

Trudeaumania Part II: Passionate Politics in a Canadian 21st Century Media Event

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In 2000 former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, age 80, died, and was remembered in a televised state funeral in his native Montreal after four days of vigils and round-the-clock coverage. Trudeau had dominated the Canadian political scene over three decades, launching into it in 1968 on a wave of what was described then and since as Trudeaumania. Some dubbed the public response to his death as a new, more subdued version of Trudeaumania. It was deemed to be unprecedented, both in its scale and its emotional intensity. Based on a large sample of both English and French-language newspaper, magazine, and television coverage, this paper uses the media coverage of former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's death and funeral to investigate contemporary rites of national mourning, their representation by the press, and their evaluation by scholars. The concern was voiced by some at the time of Trudeau's death that for funerals of public figures like these the news media drop even the pretense of objectivity, and slip into "memorial broadcasting." My analysis leads me to argue that, generally speaking, the news coverage of the Trudeau funeral framed the event as a time of national mourning and idealized Canadian *emotional* unity in remembering Trudeau, while simultaneously acknowledging the *political* dissent and division that he inspired. Despite divided opinion about what exactly Trudeau had meant for Canada, he provided a common object of attention and memory – "everyone" participated in the remembering, even if they came to different conclusions about the same events. The felt obligation or compulsion to remember and observe did not necessarily indicate reverence and respect for the man and his policies, but acknowledgement of his relevance to national group membership, even when that group membership was resented (as for many Québécois). I suggest that both the way the events were covered in the press and scholarly responses to these kinds of rites of national mourning point to a distrust of the emotional authenticity of ritualized crowd response. The prominence of emotional scripts in public mourning creates doubt about the authenticity of the motivations or emotions of mourners, leading to an insistence upon the spontaneity and voluntary nature of crowd participation by reporters and commentators. This paper argues that critiques of political spectacles and their media representations need to go beyond suspicion of ritualized group emotion, and attend to the conditions of crowd production and the nature of its media representation.

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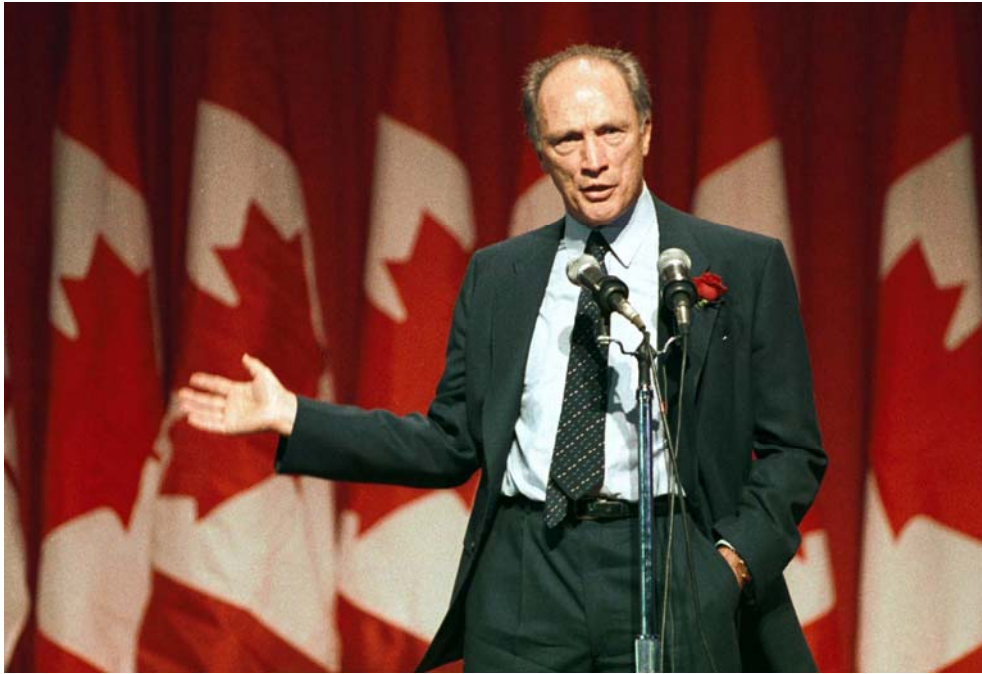


Figure 1. Pierre Trudeau speaking at a fundraising dinner in Toronto, Dec. 13, 1983.
Reuters Photographer/Reuters

On Sept. 28, 2000, former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, died at age 80, and was remembered in a televised state funeral in his native Montreal after four days of vigils and round-the-clock coverage. Although Katz and Liebes (2007) have recently pronounced the television genre of media events to be in “retreat” (p.157), the Trudeau funeral provides a 21st century data point to add to those televised, ceremonial events that inspired Dayan and Katz’s (1992) original theory. Here I propose to use Trudeau’s funeral to address some of the theoretical questions that have arisen in studies of public mediated rituals, in particular, the role of emotion in political and national identities, and its authenticity or lack thereof.

Specifically, one of the critiques of "memorial broadcasting" (Turnock, 2000, p. 25) is that journalists suspend critical distance and objectivity during certain kinds of national rituals, thereby imposing a narrative of national unity and consensus on the public.¹ As much as the press construct a sense of national identity through routine reporting frames and word choices (see Billig, 1995), media events-style broadcasting has been criticized for creating an oppressive sense of national community that renders invisible the periphery's dissent and disengagement from the center (Couldry, 2003). Emotions are attributed to the entire national group, rather than to the particular visible subsection of the public who happen to be caught by the cameras. Similarly, Kitch and Hume (2008) comment on the seeming increase in "grief journalism" in the United States, whose main trope seems to be that of unifying the public in national rites of mourning, regardless of whether the event in question is truly national in scope.

A second question that the Trudeau funeral speaks to is the nature of political ritual in the age of mass media and how it should be evaluated. I ask whether there is evidence that the apparent outpouring of grief and national stock-taking in Canada in response to Trudeau's funeral was merely a construction of the press and broadcasters who, because of their intimate connections with and dependence upon establishment politics, were predisposed to emphasize or construct national consensus. While I examine this question in relation to the specific case of public responses to Trudeau's funeral in Canada and their media coverage, I seek to consider more broadly the semiotics of crowds and their media representations. I ask whether it is possible to achieve a balance between maintaining a critical perspective on crowd behavior in political spectacle and its media coverage, while acknowledging the potential for meaningfulness when citizens inhabit public space in order to express political sentiment. Returning to a problem explored more than 50 years ago by Lang and Lang (1953), what criteria might we use to distinguish between the media construction and manipulation of crowds, and mediated crowd behavior that is worth taking into account? In examining reactions to this moment of national grieving in relation to others like it, I consider what normative frameworks for the role of emotion in citizenship and national identity are in play, and what assumptions and ideologies they rest upon.

To answer these questions, I examined television, newspaper, and magazine coverage leading up to Trudeau's death, the funeral, and the aftermath, covering the dates of Aug. 31 to Dec. 31, 2000, including four French-language newspapers from Quebec – Montreal's *Le Devoir*, *La Presse*, *Le Journal de Montréal* (a tabloid), and Quebec City's *Le Soleil*. The English-language news sources consulted included papers from large cities in Central Canada: Toronto's *Globe and Mail* (which, like *Le Devoir*, styles itself as a national paper), the *Toronto Star* – a broadsheet with the largest circulation in the country, the *Toronto Sun* – a tabloid, and the *Ottawa Citizen*; papers from smaller cities in Ontario: the *Hamilton Spectator* and the *Cambridge Reporter*; papers from Western Canada: the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Sun* (also a tabloid); and the *Canadian Press Newswire*. CTV news transcripts were obtained and CBC funeral coverage was obtained in its original televisual form, and then partially transcribed. In addition, *Maclean's*, a national weekly magazine similar to the U.S. *Newsweek*, was consulted. With the exception of the CBC coverage and the French-language papers, all of this material was available on Lexis-Nexis by searching for articles with the keyword "Trudeau" in the headline or lead.

¹ Turnock gets this phrase from journalist Mark Lawson who coined it in the *Guardian* (Sky and CNN were first, but a royal death is a BBC matter. *The Guardian*, Sept. 1, 1997, p. 7).

The sample allowed comparisons among some of the self-styled “national” media sources most likely to produce a sympathetic account of Trudeau with more regional and local sources, as well as between Ontario newspapers and regions of Canada where Trudeau was less popular – Alberta and Quebec. French-language newspapers were not available electronically so they were examined on microfilm, and articles including “Trudeau” in the headline or lead were copied. There was a total of 558 documents culled from Lexis-Nexis, and 271 articles from the French-language papers.

