

**Impressum**

Klaus Bung: Diana: Dead as a Dodi

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**Klaus Bung:**  
**Diana: Dead as a Dodi**  
Letter to a friend in Portugal

6 September 1997

Dear Mariana,

Death and deception go together and not only by alliteration like Dido, Dodi, Diana, Di and Die (01). Est nomen omen? (02) Princess Diana has just been buried on a tiny island in a lake on a private estate, where her grave can be closely guarded and where no unauthorised persons can touch her. Without these precautions I would indeed not be surprised if in three days' time the newspapers announced that she had risen from the dead. The problem of idolatry, the formation of legends, and pious fraud is two thousand years old. Jesus too had to be buried on a private estate (belonging to the Earl Joseph of Arimathaea), in a tomb hewn into the side of a rocky mountain, a heavy boulder was rolled across the entrance, and finally as a last precaution against media intrusion and manipulation (03) a guard was placed outside the tomb - at the request of the "Jerusalem Sceptics Association". They went in a body to Pilate and said to him: "Your excellency, Sir, we recall that this impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I shall rise again'. Therefore give the order to have the sepulchre kept secure and guarded until the third day, for fear his disciples come and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead'. This last piece of fraud would be worse than what went before". (04)

So it seems to have been with Diana, media fraud after her death even worse than before. But let me explain.

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I am so glad that you are not English. Therefore I can perhaps dare to let off some steam about the hysteria which, in this country, has followed the death of Princess Diana. I would not dare open my mouth here, because I do not want to be lynched, for blaspheming against our new goddess. It is enough to make me convert to Islam which, wisely it seems, prohibits idolatry. And this is idolatry.

One would have expected these excesses, these outpourings of public grief after the deaths of one of our great dictators (Peace be upon them; they need our prayers if anyone does), an Adam Hassihn, an Idyll Amin, an Adolph Hittler, a Paul Josef Gobbles, a Guiseppe Stalin, a Ginseng Khan, a Lame Tambour, dutifully and passionately mourned by each and every one of their devoted subjects, but not for a woman who had contributed nothing lasting to history, like those great men did. How can such grief be created in a democracy where no force and no fear is used? Perhaps we do not need dictators. We conform and fall in with the expected sentiments even before we are compelled. Our dictators do not need to use force since their techniques of persuasion are so powerful.

"Fuck the Pope. God bless King Billy and his fleet" (05) is sprayed on Glasgow railway bridges. Will any poet ever spray: "Fuck chaste Diana! Bless our Gracious Queen!"?

Princess Diana died on Sunday, 31 August 1997. Her funeral took place on 6 September 1997. The public hysteria whipped up by the media over her death is incredible. The empty minds of shallow people need an emotional adventure (similar to their self-righteous anger displayed during the Gulf War, the enduring loathing for the child murderess Myra Hindley (06), and the like). Panem et circenses! (07) These are all deeply satisfying emotions, and we must be grateful for the people, even if they be criminals, who give us a chance to release them. People with such needs are being stirred up by the media and in turn give them a subject to reflect upon - a positive feedback circuit, like a swing, working itself up to ever greater heights, trying to break all records.

The greater the crowds reported by the media, the more people are induced to join them and to think they have lost somebody who was important in their lives. How empty these lives must have been! Otherwise why would these people feel compelled to project their affective needs onto a public figure, a film star, rather than having their lives filled by relations with their personal friends, their families, their work, their interests and hobbies, their books (for those who can read), &c. Is there not enough to love, to enjoy, to lose, to miss, to be sad or content about in our private lives?

"The biggest funeral in the history of the human race" - yes, but not the greatest, and not because of the greatness of Princess Diana or the extreme love of the people, but merely because of the availability of the media which made her life, her fame and

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the excesses of mourning possible, a Moloch, which needs to be fed with emotions, however false, continuously.

