, Ohio, on the eve of McKinley’s burial:

In Tuscarawas Street, from one end to the other, business houses are hung heavy with crape and at intervals huge arches, draped and festooned in mourning colors, span the route of the procession

One of the arches is in front of the Canton high school The school is draped and in every window is a black-boarded portrait of the late president. In this thoroughfare, too, are two large churches, one of which was regularly attended by Maj. McKinley. . . . At each corner of the edifice and above the big cathedral are broad draperies deftly looped, each bearing a large white rosette. (Staff Correspondent, “Mourn in Home City,” September 18, 1901, 1.)

In walking description, a visible field is set in motion by the observer, who wanders around gathering impressions. This manner of reporting had a coherent and compelling visual impact. Engravings from photography do not really accomplish the same thing. Photographs of draped buildings, especially in a black and white halftone reproduction, have little immediacy. Sketches can do better, by both highlighting the significant (and not necessarily simultaneous) details and posing figures in didactic positions — marveling at the billowing crepe, for instance, in the engraving that accompanied the foregoing excerpt (“From a sketch made by a staff artist for *The Daily News*,” 2), or striking exaggerated postures with cartoon-like facial expressions as in “All Chicago Mourns” (*Daily News*, September 14, 1901, 2).

Over time, the mourning came to be depicted photographically, and symbols of mourning such as wreaths and floral arrangements became frequent subjects. For Harding’s death, the *Daily News* showed a floral arrangement along with a shot of a draped doorway (August 4, 1923, 3). The next day a wreath being sent by the city of Chicago got its own portrait, flanked by inset mug shots of the mayor and commissioner who would convey it to Washington. A *Daily News* picture during observances for Roosevelt showed flower arrangements piled around the casket (April 14, 1945, 8), just as during the Harding rituals.

These representations of grief eventually disappeared. No draped façades or doorways appeared prominently in photographs after FDR's death, which marked the last notable appearance of floral arrangements. In the Kennedy coverage, neither of these signs of mourning played a significant role. They appeared instead only as minor details in the background. Photos, although in some ways better than words for depicting grief, make poor substitutes for many of the other standard visual images in reporting. Photos cannot do walking description, for example. What photographs lacks is a moving locus of subjectivity.

The occasion for walking description became less compelling over time, as newsworthy mourning was redefined. In the early deaths it was decentralized, and the reaction of the people was the news. The local character of even national events gave impetus to walking description. News slowly abandoned the local definition of political life in favor of larger domains. Gradually, mourning became defined by the official statements of prominent men, clustered at first in the nation's capital — then often in the capitals of the world.

Increasingly, grief when an American chief executive died in office became internationalized. The deaths of Garfield and McKinley, especially, but also of Harding, inspired local stories and story angles with the pictorial coverage limited almost entirely to places such as Buffalo and Canton. The rise of American international power made the event a worldwide story, but the availability of photographs may also have held sway. Plenty of international responses appeared in the earlier textual coverage, but these moved into the pictures only after Roosevelt died. The *Times* showed three shots in a representative cluster: Churchill in London, several gendarmes in Paris, and a some "Filipino residents" gathered around a newspaper front page showing the news (April 14, 1945, 3).

The mourners who merit detailed pictures have always been important people, dignitaries usually shown in full-length images (long shots) upon their arrival or during their march in procession but sometimes shown in closer images from the waist up, with more facial detail (medium shots). Such imagery began in *Daily News* sketch art after McKinley died. Senators and cabinet members dominated the early pictures, but more international dignitaries appeared in pictures with each successive death in office.

The role grew for the military as intermediary in the public grief. An honor guard first appeared surrounding the catafalque in *Daily News* sketches of McKinley's rites (September 17, 1901, 1). The *Times* did the same thing photographically in coverage of Harding. The presence of the military became a dominant theme in pictures of Roosevelt. An honor guard and the pallbearers from military ranks figure among the multiplying signs of the president's role as commander-in-chief. The most notable, a riderless horse, first appeared in news coverage when Roosevelt died during wartime. This symbol (dating from the era of Ghangis Kahn, the newspapers said) commemorated the loss of a leader in battle. The horse (at one time killed and buried, according to news accounts, to accompany the fallen leader into the afterlife) was led riderless after the bier. Its stirrups carried the boots, turned backward, of the dead man, and his saber pierced the saddle. The symbolism made sense to reporters during World War II, and perhaps the mood of garrisoned cold war encouraged similar military imagery during the Kennedy coverage.