All data were imported into qualitative research software, where they were coded thematically. Some codes were devised from the outset and others emerged from close reading of the coverage itself. Some themes capture phrases that were repeated many times throughout the coverage (such as “love him or hate him”) whereas others are more theoretically informed (such as tracking when articles quoted “people on the street”). I approached the corpus both as evidence of how Trudeau’s death and funeral were represented by various media outlets, but also as the means through which the vast majority of Canadians would have actually participated in the events – through mass media. I considered that reporters and broadcasters bring their own biases and frames to the events due to news routines and ideological dispositions, and yet these individuals are also members of the culture on which they report (Schudson, 1995).

My analysis of the coverage leads me to argue that, generally speaking, the news coverage of the Trudeau funeral framed the event as a time of national mourning and idealized Canadian *emotional* unity in remembering Trudeau, while simultaneously acknowledging the *political* dissent and division among Canadians that Trudeau inspired. The Trudeau funeral data point suggests the relevance of Barry Schwartz’s (1991) conclusions in relation to the Lincoln funeral for scholars interested in media events and political spectacles: that successful national rituals do not depend on, or necessarily produce, national consensus at the level of ideas or political issues, but at the level of sentiment. As Mabel Berezin (2001), John Bodnar (1992), Michael North (1992), and Lisa Wedeen (1999) have observed, symbols and rituals generally allow enough ambiguity that people can adjust the meaning to their own situation, thereby making symbols effective means to contain conflict and contradiction. I will illustrate how this took place with Trudeau, where he, as a person, and his death were widely interpreted as a meaningful and profound symbol of Canada and its recent past, but with very different interpretations of his valence and significance. In fact, his connection to conflict and contradiction arguably made him all the more potent a symbol of, and for, Canada.

I also use the Trudeau case to re-examine our approach to understanding and evaluating political ritual. I suggest that both the way the events were covered in the press and scholarly responses to these kinds of rites of national mourning point to a distrust of the emotional authenticity of ritualized crowd response. I use this case study, in comparison with other scholarly accounts of political ritual, to suggest an alternative set of criteria for evaluating the authenticity and meaningfulness of crowds who participate in political rituals, as well as their media representations.

PET: Media Star and Political Celebrity

A French-Canadian Liberal, a child of privilege, and a reluctant politician, Pierre Elliott Trudeau nevertheless dominated the Canadian political scene over three decades, launching into it in 1968 on a wave of what was described then and since as Trudeaumania. This period was frequently referred to and reminisced about in coverage of Trudeau's demise, some even dubbing the public response to his death as a new, more subdued version of Trudeaumania. Whereas Trudeaumania Part I had featured crowds of screaming girls and women angling for kisses from the debonair, athletic, and nattily dressed Trudeau, Part II featured crowds of Canadians, many clutching Trudeau's signature red rose, inhabiting public space in order to mark the passing of Canada's celebrity politician.

Trudeau served as Prime Minister from 1968 to 1979, then from 1980 to 1984. His impact was felt not only in terms of the length of his tenure, but in the political events he influenced and presided over, including his oversight of legislation as Justice Minister in the 1960s that decriminalized abortion and homosexuality, threats and kidnappings from Quebec separatists that prompted him to invoke the War Measures Act (read: suspension of civil rights) in 1970, and his role in ushering in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. He also challenged Canadians' view of themselves as boring and provincial with his unconventional and sophisticated personal life and style. An oft-repeated montage from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) funeral coverage gives a sense of him as a political celebrity and his "greatest hits" in terms of captured media moments. From crowds of screaming young girls in his earlier political career, reminiscent of the Beatlemania that inspired the term Trudeaumania; to Trudeau's famous pirouette behind Queen Elizabeth; to telling the press on the steps of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa to "Just watch me" in response to a question about how far he would go to foil the FLQ (Front de Libération de Québec); to the sight of a much frailer man bowed by grief at the funeral of his youngest son Michel in 1998; the series of images and sound bites solidified collective memory for those viewers who could recall those (mediated) moments, and created a seamless televisual narrative for newer viewers.



Figure 2. Pierre Trudeau reprises his famous pirouette, first performed in the company of Queen Elizabeth II, after the proclamation of the Constitution Act in Ottawa, on April 18, 1982. Reuters Photographer/Reuters



Figure 3. Pierre Trudeau at the opening of an archaeological excavation in Hull, PQ, on May 20, 1983. Reuters Photographer/Reuters

The word "charisma" and Pierre Elliot Trudeau have long been linked. Press coverage upon his death returned to this theme again and again as in this comment: "He has been called an enigma, a bewitcher, even a 'magus.'"² Like John F. Kennedy, Trudeau came of age politically in the 1960s just as the medium of television became so important to politics, and his personality seemed to make him a media star. One gets a sense of his media profile from a comment in *Le Soleil* which said, "Was there ever a world leader who was photographed as often in his bathing suit? And who, in doing it, and despite

² Sheppard, R. (Sept. 18, 2000). The Trudeau Vigil. *Maclean's*, p. 16.

everything succeeded in maintaining his dignity?"³ Trudeau's charismatic and media-friendly ways not only gave him a high profile domestically relative to other politicians, but made him more well known on the international stage than perhaps any Canadian before or after him. And yet, Trudeau was also remembered as a man who could back up his flash and celebrity with intellectual heft and political convictions. The comments of the many who were quoted about Trudeau point to his charisma and appeal as an unconventional politician, but almost as many sources mention that he was principled, had a clear vision for Canada, and was "a man of substance."⁴

Canadians experienced him in death – in the form of sparkling and mischievous television images – much as they had in life. As one wire reporter put it, "Like Diana and Kennedy, but unlike his political predecessors, Trudeau was both product and master of television. That relationship was so revealing, so compelling, that its flickering images shaped and dominated Trudeau's passing."⁵ Canadian mourners remembered, perhaps, not only the man as their past selves in front of the television. A *Globe and Mail* columnist wrote, "Pierre Trudeau inhabited my living room: He was on the television almost every night from the time I was eight until I had graduated from university. His adventures were endlessly thrilling; his battles, Olympian."⁶ Trudeau's death, then, was ripe for a spectacular media event that capitalized on the exciting and entertaining footage from the past that tapped into many Canadians' collective, if for the most part mediated, memories.

Emotional Scripts for National Mourning

In Trudeau's death and funeral there were echoes of large, public funerals of the past, making it recognizably an example of this particular genre of media event. In fact, members of the press and the public frequently made comparisons to the funerals of Diana, as well as to that of JFK, when characterizing the mourning and events for Trudeau, although not always as a compliment.⁷ Although

³ Cheadle, B. (Oct. 2, 2000). "Une mine d'or pour les photographes: Une pléthore d'images inusitées qui risquent d'éclipser les réalisations et les politiques de Pierre Trudeau" *Le Soleil*, p. A12. All translations of French-language texts by the author.

⁴ Corbett, R. (Oct. 3, 2000). All Down the Line, the People Salute a Man of Substance. *Ottawa Citizen*, p. B10.

⁵ Travers, J. (Oct. 2, 2000). Ottawa's Simple, Emotional Goodbye to Pierre Trudeau. *Hamilton Spectator*, p. D02.

⁶ Jack, C. (Oct. 2, 2000). A Child of Trudeau Remembers. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A26.

⁷ There were 55 references to JFK or Kennedy in the news coverage, as a comparison to the stature of Trudeau or how the country felt upon his death, and 32 references to Princess Diana. I focus more on Diana because, even though she was a different kind of political figure than Trudeau, their deaths and the media coverage of their funerals was more similar in the sense of the public response being perceived as unprecedented.

there are important differences in the circumstances surrounding the deaths of different public figures such as Trudeau, Lincoln, Diana, and JFK, the points of consistency point to how emotional scripts shape national mourning, leading to some consistency in these events across time and national contexts (Turner & Stets, 2006). From my examination of the Trudeau coverage, I would argue that the prominence of these scripts creates doubt about the authenticity of the motivations or emotions of mourners, leading to an insistence upon the spontaneity and voluntary nature of crowd participation by reporters and commentators.

To the extent that it is through media that certain kinds of imagined communities are made possible, it is largely through media that the emotional bases of identification, in particular for national identity, occur (Anderson, 1983, p. 16). Rites of national mourning, such as the Trudeau funeral, are moments in which the emotional bonds of national citizenship are modeled and enacted through mass media. Scholars who have considered similar events (Pantii & Wieten, 2005; Kitch, 2003) have questioned whether this is really desirable – whether these are moments when mass media become too powerful in constructing, rather than legitimately reflecting group feeling, and further, whether emotional appeals to national identity are inherently manipulative and simplistic. The very scriptedness of national rites of mourning raises questions about their emotional authenticity, given cultural assumptions about the inauthenticity of emotional scripts and the valorization of spontaneity and originality as evidence of the emotions of the inner self (Taylor, 1989; Guignon, 2004). These observations raise further questions, such as, is there such a thing as “group feeling” that can be accurately represented?