Sing all: "Worthy is Diane who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And the beast said: Amen." (08)

Diana had her Mark Antony in the pulpit and, outside the Abbey, a receptive crowd wary of their rulers. "Here was a Princess! When comes such another? (09) During the last year of her life she proved that she needed no royal title to perpetuate her particular brand of magic", said her brother, the Earl Charles Spencer, during his tribute at Westminster Abbey, with a stab (10) at the friction that had existed between Diana and the Royal Family, to whose conventions she did not want to conform, and which ended with her divorce and with her losing the title "Royal Highness".

When the Earl had finished his speech, playing out the Princes' (11) maternal "blood family" against their paternal Royal Family, heard with consternation in the Abbey, the sound of applause wafted in from the mob outside, intermingled with muffled shouts of

"Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!  
Let not a Royal live!"

And the mourners inside the Abbey did what was demanded, saved their heads, broke with protocol and applauded the seditious Earl.

"He comes not, friends, to steal away your hearts.  
He is no orator, but (as you know him now)  
a plain blunt man."

But Diana would never have gained the popularity needed for her continued magic, had she not married Prince Charles first. Her royal status made her ordinariness endearing to the people.

Charles launched her on her career as Queen of Hearts, a pretentious title. It was an unlucky choice: its original holder was the unfortunate British Princess Elizabeth (1596-1662) (12), almost proverbial as Queen of Bohemia (13), who had to live in exile for 40 years and is now buried in Westminster Abbey. It was the Queen of Spades who ultimately enthroned Diana as Queen of Hearts. The memory of her fate will be as sad as that of the Queen of Hearts, Queen of Bohemia. Est nomen omen? (14)

There are countless ordinary people who have her human touch, her kindness and compassion. I have a friend, let's call her Pilar for she wants to remain anonymous, who works in England, supports a large poor family in the Philippines, sends almost half her meagre income to them, and spent all her adult life working for the welfare of others, while at the same time neglecting the most urgent of her personal needs, because she is unable to say No

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when faced with the needs of others. And she is not alone in this world. Her life is not, and will never be, glamorous, and nobody except me will make a fuss about her virtues, her humanity, her unselfishness, her deep concern with human suffering. I am happy and honoured to have known Pilar, but I do not care particularly about Princess Diana. I have somebody good to admire much closer to home. Nobody will comment on Pilar's normality or enthuse over her saintly way of feeling and acting, not even those who know her closely, because nobody is particularly surprised by it. We all expect normal people to behave like normal people.

If Pilar had visited a children's hospital or touched a cancer or an AIDS victim with exactly the same love and affection as Princess Diana, as on occasion she has done with friends in that condition, the sufferer would not have been as impressed as Diana's protégés were. They were impressed not by Diana's humanity but by her royalty.

She had, through her royal status, been raised above the level of normal people. It was expected that, as a result, she would be stand-offish, formal, perhaps even uncaring: "Qu'ils mangent de la brioche" (15). The fact that she, unexpectedly, retained that human touch endeared her to the people. They were astounded by the combination of glamour and humanity, as paradoxical as that of divinity and humanity in Jesus. She acquired her glamour only through the royal connection (since there are innumerable other women as beautiful as her), and she is not unique in having the human touch.

Take the case of Jesus. He was not particularly virtuous (he was an anarchist, glutton and wine-bibber, drug addict, companion of sinners, whores and politicians) (16), his ethical teachings contain nothing that has not been preached by other wise men before him (Socrates, Confucius, the Buddha, &c), many were more compassionate than he (e.g. the Buddha, who did not restrict his compassion to human beings but taught us to love and respect all sentient beings) and his suffering was no worse than that inflicted daily on countless other human beings (torture in Algeria during the war of liberation, in Germany under the Nazis, today in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, &c.). Yet he was immensely popular - popular unto death. What was special about him was only the notion that he was divine, the son of God, that he underwent his humble birth in a stable, his suffering, voluntarily: he could have continued to live like a royal in heaven - in splendid isolation. But he chose to do otherwise.