The way they deciphered this arcane historical knowledge also highlights the growing tendency of reporters to act as interpreters. The reliance on the military as the intermediary for public grieving arose as other aspects of the content in the new long journalism shifted away from the individual and toward institutions, groups, officials of every sort, and expert sources. These groupings in themselves provide a sort of interpretation, in the case of presidential deaths

suggesting a nation fortified against not only grief but also the danger grief represents to the continuity of the state.

Pictures helped forward the move toward symbolic groupings. The public itself appeared in crowds almost exclusively at first. The *Daily News* showed them in Buffalo as McKinley's body was removed to Washington: the masses, the streetscape, the military officiating (September 17, 1901, 4). Crowds appeared in Washington at the rotunda and procession, and finally at the cemetery. The *Times* picked up this approach later, as it covered Harding, showing crowds in Ohio and Washington (August 11, 1923, 2), as well as along the train route (August 12, 3–4). With the death of Roosevelt, the *Times* began to show a representative mix of crowds. In one cluster of four shots, crowds stood for geographies, gathered at Warm Springs, Georgia, and Hyde Park, New York. Crowds in local coverage likewise represented places. In New York City, where Uptown and Downtown, East Side and West, differ in the social geography, the *Times* selected various groups in sundry locations, such as a memorial service Seventh Avenue. The *Daily News* showed some of the same wire service crowd scenes, along with the usual throngs at the Capitol and along Constitutional Avenue in Washington. Such shots continued without much change in the Kennedy coverage.

As verbal reporting abandoned the ordinary person identified by name alone and began identifying people by demographic affiliation, pictures took over some representations of people, but at the same time identified individuals increasingly as group representatives. The images of citizens mourning document the process. Although most mourning was accomplished through medium and long shots of dignitaries (setting aside for now the special case of the widow), medium and close shots of ordinary people emerged slowly over the period, beginning with coverage of Roosevelt. Newspapers sought to illustrate how the masses felt the death personally, and so besides showing mourning acts en masse, they began choosing emblematic examples of the personal loss. In the *Daily News* these examples took on two forms. The first pictured a group of college students, with each individual fully identified in the caption and with each face clearly visible (April 12, 1945, 9). This form of representation, emphasizing the personal identity and grief of ordinary citizens, occurred only with the death of Roosevelt. A second form hid the identity of the emblematic individuals. In the next day's coverage, after showing the crowds around the Capitol, the *Daily News* ran a medium shot of several women from the crowd (3–4). Of the two clearly visible, one covers her face with her hand, and the other wears an engulfing hat. The caption did not identify either beyond the phrase "women weep openly" and a reference to the crowd. This kind of generalizing of personal grief became the norm for pictures of ordinary mourners.

The *Times* did not pick up the practice until Kennedy's death. On the first day of coverage, it showed in close up "a woman" mourning, her hand over her face, with no accompanying identification (November 24, 1963, 5). On the second day it showed a Harvard student, weeping into his hands, on the steps before a crowd leaving the campus memorial service (11). In subsequent coverage, the *Times* showed medium shots of commuters, of black children, of nuns, and of Catholic boys — all with emblematic expressions and gestures of grieving, but none identified beyond the group affiliation. The *Daily News* took the form even further, running a stack of seven pictures on the first day, all uncaptioned — mostly women with their hands over their faces or comforting one another (5). The full column of images formed a chimney of grief bearing the headline, "And his people wept . . ." In early coverage, the text described men weeping openly and copiously. As grief moved from the text into pictures of the public, usually only women, children, and students appeared in the act of breaking down in tears.

The same process also occurred in verbal descriptions of the people. Besides being described as crowds, they now became described also as individuals occasionally, given voices but not names. In general they remained a category:

At a crowded bar-lunch room at State and Kinzie Streets, laborers from a nearby construction project gasped as the announcement of the death came over a radio.

A husky Negro workman knocked a glass of whiskey from the bar, said "for God's sake," and rushed out the door.