Like the public responses to the deaths of President Lincoln, Princess Diana, and Ronald Reagan, the public response to Trudeau’s death was deemed across media reports to be “unprecedented.” The emotional outpouring was also considered somewhat uncharacteristic from Canadians who, much like the British, often assume their “national character” to be emotionally reserved and not overly sentimental or reverential toward their political leaders.⁸ Thousands of Canadians lined the railroad tracks to await the train that took his body between Ottawa and Montreal⁹; thousands more greeted the train in Montreal¹⁰; and thousands also attended the funeral at Montreal’s Notre Dame Basilica, both inside and outside the

⁸ This despite the fact that very similar comments about the public response being surprising were made by the American press and critics when Ronald Reagan died, notwithstanding that country’s supposedly more overt patriotism and emotionality (Kitch & Hume, 2008).

⁹ Canadian Press. (Oct. 2, 2000). Thousands Line Tracks to Say Farewell as Trudeau Train Passes. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

¹⁰ Rubec, S. (Oct. 3, 2000). PET Comes Home. *Edmonton Sun*, p. 4.

church.¹¹ An estimated 75,000 Canadians filed past Trudeau's coffin over the three days and nights while he lay in state in Ottawa and Montreal¹²;

The cameras captured the responses of the public, both in "person-on-the-street" interviews and by recording the different gestures that people undertook to mark Trudeau's passing. While Princess Diana's funeral saw mass vigils outside Buckingham Palace and her home with teddy bears, flowers, and notes, Trudeau's funeral saw the public congregating outside his home in Montreal and on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, some clutching notes, and many bringing roses, in remembrance of the fresh rose that Trudeau wore in his lapel every day of his tenure as prime minister.



Figure 4. Flowers and cards left outside the home of Pierre Trudeau in Montreal, Sept. 29, 2000. Shaun Best/Reuters

¹¹ Canadian Press. (Oct. 3, 2000). Poor and the Powerful Bid Adieu to Ex-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

¹² Canadian Press. (Oct. 3, 2000). Last Visitor to Trudeau Casket Used All His Savings to Get There. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

The Trudeau and Diana funerals were both moments when the "center" was powerfully represented to the "periphery," such that the focus of the country's media was on public space in London in the case of Diana, and Ottawa and then Montreal in the case of Trudeau. Some undertook pilgrimages to be present and part of the crowds, such as the Cunninghams, a couple with two young children, who drove twenty hours from Atikokan, Ontario to pay their respects. Cunningham, a heavy truck driver, told a reporter, "We decided that this would be one time when we wouldn't let the small stuff in life get in the way of something you've got to do."¹³ Others created observances or spaces in their own communities to connect synchronically with the main events. Both TV and press coverage devoted time to illustrating that there were simultaneous activities and observances from coast to coast on the day of the funeral. Some schools held ceremonies of their own or watched the funeral in assemblies,¹⁴ and parallel memorial services were held in some cities.¹⁵ Books of condolence were placed in city halls and government offices around the country for people to sign. People stopped to watch the funeral coverage in public places like barber shops and shopping malls. Similar to Princess Diana's death, the media, and the many who chose to watch, held vigil between the time of death and the funeral ceremonies.

In these kinds of commemorations, the role of the people seems on the one hand "spontaneous," but appears in patterned, almost liturgical gestures. Innovations on past commemorations, like wearing or bearing red roses in memory of Trudeau's signature flower, quickly became iconic. The unexpectedness and the apparent spontaneity of a seemingly "unified" public response, compounded by the liveness of the coverage, were an important part of what made the Trudeau story compelling. Despite the instantly recognizable emotional scripts that were invoked by mourners, the improvisational nature of the acts within these scripts were especially remarked upon to verify their authenticity: The moments when crowds broke into applause (as Trudeau's casket was transported different places, and in the church after his son's eulogy), the spontaneous renderings of the national anthem, the handmade pictures and notes left at the eternal flame on Parliament Hill, and most fundamentally, the formation of crowds where none had been officially organized. Particularly remarked upon were the crowds, not in the ritual centers of Ottawa and Montreal, but in small towns and rural areas along the tracks that carried Trudeau's funeral train. The train journey echoed funeral trains of the past, such as those for Robert F. Kennedy and former Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, although those connections were very rarely made explicitly in the examined media coverage. It was the spontaneous observances along the train tracks that captured the press's imagination and received extensive coverage. This passage from the *Ottawa Citizen* is representative of stories that focused on the train journey:

¹³ Cobb, C. (Oct. 2, 2000). Day of Mourning, Respect as 50,000 Pay Tribute. *Calgary Herald*, p. A3.

¹⁴ Globe and Mail Staff and Canadian Press. (Oct. 4, 2000). Canadians Pause for Trudeau Funeral. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A4.

¹⁵ Canadian Press. (Oct. 3, 2000). Hundreds Attend Service at Toronto Cathedral to Remember Trudeau. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

There were women blowing kisses and crying, people holding roses or Canadian flags aloft — one of them sewn to a hockey stick. A blur of forest and then, suddenly, a lone man in a field, saluting, and later, a farmer by his tractor, paying silent tribute.¹⁶

This farmer, taking a moment away from his work to hold his hat in hand for Trudeau's funeral train, attracted the imagination of reporters who covered the story perhaps because, being so obviously unplanned and solitary, this working man's tribute seemed beyond reproach.¹⁷ His gesture could not so easily be interpreted as self-conscious and performative compared to the crowds who appeared where they must have known the cameras would capture them, such as on Parliament Hill or outside Trudeau's home in Montreal.

The voluntary, even impulsive, participation of citizens in public space in combination with the planned activities and rituals of event organizers turned the death of Pierre Elliott Trudeau into political spectacle, in a descriptive sense, not necessarily a critical sense. It is to critiques of the modes of reporting on this kind of spectacle of mourning that I now turn.

Memorial Broadcasting

The concern was voiced by some at the time of Trudeau's funeral and by many in relation to similar events such as the deaths of Diana and the Pope, that for funerals of public figures like these the news media drop even the pretense of objectivity, and slip into "memorial broadcasting" (Turnock, 2000). As one columnist suggested:

. . . a once unsympathetic media had now successfully inserted him into their ready-made world, complete with "routes, signposts, indicators, and a public voice directing (every Canadian) to assigned positions."¹⁸

Similar to these sentiments expressed in the Canadian press, some scholars argue that at moments like these, the media solidify their role as agents of nationalism and fall into line with state interests by proselytizing on the importance of national unity and reverence for a shared past. In Dayan and Katz's terms, the press adopt a "priestly role" and present the events in "hushed tones" (Dayan & Katz, 1992, p. 193). This is thought to be an essentially anti-democratic activity, because it emphasizes the ritual and emotional dimensions of citizenship rather than the deliberative, rational, and instrumental activities of citizenship, such as voting, and because it tends to focus on and valorize elites (Marcus, 2002).

¹⁶ O'Neill, J., & Baxter, J. (Oct. 3, 2000). 'A Million Thank-You's: Entire Towns Sing, Wave and Weep as Funeral Train Rolls By. *Ottawa Citizen*, News, p. A1.

¹⁷ Corbett, R. (Oct. 3, 2000). All Down the Line, the People Salute a Man of Substance. *Ottawa Citizen*, p. B10.

¹⁸ Deckert, C. (Nov. 3, 2000). What Would Trudeau Have Done If He Watched Over His Funeral? *Hamilton Spectator*, p. A13.

Trudeau's funeral is a classic example of a media event as Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) define that category. To them, media events are the high holidays of mass communication, the closest thing that modern nation-states get to mass rituals. *The Globe and Mail* television critic's comment that the Trudeau funeral was "One of the few times that television coverage could be truly said to bring the country together" speaks to its fit in this category.¹⁹ In media events, most audiences participate by watching television, and through their participation, both embodied and mediated, validate the event as a "successful" ritual. Dayan and Katz avoid passing judgment on media events, remarking that in the main, they seem to encourage social integration, but that this is not a necessary result or use of them. Their critics, however, are suspicious of the integrative, consensus-producing promise of media events, and of the cooperation between event organizers and media broadcasters in eliciting emotional responses from audiences (Lukes, 1975; Couldry, 2003). Some critics see these national, televised rituals as no better than media manipulation in the service of the status quo, or worse, as pandering in the service of profit. Media are thought to do this by framing the event as historic; by their very presence legitimizing the event as worthy of attention; and by telling audiences in advance or during the event how they should feel or behave (Dayan & Katz, 1992; Wardle & West, 2004). Using Bodnar's (1992) terms, the press are thought to favor official cultural expressions in constructions of public mourning and memory, focusing on issues of unity and national continuity, rather than the more personal and local considerations of vernacular culture.