Diana's brother, the Earl Spencer, reminded us that Diana, in Greek mythology, was the Goddess of hunting, and that yet Princess Diana, was the most hunted person in the world. He wisely failed to mention that Diana was also the Goddess of Chastity. A Blackpool miner, angry about the public hysteria and missing his football programmes on television, was heard to say "Fuck Diana" and was promptly accused of necrophilia.

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Diana's lover, Dodi Al Fayad, who died with her (some people spoke of a "Vorspiel und Liebestod" (17)), has given rise to a new simile in the English language: "Dead as a Dodi" (18). Unkind people have already started misusing the new expression: "Diana can be forgotten now. She is as dead as a Dodi." Elton John, who sang "When I am laid in earth" (19) during the funeral service at Westminster Abbey, has started work on a new opera, entitled: "Dodi and Aeneas", a project which has outraged lovers of Purcell and Berlioz (20) and the anti-gay lobby alike.

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now," urged the orators. The public frenzy made itself felt even in India, where Mother Theresa decided to die (5 Sep 1997) on the day before Diana's funeral. She was getting jealous of all the publicity for Diana and wanted to get in on the act while the public still had a few tears to shed. She will receive a state funeral in India next Saturday. The conductor Sir George Solti decided to follow suite (sic!) on 6 September, the day of Diana's funeral. The pop singer Chris de Burgh wrote a song in Diana's memory in which he talks of a new star that has been added to the night skies. People are already demanding not only that our monarchy be more pliable, but the installation of a new Holy Trinity: Theresa, Diana and George - Mother, Daughter and Holy Ghost. Perhaps a new Church of New England will be founded to accommodate that Trinity. In Holland, pressure is building up for the Pope to join the big exodus and make way for a democratic mastiff.

The question arises whether Diana was simply ambitious (21), - as her funeral shows, successfully so. "When that the poor have cried, Diane has wept." She knew that charitable work would endear her to the British people. Therefore she elected to do this.

Having no need to earn a living and having enough money, she had time to devote herself to good causes. But is it not infinitely more difficult to run an ordinary household, live with a poor and ordinary husband, bring up four children in suburbia, with all the boredom and duties that entails, to care for sick friends, relatives, ageing parents, than to go on trips to African minefields, to Bosnia, to assist in heart operations, go to orphanages, shake hands with AIDS victims &c? Work in these conditions is hard and boring for people whose daily jobs they are.

But such visits become glamorous and highly rewarding for a Princess who floats in from the outside, however often, acts out of character (by playing at being ordinary, which she is not), and knows that she is being applauded, admired and loved for being so much "like us", considering that she is so utterly unlike us.

That effect of admiration is produced even when no press is present. Therefore Diana can be called self-seeking (like most of us, but more successfully so) even when she did her good deeds away from the limelight of the television cameras.

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People blamed the media for her death, but the media only reflected the obsession of the general public with Diana. Those who were mourning today were those who yesterday bought the newspapers in which they wanted to see her pictures. The excesses in public mourning come from the same simple-minded attitudes which led to the excessive interest in her during her life. If the people had not wanted her pictures in the newspapers, the photographers and journalists would not have hunted her. And far from her death putting an end to this public obsession, it got worse after her death. Now people really let themselves go: no holds were barred. Why were they sad: because they could no longer hunt her. They hunted her into death and even after death - and even feel virtuous about it. They are too stupid to see the connection and dare criticise the newspapers and photographers. Not only the editors have "blood on their hands", as the Earl Spencer said, but so do all the pathetic mourners. The public obsession with Diana during her life was as bad as that after her death.

The media expressed surprise with the enormous outpouring of public emotion. But this was created by the media themselves. The media and the people are worshipping an idol, i.e. a goddess whom they themselves have created. God and gods, if they are to be any good, are man-made, custom-built. Diana was a perfect example of such a plastic goddess.

It all started with the BBC (22). I heard the accident announced on the World Service at 2 a.m. Diana's death was announced at about 4 a.m. By the time I woke up, at 9 a.m., the media circus at the BBC was in full swing: all the five BBC radio stations had been linked to broadcast only one programme - reminiscences and interviews about Princess Diana, and continued this for the rest of the day. How can one say so many useful things about one person, except by repeating the same sentiments again and again? I do not know what happened on television, but it must have been similar. Somebody very high up must have made this decision. Nothing can yet have been known at that time about the strength of public feeling.