Women at a table burst into tears. All was silent except for the radio announcer's voice. (Special to the *New York Times*, "People Across U.S. Voice Grief and Revulsion," November 23, 1963, 11)

More and more, of course, reporters put themselves in the place of the public, either by writing of the reaction of the press corps (as in Tom Wicker's "Kennedy and Reporters," *Times*, November 24, 1963, 12) or by writing of their personal responses.

t h e c i r c l e u n b r o k e n

The oath as a moment of action could not get pictured until the advent of portable cameras in the 1920s and 1930s. That sort of candid shot did not represent any of the presidential deaths until Roosevelt. Newspapers could have shown the oath in sketch art but did not. This interesting omission suggests that the oath did not become an icon until recently.

Until FDR's death, then, the oath of office had been described verbally and was a pre-eminent occasion for dramaturgy. When McKinley died, Teddy Roosevelt, his vice-president and a famous outdoorsman, was hunting in the Adirondacks. Messengers tracked him down and hustled him to Buffalo, the city where McKinley had been shot and where, after six days of counterproductive medical attention, he had died. There, in a private home, Roosevelt took the oath:

It was in the subdued light that filtered through cathedral windows in the great front parlor of Ansley Wilcox's home at 641 Delaware avenue that President Roosevelt bowed his head and said: "I swear."

There was a hush as deep as the silence of death when the ceremony was concluded and the new president, cool and calm as a statue, kissed the bible and taking up a gold-mounted pen signed the formal oath of office. (From a staff correspondent of *The Daily News*, "Roosevelt Takes Oath," September 14, 1901, 1.)

Here the reporter (under a generic byline) performed like a novelist, although refraining from attributing states of mind to the various witnesses (named exhaustively in a fairly typical catalog). The emphasis was on a combination of solemnity and confidence. The deep silence indicated the gravity of the occasion, and the coolness of the new president reassured all that the crisis was over as soon as it began. (Teddy Roosevelt, famous for his energy, was a good subject for reporters. Not so the previous successor, Chester Arthur, described as almost "womanish" in his grief at Garfield's death.)

The Coolidge succession was similarly dramatic and more fully illustrated. Harding's unexpected death found Coolidge visiting his family in New England, where his father, a notary public, administered the oath himself. The homeliness of the event rooted the stable succession in the molecular American family. The *Times* used two retrospective pictures to frame the oath as an event: one of Harding on his way to the Inauguration, and the other with his wife as they returned from the oath-taking and entered the Executive Mansion (August 3, 1923, 2-3). The *Times* on August 4 (2) and the *Chicago Daily News* on August 6 (5) illustrated Coolidge's oath-taking by

running a picture of the new president with his father outside the Vermont farmhouse, posing after the event.

When FDR died, a picture ran in both papers showing Truman taking the oath (*Daily News*, April 12, 1945; *Times*, April 13, 3). The wide shot set the canonical form, with the First Lady, the Chief Justice, and all the witnessing leaders assembled. The *Times* the same day ran a file photo of FDR's oath-taking, again with the First Lady, leaders, and Chief Justice, before a prominently positioned flag (6). The pictures had a posed, iconic quality, like a historical frieze.

Kennedy's oath followed the Truman model almost exactly, except that the First Lady stood not immediately next to her husband but instead at the far left, framing the picture on one side. The image ran on the first day of coverage in the *Times* (November 23, 1963, 15), but the more pressing event, Johnson's oath of office, ran on the front page. Unlike Kennedy's formal event, this one occurred aboard the airplane in Dallas. Shot in close quarters, the picture shows only Johnson flanked by his wife and several faces of witnessing leaders on one side. Jackie Kennedy prominently on his right, closest to the camera. The picture, from the A.P., appeared in both newspapers.

This image marks the completion of a shift from posed icons of a ritual event to the active dramatic moments preferred by photojournalism. In another sense, the use of oath imagery also followed a transformation of the act, from a private or hidden, unseen ceremony (in the pictorial dimension), into a public ritual seen at close range (the LBJ picture is a medium shot). The repetition of images from wire services reinforced the moment as a shared public memory.

t h e n e w s o f t h e n e w s

In all the reportage of all the deaths, newsfolk were everywhere. They turned up as crowds, in a deathwatch with Garfield in Long Branch, with McKinley in Buffalo, and with Harding in San Francisco. They filled the tightly packed cars in the Kennedy motorcade in Dallas and followed the funeral processions in swarms. They also turned up as intimates, chatting with doctors, relatives, and heads of state, and, more and more often, with each other. At first they recounted what they saw. Later they recounted what they felt.