It's fair to say that the news media did frequently adopt the "priestly role" that Dayan and Katz would predict, not just reporting *about* the community but speaking on its behalf. Journalists routinely spoke for all Canadians, attributing feelings of grief to the entire country.²⁰ *Maclean's* magazine, a national news weekly, conjured the image of the nation in a collective bedside vigil when they wrote, ". . . even before his death last week in Montreal, an anxious nation had figuratively rallied to his side, united in its reluctance to say goodbye to someone who had made them feel better about themselves and their country."²¹ Clichés, like "the nation mourns" or "a country grieves" appeared regularly as headlines, and some journalists didn't hesitate to make pronouncements about the liminality caused by Trudeau's death. For example, CTV reporter Joy Malbon, on the conclusion of the funeral service, commented "It was as if the country stood still . . . Across Canada they paused to watch his funeral, to watch the end of an era, to watch history."²² Similarly, a column in the *Toronto Sun* suggested that "It was one of those nights when

¹⁹ Doyle, J. (Dec. 29, 2000). The Big Moments on the Tube. *The Globe and Mail*, p. R3.

²⁰ The habit of speaking for all Canadians, or attributing a homogeneous response to the whole country, was much more prominent in national outlets like national television news, *Maclean's* and *The Globe and Mail* than in regionally-based papers.

²¹ Lewis, R. (Oct. 9, 2000). The Legacy of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. *Maclean's*, p. 2.

²² CTV. (Oct. 3, 2000). The Funeral for Pierre Elliott Trudeau. *CTV News*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

everything just stops,"²³ and even the Quebec City paper *Le Soleil* remarked that, upon learning of Trudeau's grave illness, "time stopped in Canada."²⁴ This type of description was sometimes combined with the practice of quoting interview subjects, and suggesting that they could be taken as representative of how Canadians everywhere felt or behaved, such as in a *Canadian Press* news report that read, "Like Canadians everywhere, Barbara Hughes collapsed in tears at news of Trudeau's death."²⁵ Kitch and Hume (2008) observed a similar dynamic with the media coverage of Ronald Reagan's funeral. They write, ". . . interviews with ordinary Americans – and in a broader sense, the *idea* of a shared commonness that explained national values – were what ultimately validated the extraordinary amount of news coverage of Reagan's final scene" (Kitch & Hume, 2008, p. 153). Just as with Reagan's death, the press narrative increasingly turned toward the story of public response, particularly those who came to bear witness and be "part of a historic moment."

As the most visible evidence of a "nation mourning," those who showed up physically to pay their respects to Trudeau received prominent coverage. Their volume and their diversity were consistently remarked upon, and the English-language coverage in particular reflected the idea that the grieving was productive of national unity. Trudeau was well-known for his desire that Canada remain united and for relations to improve between francophones and anglophones, even though many argued that his actions were ultimately counterproductive to those goals. The *Sun* papers reported that the "Former Prime Minister . . . came home to Montreal yesterday to the spontaneous strains of 'O Canada' in both official languages."²⁶ Reporters regularly remarked how Trudeau was achieving in death what he had strived to do in life, "unite Canadians in a common cause."²⁷ The meeting and handshake between Trudeau friends (and honorary pallbearers) but political enemies Fidel Castro and Jimmy Carter before entering the Basilica in Montreal, a frequently reproduced story and image from the day of the funeral, was often read in a similar way — as characteristic of Trudeau's ability, or at least his desire, to unite disparate points of view (See Figure 5).

²³ Warmington, J. (Sept. 30, 2000). It Was a Night to Remember Pierre Elliott Trudeau 1919-2000. *Toronto Sun*, p. 12.

²⁴ Vastel, M. (Sept. 8, 2000). "Notre père ne se porte pas bien." *Le Soleil*, p. A1.

²⁵ Canadian Press. (Oct. 1, 2000). Salmon Arm Middle Finger Salute Recipients Will Miss Trudeau's Frankness. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

²⁶ Rubec, S. (Oct. 3, 2000). PET Comes Home. *Edmonton Sun*, p. 4.

²⁷ Thorne, S. (Oct. 2, 2000). Trudeau Brings Together Canadians of All Backgrounds in Stirring Tribute. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.



Figure 5. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Cuban President Fidel Castro arriving at Trudeau's state funeral in Montreal, Oct. 3, 2000. Reuters Photographer/Reuters

One mourner received a number of sentences worth of coverage in a number of news articles, perhaps because of how his story spoke to the themes of Canadian unity combined with its diversity. Donald Potter, of St. Hubert, QC, had come to Parliament Hill with a tapestry that he made with his son featuring the national flags of countries that new Canadians had emigrated from (see Figure 6). In an impromptu speech to the crowd, he was quoted:

The country is fragile, just like the flag is The vision of Pierre Elliott Trudeau is to keep the country together, united. It doesn't matter what you do in life, or your colour, or language or the culture. Pierre Elliott Trudeau wanted us all to stay together as a family.²⁸

Potter's nation as family metaphor would prove to be prescient in terms of how the funeral itself would be framed and interpreted.

²⁸ Canadian Press. (Oct. 2, 2000). Crowd Erupts into 'O Canada' as Pierre Trudeau's Casket Arrives in Montreal. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.



Figure 6. Giant banner with flags on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Sept. 30, 2000. Reuters Photographer/Reuters

Consistent with the attention to Potter, the diversity of the crowds lining the streets or queuing to view the casket were heavily remarked upon in text and image, in terms of the regions they represented, their ages, and their race and ethnicity. About the crowds in Ottawa, the *Canadian Press* commented:

Young mothers with babies, teens in baggy pants and backpacks who weren't even born when Trudeau held office, stood with seniors patiently swatting tiny black flies brought out by the unseasonable warmth The people came from Botwood, Nfld., and Hillsborough, P.E.I.; from Joliette Que., from Winnipeg, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Victoria and Halifax.²⁹

In other words, mourners came from "sea to shining sea." The English-language press especially seemed to rhetorically work against the idea that Trudeau was only mourned by a geographically and linguistically narrow segment of Canadians. In contrast, the French-language press sometimes remarked that the crowds were heavy on anglophones and thin on francophones, especially in Montreal. For example, the

²⁹ Canadian Press. (Oct. 2, 2000). Thousands Line Tracks to Say Farewell as Trudeau Train Passes. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis. Similarly, "There were young people with blue hair, businessmen, grandmothers, anglophones, francophones, rich, and poor. A colourful crowd, in the image of the politician." In Fortier, M. (Oct. 1, 2000). Les gens de tous les milieux partagent une même émotion. *Le Journal de Montréal*, p. 3.

day after Trudeau's death was announced, *Le Journal de Montréal* focused on mourners outside Trudeau's house in Montreal, concluding that the dozens of mourners were outnumbered by journalists, and further, that most of them were older anglophones.³⁰ The focus on unity in the English-language press contrasts with the focus in the French language press on the tremendous irony that one of Trudeau's most highly prized goals – Canadian unity – had not been achieved, and perhaps that the province of Quebec was even more alienated from the rest of Canada after Trudeau's actions than before.³¹

A consistent feature of the coverage across all the sources was quoting Canadians who attributed their success in immigrating to Canada to Trudeau's vision for a multicultural society, such as in the following, emblematic account:

Around 6:10 a.m., nearly an hour before sunrise and five hours before the bronze doors of the city hall [in Montreal] would open to the public, Yvonne Orneau, a 49-year-old hairdressing instructor, became the first person to arrive at the scene. Shortly after, she was joined by Jeannette Gaboton, 55, a health-sector clerk. Ms. Orneau was an immigrant from Martinique, Ms. Gaboton from Haiti. "He was someone who was close to immigrants, who made us feel at home here," Ms. Orneau said. "It's important to be here today to salute him. He gave me the opportunity to be here. Immigrants are the heirs of Mr. Trudeau," Ms. Gaboton said.

The "rainbow" of mourners for Trudeau, as well as moments where 'O Canada' was sung in both French and English, were taken as evidence that Trudeau's goals for a society welcoming of difference across language and culture had been at least somewhat successful and that, in death, he was still capable of furthering those goals.³² A frequently reproduced Reuters photograph of two older men in the crowd outside Trudeau's funeral, one black and one white, grasping each other in apparent joy and framed by Canadian flags, became one of the iconic images of crowd response, conveying an image of "racial harmony" in public grieving for Trudeau without saying so explicitly (see Figure 7). Similarly, columnist Michele Mandel of the *Toronto Sun* wrote, "So many miles we have travelled together these last days. anglophone and francophone, immigrant and native-born – the mosaic that Trudeau had so stubbornly envisioned, gathered together as one."³³

³⁰ Gauthier, P. (Sept. 30, 2000). Un chagrin discret d'ici et d'ailleurs. *Le Journal de Montréal*, p. 2.

³¹ For example: Bourgault, P. (Sept. 30, 2000). L'échec. *Le Journal de Montréal*, p. 15.

³² Winsor, H. (Oct. 2, 2000). Mourners Pour Out Respect for Trudeau. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A1.

³³ Mandel, M. (Oct. 3, 2000). Trudeau's Death Unites Us in Grief. *Toronto Sun*, p. 5.



Figure 7. Two Men Embrace after the State Funeral of Pierre Trudeau in Montreal, Oct. 3, 2000. Reuters/Shawn Best

Of course, it's hard to judge how selective the press were to achieve these images and reports that emphasized unity. Certainly comments like Mandel's suggest that some reporters brought a fair share of sentiment and romance to their work, perhaps more commonly in the tabloid-style papers. The themes of unity and nationalism were prominent in the coverage, particularly in the English-language sources, and evidently there were images and quotes widely available to tell these stories. For those concerned about the ideological nature of "memorial broadcasting," its characteristics are there to be found in the Trudeau coverage, but the extent to which reporters imposed this frame on their stories is difficult to determine. It wasn't the same immigrants, for example, quoted across different news stories, but many different Canadians who had come from other countries and told very similar stories about the importance of Trudeau in that process. Presumably, if no sentiment or attention to emotion appeared in news coverage, it would no longer be an accurate representation of public participation in the events. Without detailed ethnographic reports on all who attended, such as those procured by Lang and Lang (1953) in their study of General MacArthur's return to the U.S., it's difficult to evaluate how the patterns that appeared in the press representations deviated from the "reality" on the ground.

Media Coverage of Dissent and Division

We could read the overwhelming evidence for narratives and images of unity in much of the Trudeau coverage as a straightforward confirmation of the press's tendency to engage in memorial broadcasting, much like Princess Diana's funeral. Thomas (2002) and Turnock (2000) have argued that round-the-clock, inescapable Diana coverage that was so insistent on the depth and breadth of British grief created a "spiral of silence" for those who were not moved or actually disapproved of mourning for Princess Di (Noelle-Neuman, 1993). The coverage has been described as breathless, hysterical, and overly selective of public responses that confirmed the narrative of a popular grief for the "People's Princess." In the end, these scholars argue, this kind of coverage was divisive because of how it excluded dissenting points of view.

This analysis does not apply neatly to the Trudeau case, despite some other similarities in the coverage. Emphasis on evidence of unity and issues about which there seemed to be some consensus, like Trudeau's championing of multiculturalism and passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, co-existed in the press coverage with a fair amount of attention to Trudeau's divisiveness and mixed record as a politician. As much as some news media sought confirmation of Trudeau's greatness, they also reserved air time for Trudeau's critics. Negative comments, whether they were from newspaper columnists, pundits, or *vox populi*, weren't saved for after the funeral – they appeared right away. In fact, the very day of his death the *Canadian Press* quoted one of Trudeau's Quebec separatist foes and former FLQ member, "Good riddance. I don't know if we'll go and spit on his tomb but it's good to get rid of an enemy like that."³⁴ Similarly, Simon Tremblay, a 19-year-old Montrealer travelling in Vancouver, did not feel constrained to take the high road, "He used the mind, the proud (pride) of Quebecers and turned it opposite to enslave them," said Tremblay. "Pierre Elliott Trudeau was not a nice guy."³⁵

These comments were not restricted to quotes from sources but appeared in news copy and editorial, such as one of the headlines on the day after Trudeau's death in *Le Soleil* which read, "A man of great victory but also of great failure."³⁶ Critical remarks and stories focusing on Trudeau's "controversial" or "divisive" qualities appeared throughout the five days from Trudeau's death to his burial, and not just in the papers in regions where Trudeau was unpopular, like Alberta and Quebec, although they were certainly prominent in those places. Even one of the citizens who lined up to sign the book of condolence

³⁴ Canadian Press. (Sept. 28, 2000). Some Quotes from Canadians on the Death of Pierre Trudeau. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis. The FLQ is the Front de Libération de Québec, an organization with which Trudeau clashed in the 1960s and into 1970.

³⁵ Canadian Press. (Sept. 29, 2000). Trudeau to Lie in State in Ottawa, Canadians in a State of Reflection. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

³⁶ Giroux, R. (Sept. 29, 2000). Trudeau est mort gagnant: Homme d'une grande victoire mais aussi d'un grand échec. *Le Soleil*, p. A6.

in Ottawa shared some harsh criticism about the national debts that remain part of Trudeau's legacy.³⁷ Particular policies and quips often surfaced in more critical coverage such as: the time Trudeau reportedly gave the finger to protestors in British Columbia; when he told western farmers to 'sell their own wheat'; his cuts to the military; his NATO policies; his National Energy Program, very unpopular in oil-rich Alberta; his implementation of the War Measures Act in 1970; and the repatriation of Canada's Constitution in 1982 without the province of Quebec's ratification. It was rare indeed for the press to contain any kind of admonition that Trudeau critics should bide their time out of respect.³⁸

Acknowledgement of Trudeau's divisiveness, ironic given his penchant for unity, was reflected in a recurring theme throughout the news coverage and commentary – the theme of "love him or hate him." This exact phrase appeared 22 times in the corpus of English-language print and TV news coverage, frequently appearing in headlines and leads. A similar sentiment appeared dozens of other times using different wording such as "Trudeau stirred the heights of admiration and hate"³⁹; "He was both loved and loathed"⁴⁰; and he left ". . . a legacy of both resentment and admiration."⁴¹ Similar constructions appeared many times in the French-language press as well, as in this lead from *La Presse*: "Aimé ou honni, Trudeau ne laissait personne indifférent" (Loved or hated, Trudeau left no one indifferent).⁴²

The "love him or hate him" idea was invariably accompanied by a second idea, as this headline puts it, "Love him or hate him, and over his career we did plenty of both, the Canada of today is the

³⁷ Canadian Press. (Sept. 29, 2000). Trudeau to Lie in State in Ottawa, Canadians in a State of Reflection. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

³⁸ Although the *Grand Prairie Herald Tribune* did when they wrote in their editorial, "It's a tough pill to swallow for those anti-Trudeautes out there, but in death, they can at least outwardly show their respect for a politician who, with maple heart on his sleeve, drove hard for his Canada. (Reproduced in *Hamilton Spectator*. (Sept. 30, 2000). A Symposium of Opinion on Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Editorial, p. B10.)

³⁹ Cambridge Reporter. (Sept. 29, 2000). Trudeau Stirred the Heights of Admiration and Hate. *Cambridge Reporter*, Opinion, p.A4.

⁴⁰ Headline in Brandon Sun, quoted in Canadian Press. (Sept. 28, 2000). Excerpts from Newspaper Editorials and Columnists Following the Death of Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

⁴¹ CTV. (Oct. 1, 2000). The Legacy of Pierre Trudeau in Montreal. *CTV News*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

⁴² Yennat, P. (Sept. 29, 2000). 35 Ans de Manchettes. *La Presse*, p. A17.

Canada of Pierre Elliott Trudeau.^{43,44} These comments and many others like it argued that while Trudeau was a symbol of some fundamental disagreements among Canadians, he nevertheless was formative to the nation as it currently stands. Canadians had to agree that he had made a tremendous impact on the nation, even if they disagreed about the nature, or valence of that impact. For example, the editorial board of the *Brandon Sun* explained, on the day of his death, ". . . there was no doubt he dominated this country like no politician before or since. That's not necessarily a compliment."⁴⁵ And *Journal de Montréal* columnist Michel Auger said on CTV: "So it's true that when he left politics he left a country that was very different than the one he brought in, but he also left a country that was far more divided than the one he brought in."⁴⁶

Despite the widely acknowledged ambivalence about Trudeau's political legacy, the press was more likely to acknowledge a kind of emotional consensus in response to his death. Auger's editorial read:

Today, there are two different types of mourning. Canada is weeping for a fallen giant, a man who defined the country. In Quebec, we lament the loss of a member of the family whom we respected in the end, even if we didn't always agree with him.⁴⁷

This conflicted response was nicely captured in an editorial cartoon in *La Presse*, in which a husband catches his wife crying in front of the Trudeau television coverage. He challenges her: "You, who fought for independence all your life! And the War Measures Act? And 'la nuit de longs couteaux'? And the arrogance? And the contempt? And the . . ." His wife interrupts him, "Yes, but what a man!"⁴⁸ Historian

⁴³ Canadian Press. (Sept. 29, 2000). Pierre Trudeau Leaves Behind Two Sons Who Resemble Their Father in Many Ways. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

⁴⁴ Similarly, in *Le Devoir* the day after his death: "Tellement vaste a été l'influence sur le pays de Pierre Trudeau, aujourd'hui encore encensé par les uns et honni par les autres . . ." [So vast was the influence on the country of Pierre Trudeau, today still idolized by some and reviled by others . . .] (Dion, J. (Sept. 29, 2000). L'homme qui façonna le Canada d'aujourd'hui. *Le Devoir*, p. A1.)

⁴⁵ Canadian Press. (Sept. 28, 2000). Excerpts from Newspaper Editorials and Columnists Following the Death of Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

⁴⁶ CTV. (Oct. 2, 2000). Assessing the Late Pierre Trudeau May Prove a Daunting Task. *Canada AM*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

⁴⁷ Auger, M. (Sept. 29, 2000). Les Deux Deuils. *Le Journal de Montréal*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Élie, P. (Oct. 1, 2000). Editorial Cartoon. *La Presse*, p. A18. 'La nuit de longs couteaux' is the expression used in Quebec to refer to the deal made by Trudeau with Canada's premiers to ratify the Constitution in 1982, without Quebec's agreement.