The reporters retreated as observers to the extent that photographers and then television cameras moved in. Reporters abandoned much of their descriptive function, even more so than this study indicates. Our sample features the powerful events that inspire reporters to haul out and dust off old tricks. Even the Kennedy assassination coverage included some walking description, extensive fine detail, and a good deal of dramaturgy.

More and more the reporter's tense had shifted from the present to the past primarily but also to the future. In the Kennedy coverage, reporters supplied whole volumes of retrospective and prospective material. If any type of story were signaled as the reporter's most important work, it would be the expert analysis, fully sourced, of the implications the change in administration might have for this or that issue. That reporters were on holiday when doing dramaturgy, for instance, is indicated by the fact that they dramatized themselves, something they never would have done in analysis. That a reporter could admit grief while covering grief meant that grief was no longer the best beat, that mourning was not a weighty or momentous subject. A reporter would never, in contrast, admit to being Republican while covering Republicans.

As reporters took to the future, they left the present to photographers and even more so to television. By the time of Kennedy's death, one of the most compelling stories concerned television. The coverage in both the *Times* and *Daily News* turned repeatedly to what was happening on television. The shooting existed as a shared newsreel, the primary text, upon which print journalists could comment and expound. Television news took over for four consecutive days

of broadcasting on all three networks. All entertainment programming was canceled. No commercial spots ran. Newspapers reported these acts as primary events in the chronicle of the president's death. Both newspapers told the story of the public witnessing the shooting, the death, the swearing in, and the burial as the story of the public watching television. Reports spoke in glowing praise of broadcast news, fulfilling at last its promise — and tacitly eclipsing print.

Conclusions

By deepening the understanding of how newspapers incorporated photography into their pages, this study recasts the understanding of how newspapers responded to television. The conventional wisdom of journalistic circles would describe the changes as a result of the head-to-head competition between newspapers and television news in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The discovery of the (much earlier) origin of these shifts also critiques a naive narrative of technologically determined change.

News was transformed through two related processes. One involved the entry of pictures into the center of journalistic content, diminishing or entirely displacing some of the tasks of text. The other involved the shift of all news content away from the story-telling compendium and toward expert interpretation in the form of analysis buttressed by the evidence of history in words and images.

From the perspective of images, photography, as it grew out from the tradition of engraving, took on increasingly the values of journalism. Greater complexity emerged in the dialectic of form, that is, in the size, placement, and pose of images, as shown in the example of the relationship between the deceased president and his replacement. The period also saw a change in the mode of pictorial narrative, which photography accomplished using collage first, and then filling entire picture pages after the times of FDR. Pictorial representations also shifted from static iconism to picture-as-content, as found in the sources of imagery, beginning with stock campaign engravings and moving to journalist-produced candid shots.

Pictures adopted greater claims to status in the hierarchy of news values. Newspapers advertised their scoops — the last picture, the latest picture. That change accompanied the loss of image-as-handicraft, not only the end of engraving and sketch art, replaced by the supposedly mechanical photograph, but also the disappearance of artists' signatures (which at first would appear within the photographs as autographs). Artist, like authors, were swallowed up in technical expertise.

Initially, textual reports performed many functions that illustrations subsequently either took over or eclipsed altogether. At the same time, new tasks were invented, especially that of prediction. Although the future tense was not absent in early reportage, it was usually confined to details of ceremonies (e.g., "the color guard of the 82nd infantry will follow the casket"). Over time, reporters began to speak confidently of a wider future, an aspect of the new long journalism.

An examination of text shows that it is too simple to say that the visual was missing until the rise of news photography in the twentieth century. Not only were there all sorts of ways of visually representing the news, but also there were textual ways of presenting visions of events. The walking description, for example, incorporated imagery as well as motion.