Stephen Clarkson agrees with the view that despite many differences, there is a common thread between the emotional responses of Canadians both inside of and outside of Quebec:

All these emotions that well up in the Quebec nationalist breast attest to Trudeau's negative power in the Quebec imagination. This demonization does not negate his charismatic appeal. It confirms it: for, if this man is such a source of anger, it is because his magic was feared.⁴⁹

The impression one gets from the Quebec papers is of inner struggle. On one hand, Trudeau was one of their own and was "coming home" to be buried, but on the other hand, he had been enemy number one for separatists and sovereigntists. As *Le Soleil* columnist Michel Vastel put it, "In coming home with one flag [the Canadian flag and not the Quebec provincial flag], the "home" of Pierre Trudeau is still 'elsewhere' for a lot of Québécois."⁵⁰

Despite divided opinion about what exactly Trudeau had meant for Canada or for groups within Canada (or opposed to it, as some Québécois position themselves), he provided a common object of attention and memory – "everyone" participated in the remembering, even if they came to different conclusions about the same events. He was a symbol of Canadians' engagement with and connection to national politics, of the nation's ascent to greater international stature, and he was inseparable from a rather long and pivotal period of Canada's recent history, a period of formation and modernization. The felt obligation or compulsion to remember and observe did not necessarily indicate reverence and respect for the man and his policies, but acknowledgement of his relevance to national group membership. And in participating in the memorial activities, even if it was only watching the ceremonies on television, citizens were participating in a kind of national communion, defined by simultaneous attention toward a common object. As Anderson (1983) argues, national identity is an artifact of the illusion of communion with dispersed, invisible others, made possible in part by mass media.

The fact that the generational divide, between those who did and did not remember Trudeau, seemed to generate as much media attention as the other more obvious national divisions, such as between francophone and anglophone or among the eastern, western, and central regions of Canada, highlights the importance of shared knowledge, shared memories, and moments of perceived simultaneity as components of national identity. While those across political divides could agree to disagree, those across generational divides could hardly have a conversation. The synchronic participation of Canadians would mean nothing if it didn't have some kind of lasting impact in the future. This was why, the *Ottawa Citizen* argued, parents like Jean and Nancy Ward brought their young sons to witness the Trudeau funeral in Montreal. Jean Ward explained their reason for being there, saying ". . . they'll remember that they were at Pierre Trudeau's funeral and it will mean something to them, something they can tell their

⁴⁹ Clarkson, S. (Sept. 30, 2000). History's Judgment Will Mirror Our Values. *The Globe and Mail*, National News Special Report, p. P6.

⁵⁰ Vastel, M. (Oct. 3, 2000). Pierre Trudeau: Le voilà chez nous. *Le Soleil*, p. A2.

children."⁵¹ When Trudeau died, new collective experiences, moments of drama, and iconography were added to Canadian public memory, incorporating new Canadian citizens into a memory or point of reference that the group would now hold in common. The *Ottawa Citizen* editorial board echoed this analysis when they wrote:

Trudeau's death, then, has provided us with a collective memory that can, at its best, serve as a symbol for our sense of "nation-ness." In the days since his death we have been given a frame of remembrance by which we can, if we will it, imagine a lasting Canadian community.⁵²

Where the experience did not happen, as in highly separatist parts of Quebec where it was reported people were paying very little attention, or among some youth who professed ignorance or indifference to Trudeau's death, the felt lack of membership in the national group was also performed.^{53, 54, 55}

The consistency of the trope of "love him or hate him," combined with the anxiety about generational divides, suggests something that is important to keep in mind when examining media events and political spectacles. It is the consensus about relevance to the group, in terms of shared experiences and public memories, that drive national observances as much as, if not more so than substantive consensus on issues of policy or even shared affect toward a specific individual or event. This is Schwartz's (1991) conclusion about the overwhelming response to Lincoln's death – people were responding to the perceived threat to the nation as a whole, to the idea of the United States, and acknowledging the pull of Washington on their allegiances. In the process, the "collective effervescence" (Durkheim, 1912/2001, p. 268) produced by the civic rituals transferred to Lincoln and transformed him from a controversial, divisive political figure into a national hero; in fact, into George Washington's successor as an icon of American political leadership. In both imagery and text, Lincoln was obliquely but consistently framed as a 19th

⁵¹ *Ottawa Citizen*, (Oct. 4, 2000). The Roots of Community. News, p. A16.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Thanh Ha, T. (Sept. 9, 2000). Quebec Cool to Trudeau's Illness. *The Globe and Mail*, National News, p. A6; Canadian Press. (Sept. 29, 2000). Trudeau to Lie in State in Ottawa, Canadians in a State of Reflection. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

⁵⁴ Reports on youth were very mixed. They ranged from young people confessing their indifference and ignorance about Trudeau to youth saying that they credit Trudeau with aspects of Canadian culture that they had grown up with and taken-for-granted: such as multiculturalism, bilingualism, and federal youth programs.

⁵⁵ However, another narrative about Quebec response was that Trudeau's death, in combination with the death of former Quebec premier René Lévesque some years before, signaled the end of an era when politicians had stature and integrity, even though their rivalry had been profound.

century Washington – a newer founding father (Schwartz, 1991). I argue that a very similar process occurred with Trudeau in 2000.

Ritual Transformation

The day of Pierre Trudeau's funeral, a driver for the Toronto school board decorated his long yellow bus with paper flowers in the form of a Canadian flag. It was a simple gesture of affection, an inarticulate crying out in a country not given to such things.

An anthropologist would understand. In a deep and spontaneous reflex often practised by other societies, but seldom, until now, by English Canada, Pierre Trudeau is being transformed into a culture hero, the embodiment of his nation.⁵⁶

Similar to the journalist who wrote the above quote, I would argue that the “collective effervescence” created by public participation, both mediated and embodied, combined with the features of the ritual drama that unfolded after Trudeau's death to transform him from a former prime minister into a kind of “founding father” of modern Canada. In a country not known for celebrating, or even being overly familiar with, former prime ministers and other historical figures, this is a noteworthy outcome (West, 2002).

After the tributes at Trudeau's home in Montreal, the lying-in-state in Ottawa, the progress to Montreal, and the lying-in-state in Montreal, the zenith of ritual drama came toward the end of Trudeau's funeral service when Justin Trudeau, his eldest son, delivered a eulogy. An excellent public speaker and handsome to boot, Justin's speech arguably was, and was widely proclaimed to be, captivating. Beginning with a wry literary allusion, “Friends, Romans, countrymen . . .,” the young Trudeau went on to recount amusing and heartwarming stories of his childhood, when his father was prime minister and, after his separation from Margaret, a single dad to his sons. He described the moral education he received from his father, and then segued seamlessly into the moral education that Trudeau had given Canadians, saying “This simple tolerance and (recognition of) the real and profound dimensions of each human being, regardless of belief, origins, or values – that's what he expected of his children and that's what he expected of his country.” Justin transitioned between English and French through the speech, going on to say “My father's fundamental belief never came from a textbook. It stemmed from his love for and faith in all Canadians and over the past few days, with every card, every rose, every tear, every wave and every pirouette, you returned his love.” Having rhetorically established the equivalency between Trudeau's care for his sons and his care for his country, Justin ended his eulogy, choked with tears “Je t'aime papa” (I love you, Papa).⁵⁷ He then walked over to the flag-draped coffin and lay his head on it, weeping. Needless to say, this was the image splashed across the front pages of Canadian newspapers the next day, as well as shown repeatedly as the concluding image in the story of Pierre Trudeau's life on television. As Hariman

⁵⁶ Conlogue, R. (Oct. 10, 2000). Hero of English Canada. *The Globe and Mail*, Comment, p. A15.

⁵⁷ Gray, J., & Ha, T.T. (Oct. 4, 2000). 'Je t'aime papa.' *The Globe and Mail*, National News, p.A1.

& Lucaites (2007) have suggested about iconic images in general, the photo connected the abstraction of citizenship to a concrete moment and gesture.



Figure 8. Justin Trudeau rests his head on his father's casket at the state funeral, Oct. 3, 2000. Reuters Photographer/Reuters

The special attention to the words "Je t'aime papa" in the television coverage, newspaper headlines, and responses from the public suggest that Justin Trudeau's celebrated speech, in combination with the public observance of Trudeau's death, created a social alchemy that transformed Pierre Trudeau into a father figure – a man who valued his role as a father to his sons, and a man who supervised the nation through its immaturity.⁵⁸ The language of family and "father figure" was used by both reporters and mourners who were interviewed, such as Jayelyn Eberle who was paying her respects to Trudeau in Ottawa and told reporters: "I saw him as a kind of father figure and when he was in office, it seemed that everything would be all right – he would protect Canada and take care of our interests."⁵⁹ *A Globe and*

⁵⁸ Although I don't have primary audience data on how people responded to Justin's speech and these words in particular, there is evidence that they did resonate based on letters to the editor, interviews with people on the street, and the great interest reported by TV stations in acquiring copies of the funeral video.

⁵⁹ Canadian Press. (Oct. 1, 2000). Canadians Share their Stories While Paying Respect to Pierre Trudeau. *Canadian Press Newswire*. Downloaded from Lexis-Nexis.

Mail columnist who attended the funeral commented on how this last utterance in Justin Trudeau's speech affected himself and members of the crowd, saying:

It was as if everyone had been waiting for five days for someone to say it. Someone had finally fingered Pierre Trudeau as the father of late 20th century political Canada, like it or lump it. It felt as if a huge weight suddenly lifted into the air.⁶⁰

Familism has been identified as a very common feature of nationalisms (Armstrong, 2005). A Canadian familism was strongly implied and even explicitly articulated in relation to Trudeau's death. The metaphor of nation as family suggests that citizens have a duty to mark the passing of the dead, and that in doing so they are affirming the relevance and continuity of the nation through time. As Mr. Cunningham from Atikokan said, in reference to his 20-hour pilgrimage to Ottawa, "Who else would you do it for but family. Our hearts told us to come here."⁶¹

However, the metaphor of the family needs to be considered in cultural context. Whereas in authoritarian cultures like North Korea, the Stalinist Soviet Union, or contemporary Syria, familism strongly implies filial loyalty and piety to leaders (Armstrong, 2005; Wedeen, 1999), in Canadian culture the idea of family may imply more flexibility. Family suggests affective ties and some obligation, but also familial conflict, rebellion, and the possibility of division. Just as in actual families, the "children" remain fractious. An article in *Maclean's* captured this well, writing:

It was ironic that someone who valued privacy and solitude as much as Trudeau should persist in this rather tender, even foolish notion of a united country. It was a bit like the patriarch of a dysfunctional family saying yes, we're damn well going to have Christmas dinner together, and we're going to put up a tree, too. But neither family nor country is easily achieved.⁶²

I argue that the lack of consensus and even the anger surrounding Trudeau's work as prime minister was not ignored, but was part of the narrative and response to his death. Conflict and division were, seemingly paradoxically, part of the story of the man so often lauded for making Canada what it is and trying to unify it. Whether his attempts to unify the country politically are viewed as successes or failures, his death — in a sense — "unified" the country in the following ways: by being part of the existing collective memory and creating a *new* moment of quasi-simultaneous national communion in his death; in being a symbol of Canada's "coming of age" on the world stage; and by being a symbol of Canada's struggle for unity and identity. Justin Trudeau's eulogy then became a new symbol and icon for collective memory. The emotion of his speech and the resulting images swept up the press and much of the public

⁶⁰ Brown, I. (Oct. 7, 2000). Love in a Cold Climate. *The Globe and Mail*, Saturday, p. R1.

⁶¹ Cobb, C. (Oct. 2, 2000). Day of Mourning, Respect as 50,000 Pay Tribute. *Calgary Herald*, p. A3.

⁶² Jackson, M. (Oct. 16, 2000). Trudeau's Cultural Legacy. *Maclean's*, p. 34.

in a Diana-like moment that felt widely shared to many Canadians, as much as any moment can be shared by a nation of more than 30 million spread across the second largest country in the world.

Media Events as Expressions and Representations of Group Emotion

The question that is perhaps most difficult to resolve is how to *evaluate* the emotional dimensions of national identity that are expressed and represented in events such as the Trudeau funeral. Critics of political spectacle are right to be suspicious of the emotional dimensions of nationalism given the many historical and contemporary examples of nationalism that are anti-democratic and oppressive, and certainly Canadian nationalism is not exempt from this critique (Lukes, 1975; Wedeen, 1999). On the other hand, the affective dimension of group membership seems unavoidable in empirical terms (Anderson, 1983). The rationality of citizenship is usually overstated and, as many scholars have pointed out, the result of over-application of Habermasian and other idealized theories of the public sphere (Marcus, 2002; Buckingham, 1997).

It's been argued that moments of "group feeling," such as that represented by the Trudeau funeral, are media constructions that privilege the media-friendly expressions of mourning exhibited by a visible minority of mourners, ignoring the apathy of an invisible majority sitting at home, thereby creating a spiral of silence. However, sociologist of emotion Theodore Kemper (2002) argues that we need to be clear about what is even possible at the level of group emotion. Because emotion is properly understood to belong to the individual, group emotion is really only when an emotion is sufficiently shared by some aggregate of people, and that in any group there will always be an emotional "division of labor." He writes:

. . . only a relatively small number of group members may actually be feeling the emotion as such, that is, with all the cognitive and physiological attributes that distinguish that emotion. In tandem with them, however, may be a very large number of group members (a 'silent majority') who do not fully feel the emotion themselves, but do not reject the propriety of feeling it in the given situation. Thus, while not personally experiencing the emotion, these bystanders, so to speak, add substance to any observation that it is the emotion the group is feeling. (Kemper, 2002, p. 63)

Kemper's perspective on group emotion is helpful for thinking about media events. Scholars of civic rituals and media events such as Princess Diana's funeral have puzzled over the seeming disconnect when people *participate* in some way in a national ritual of grieving even though they claim not to be motivated by particularly strong emotions, or when they are unable to articulate their own motivations. Although many of the Trudeau mourners quoted in the press and featured on television were more than capable of articulating their emotions and reasons for participating in public observances, some public mourners explained that paying their respects was "surprisingly emotional."⁶³ One francophone Montrealer told a reporter that she:

⁶³ Walker, W. (Oct. 2, 2000). A Country Says Goodbye. *Hamilton Spectator*, Canada & World, p. B01.

. . . never intended to come down. And then before she quite understood why, she was on her way to City Hall. "It was an impulse," she explains, apologizing for her jeans. "I had to come. I had to come and say, 'Merci.'"⁶⁴

While there was plenty of media attention to tears and people proclaiming themselves sad, the press coverage also revealed a more festive and upbeat element to the crowd response. *The Globe and Mail* reported that, among the crowds in Ottawa: "Conversations with many of those who filed past suggest it is not a need to grieve that brought them here as much as a compulsion to show respect and to say goodbye. The triumph of positive spirit over sadness."⁶⁵ Similarly, about the crowds in Montreal *Le Journal de Montréal* noted in a headline that there were "few sobs," and the *Ottawa Citizen* reported, "It was by and large a quiet crowd; there was little display of overt grief beyond a few private tears. There were no political demonstrations. Indeed, there was no overwhelming sense of mourning or sorrow at all."⁶⁶ One reporter focused on the prominence of camaraderie, even flirting, among mourners awaiting the funeral outside the Basilica in Montreal.⁶⁷ And there was inevitable interest in the celebrities and well-known figures who attended, particularly the possibility of sighting Trudeau ex-girlfriends like Margot Kidder and Barbra Streisand (the latter did not attend).

Even among those attending in person, then, there was a "division of labor" between those who cried and professed profound emotions — which constituted the majority of those quoted, if not actually in attendance — and those who had a more playful or celebratory perspective. There appeared to be a division of labor between those who felt Trudeau's passing intensely because it represented the end of an era that included their youth, and those whose connection to Trudeau was less personal because the peak of his political career had not intersected with their personal biographies (Schuman & Scott, 1989). The diversity of motivations for attending the funeral is suggested by an interview that *Le Journal de Montréal* reporter Patrick Lagace had with two Québécois who identified themselves as sovereigntists, but who nevertheless were in attendance because "It's a page of history. He was a Québécois, a man who achieved things," even though "He was no Maurice Richard," the Québécois hockey hero who had 150,000 Québécois turn out to honor him when he died in May of 2000.⁶⁸ There was also a division of labor between those who attended the events in Ottawa and Montreal or paid their respects in their hometowns, and those who "participated" less actively, by writing online condolences, watching television, or buying

⁶⁴ Mandel, M. (Oct. 3, 2000). Trudeau Unites Us in Grief. *Toronto Sun*, News, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Winsor, H. (Oct. 2, 2000). Mourners Pour Out Respect for Trudeau. *The Globe and Mail*, Nationals News, p. A1.

⁶⁶ Lagace, P. (Oct. 4, 2000). Beaucoup d'anglos, quelques drapeaux, peu de sanglots... *Le Journal de Montréal*, p.2. *Ottawa Citizen*, (Oct. 4, 2000). The Roots of Community. News, p. A16.

⁶⁷ Brown, I. (Oct. 7, 2000). Love in a Cold Climate. *The Globe and Mail*, Saturday, p. R1.