It is also too simple to say that pre-photographic visual reproduction was technologically stunted photography. Scholars have taken the claim, almost universally advanced by early illustrated news periodicals, that photographs, even those reproduced by engraving, allow an

immediate, real look at people and places, to mean that news illustrators were trying to do just that. In fact, the regime of news illustration that preceded the advent of halftone reproduction from photographic originals was itself a mature system with its own guiding ideals. In that regime, the aim was to produce an authentic visual representation that was not only accurate but also lucid and uncluttered, and it was readily acknowledged that an artist must be responsible for that representation.

The intermediate regime explains the half-century lag between the popularization of photography and the printed reproduction of photographic images. The technological account of this development, although accurately and insightfully explaining the many chemical and mechanical impasses and solutions, assumes that all along everyone wanted halftones, when in fact the usefulness of the photograph was far from obvious to most illustrated news. What journalists wanted was lucidity, pictures that spoke clearly and compellingly, the very effect most readily achieved by an artist's engraving carefully labeled "drawn from a photograph" to convey authenticity but at the same time freely adapted to make a point.

The full adoption of the news photograph by the 1930s was therefore more ambiguous than is often acknowledged. It was the result of technological advance, of course, and also artistic innovation. It came about when news photographers learned how to make photographs as lucid as engravings. This required not only advances in the speed and handling of cameras but also in the visual conception of newspaper pages. Instead of containing a narrative within a single engraving, photography required integrating pictures into news, coopting many tasks of text, and publishing multiple images to tell a story. Little wonder that editors resisted at first. In the artistic sense, the triumph of news photography meant the defeat of the sensibility of the era of the illustrated news.

The development of news illustration worked dialectically with the history of reporting. Illustrators and reporters struggled to define and refine each other's tasks and create each other's claims to authority. After a long period of interaction, the reporter's task shifted from description to analysis, and the illustrator-turned-photographer took over the task of giving the news its immediacy and emotional force. As an analyst, the reporter explains to readers why things had happen and what things are about to happen; the reporter's tenses are past and future. The photographer's tense is purely the present. The emergence of caption conventions, by the end of the period studied, imposed the strict use of the present tense.

Reportage has come to base its claim to authority on expertise, explaining a chain of events according to processes hidden from the casual observer. Photography bases its claim to authority on immediacy, on the conviction that nothing intervenes between a reader and a scene. In both cases the authority of the news presentation entails the effacement of the observer. Reportage — even in the most heavy-handed punditry — asserts that anyone expert enough (or "in the know") would give the same account. Photojournalism implies that the shot took itself, or at the very least that anyone present with a camera would have made the same picture. In neither case is the news person represented.

That the effacement of the observer accompanied the rise of the byline adds irony to this story. Bylines simultaneously assert authorship and guarantee that authorship does not matter. Reporters use them to take responsibility, but by signing articles they are certifying that they did not invent their report. It is news that other professional reporters would also report. When a shooter puts his or her name to a news photo, the act does not mean "this is my vision." It means "I was there when it happened." Were it the photographer's vision, it would not be news. It would revert to art.

This study illuminates some neglected aspects of pre-photographic text and pictures and some previously unnoticed changes that photography accentuated. It also calls for a more respectful

understanding of earlier news regimes. Our most compelling realization, however, was itself conventional. We found that the photographic images of the Kennedy assassination called to mind long dormant emotions and anchored a deep personal memory, not only for us but also for our colleagues and family members. The photographs triggered memories of a personal nature even as they bore witness to memories of a social or collective nature. The visual images were an archive of memory.

Our experience signals the trite fact that the shift to photography heightened the emotional register of news. The early stories were moving at times but so thoroughly filtered as to render them safe, that is, unlikely to cause direct emotional distress. Even McKinley's decomposing corpse remained an icon of his office and history and therefore not a gross description. Kennedy, however, died in each citizen's living room (or in whatever intimate location). Citizens saw the spatters of blood on Jacqueline Kennedy's leg, watched the restless three-year-old salute in his tiny jacket, and, more than any other image, saw the moment of death as if witnessing a murder of an acquaintance. Photography, and even more so television, in allowing individuals to see history in intimate settings, intertwines that history with personal memory and shifts the telling firmly into the realm of raw emotion, the filter hidden. Little wonder journalists fell to over-analyzing and interpreting.

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