⁶⁸ Lagace, P. (Oct. 4, 2000). Beaucoup d'anglos, quelques drapeaux, peu de sanglots . . . *Le Journal de Montréal*, p. 2.

the paper. And beyond that, there were those Canadians who didn't necessarily participate in either an embodied or mediated way, but nor did they feel moved to protest. Nevertheless, in as much as a collective emotional response is even possible, Trudeau's death seemed to inspire a degree of emotional consensus, even while political disagreements persisted and were commented upon. This finding comes through from the media coverage as a whole, but also in individual comments, such as this anecdote:

In the hours after that extraordinary funeral service for Mr. Trudeau in the Notre Dame Basilica, an e-mail arrived from an old friend. He confessed himself fascinated and to a degree haunted by the public reaction to the death of the former prime minister. "There is such a profound, entirely visceral, reaction to him. I never voted for him and I thought he was terribly wrong about almost anything, but I am part of the same visceral reaction," he wrote.⁶⁹

A question that remains difficult to answer, despite Kemper's insight about a division of labor in group emotion, is how many people, or what proportion of the group feeling or expressing or substantiating an emotion, represents "enough." Turnock (2000) and Thomas (2002) argued that "only" 26% of the British public signed the online or actual books of condolence for Princess Diana, proving that the press coverage of her death contributed to a spiral of silence. However, 26% of the population of Britain participating voluntarily in marking Diana's death could also be construed as quite significant – it's a higher proportion of the population than the percentage of the American public that voted for George W. Bush in the 2004 election, for instance. Similarly, a poll conducted a week after Trudeau's burial discovered that half of Canadians felt that there had been "too much" favorable discussion of Trudeau and his contributions to Canada in the media, with about a third of Canadians in each region of the country thinking it was "somewhat too much" and from a quarter to less than a fifth thinking it was "far too much," depending on the region (COMPAS, 2000). Again, this statistic is hard to evaluate. With Canadians evenly divided between those who thought the favorable coverage was appropriate and those who found it far too much or somewhat too much, how can we characterize a "group" response? Considering that not all the coverage had in fact been positive, as the poll question implies, how should we make sense of this result? Also, given norms about the "irrationality" of political or national sentiment, could social desirability – the desire to not appear to have been duped by the media – have played a role in these survey responses? The logic of ritualized crowd behavior and the logic of atomized public opinion polls, in the end, are difficult to reconcile.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Gray, J. (Oct. 7, 2000). They Won't Profit from his Loss. *The Globe and Mail*, Focus, p. A11.

⁷⁰ The contrast in these logics is similar to the distinction between collective memory and collected memory discussed by Olick (1999), or the distinction between what can be observed at the collective level and what can be measured at the individual-level, in aggregate.

Emotion, Political Spectacle, and Citizenship

The value of emotional gestures from the public comes into focus when considering contexts in which they are withheld. If some reasonably significant proportion of people communicate their consent and support for the national group and civil society by participating without coercion in moments of national significance (as I would argue was the case with Trudeau's funeral) then it can be a powerful political statement when that ritual participation does *not* happen. To clarify this argument, I point to the work of Mandy Thomas (2001) who writes about the shift in crowd behavior in Vietnam throughout the 1990s. Participation in state-related and state-sponsored events steeply declined in Hanoi, while spontaneous participation in religious and cultural events, such as the funerals of celebrities, skyrocketed. The disengagement of the viewing audience at home is also relevant, as the nation used to "commune" for state-sponsored anniversaries and political funerals between the huge crowds in attendance and those watching on television, and now there is little interest in either attending or watching. The lack of affective connection to the state is thus enacted on a regular basis. In comparison, Lisa Wedeen (1999) explains that in 1980s and 1990s Syria, while Syrians generally participated in the public spectacles that promoted the cult of Asad, their participation was often involuntary, and the lack of enthusiasm, even cynicism about these events, was palpable.

I argue that, if we want to acknowledge the significance and legitimacy of transgressive crowds such as those in Vietnam, for example, or resistant ones in Syria, then we can't dismiss the emotional authenticity of the crowds who participate voluntarily in funerals such as those for Diana and Trudeau. Rather, we might develop criteria for evaluating the expression and media representation of crowd and viewer behavior vis-à-vis political rituals. I offer these criteria, generated from study of the Trudeau funeral in the context of media events coverage, as starting points:

- To what extent is participation voluntary, compared to participation that is organized, planned, or compelled by the state?
- To what extent are the public's gestures and voices featured in media coverage?
- To what extent is there acknowledgement of and coverage of dissenters and non-participants in the mass media?
- To what extent are there opportunities to occupy public space and express political views or identities outside of state-sponsored rituals?

These content-neutral criteria might lead us to take more seriously even those crowd responses with which we are not sympathetic. Rather than declare them inauthentic or manufactured, we might focus on trying to understand their emotional foundations and their logics. Using these criteria, the Trudeau funeral should be judged significant, even by those who hate Trudeau and his supporters. There was uncoerced participation by unprecedented numbers of citizens, if not the majority of the population; their symbolic gestures, bodily presence, and words were featured prominently in the coverage; the perspectives of dissenters and non-participants were also included, across all media sources examined; and Canadian

citizens have freedoms and many opportunities to inhabit public space and express their views and identities, and yet many still chose to "commune" through this national event.

I would argue that, in addition to the potential for media manipulation and selectivity in reporting these events, part of what makes critics uncomfortable about passionate political spectacles like the Trudeau funeral is that they contradict dominant ideologies of emotion and citizenship. Whereas emotion is normatively imagined to belong to the realm of the private, to come from within, and be unrehearsed, the crowd responses to Trudeau's death were the opposite of all these things: they fused public and private, they were liturgical and ritualized and, evidence of some spontaneity aside, fundamentally performative. These kinds of concerns were expressed about the Trudeau mourners, with critics worrying that people only showed up for the benefit of the cameras and only acted as they did because they had seen it all before on television. Kitch and Hume (2008) argue similarly about American culture, that:

. . . in a post-September 11 culture, Americans were quick to respond to any event perceived as a national tragedy by showing up in public space with candles and flags, knowing that their vigils and makeshift shrines would be well covered by media. (p. 154)

It is the performativity and ritualized nature of this emotional expression that puts its authenticity in doubt, but this is too narrow a set of criteria to evaluate emotional expression. In fact, I would argue that this kind of expression in public space is by definition performative. To place one's body in public space with fellow citizens is to make oneself a publicly available sign to be viewed by others. Actors in public space gravitate toward a common lexicon of bodily gestures, songs, and phrases in order to communicate to themselves and their fellow citizens all the more effectively.

As theorists of emotion now argue, the concept of identity, such as a national identity, presupposes emotion (Marcus, 2002; Berezin, 2001). Mabel Berezin in particular emphasizes that national identity is a cultural phenomenon, and that public political rituals play a role in making such a structure of feeling possible. Berezin (2001) could be referring to the rituals surrounding Pierre Trudeau's death when she writes:

Public political rituals serve as arenas where ritual actors, both participants and observers, blur the boundary between self and other, self and nation-state. These temporary arenas, "communities of feeling," dramatize political identity or felt membership in the national polity. (p. 84)

In other words, Berezin argues, emotion is an "alternative political logic" that uses public space in order to create feelings of belonging even in a pluralistic society (Berezin, 2001, p. 97).

The ritualized emotional scripts that we see in media events and political spectacles do not so much point to superficiality and a lack of originality, but this communicative logic. Berezin writes:

Ritual eliminates indeterminacy in social space through the carefully staged crowding of bodies in public spaces, but this does not presume that ritual eliminates indeterminacy as to meaning. Ritual, by acting out emotion, includes indeterminacy Solidarities and memories – the identities of subjects who have gathered under similar circumstances – may be extremely fluid. (Berezin, 2001, p. 94)

While many perspectives and reasons for attending or watching lay beneath the public response, the observances surrounding Trudeau's death, both in person and through media, reinforced Canadian identity. For a short while, these activities made national group membership an experiential and emotional reality, concretizing what is otherwise an abstraction of Canadian identity.

The new "data point" provided by Trudeau's funeral in Canada shows that media events were alive and well at the turn of the 21st century. It illustrates the symbolic and emotional power of the voluntarily participating crowd in civic ritual, especially in light of the availability of critiques of Trudeau and dissent about his legacy and vision in the press coverage. The impact of people participating in public space or following the event synchronically through media, as a moment of communion on an arguably national level, for a time effectively overwhelmed the gradations and diversity of public opinion about the substantive issues that Trudeau represented.

To understand further the semiotics and significance of crowds it would be productive to have more cross-case comparison of media events – across time, national contexts, political cultures, and journalistic cultures. Political spectacle and emotional expressions of national identity continue to be relevant even in a 21st century, globalized context in which many forms of identity compete with national identities. The high holidays of mass communication when national identities are foregrounded continue to be part of an analysis of nationalism in the present day, in a context of increasingly fragmented and globalized media systems.

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