The BBC's saturation coverage was therefore not in response to public sentiment but produced it.

At that stage the public might have been content with a few news bulletins and a few memorial broadcasts. But these days the media make total, continuous participation possible, - news carpet bombing, as they did during the Gulf War. What was done for Diana was done because it was technically possible. The available means decided the actions, as they did in Auschwitz or in Guernica. We have trains and gas: let's use them. We have bombers, let's see what they can do. "Wollt ihr den totalen Krieg", Hitler screamed. "Wir wollen ihn" (23), roared the people. "Free Barrabas, crucify Jesus. His blood be upon us and our children" (24), shouted the crowd who wanted a total execution.

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Diana's was total, totalitarian mourning.

Any member of the public noticing that their normal radio and TV stations have changed their programmes and discuss nothing but Diana, all of them, for a whole day, is being told implicitly but very forcefully that this death is a momentous event (which most clearly it is not) and that he must be very upset about it, whatever his prior feelings may have been; that Diana is extremely important, that her death is sad beyond words, and that therefore, if he does not participate, if he does not fall into line, he is a cruel, heartless, antisocial traitor, like me. Sid, the ordinary citizen, will therefore fall in with the general mood, as people did in Nazi Germany during the skilfully orchestrated Nuremberg rallies, and as people do during evangelical crusades by Billy Graham and the like. Once this has happened, the media can report the expressions of public grief and say how surprised they are about it all. But it was they that started and created it. What we have yet to see, regrettably, is the media discussing their role in this grandiose farce. Diana, poor cow, will be milked until she is bone-dry - to the bitter end.

In brief, the whole Diana circus, life and death, is a media event, created by the media and utterly impossible without the media. It tells us nothing relevant about Diana, nor about the people who mourn her - only that, these days, superlatives no longer happen, we can create them at will (as we do, also, on Save the Children Day, and other hyped up charity events.)

People are crying not because they are sad about Diana, but because others are crying. They are feeling sorry for each other. And doesn't it feel good to have an excuse for a proper weep! Grief spreads - like a virus. The media are the carriers.

I wonder whether the people who made the initial decision to deify Diana (e.g. those in the highest echelons of the BBC, and their political friends, perhaps Prime Minister Tony Blair himself) had a long-term political motive in stirring up the populace, e.g. to mould Diana into a rod with which in the future to beat or threaten the monarchy; to put pressure on the royals, as they did during the week of mourning when they successfully pressurised the Queen into breaking with royal protocol: by prematurely returning from Balmoral to London, by flying the Union Jack at half-mast over Buckingham Palace and by inducing the Queen, contrary to tradition, to speak to the nation on television. Only that would explain what happened, or rather, what was made.

The Prime Minister and the Labour Party have now appropriated Diana and made her the symbol of their cause, a "People's Queen" for a new Britain and new Labour, against Toryism and old-style monarchy. If the Falklands War won Mrs Thatcher a new term in office, so will Diana (if nothing else) win Labour the next election.

Here is new Labour's new war cry:

I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,  
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot:  
Follow your spirit; chase the Queen and shout.  
Cry 'God for William, Harry, and Diane'. (25)

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12 September 1997

#### DIANA'S WAKE

The body of this letter was written on the day of Diana's funeral. But the public hysteria has not ended yet and its patriotic dimensions are coming to the foreground. On 10 September, Fabio Piras, a Sardinian tourist, was given a one week prison sentence for having stolen a teddy bear that a member of the public had put down among the flowers at St James's Palace as a tribute to Princess Diana. On appeal this sentence was reduced to a one hundred pound fine. Fabio Piras was punched in the face by a member of the public when he left the court after having won the appeal. He was a foreigner.

On 11 September two 50-year-old ladies from the Slovak Republic were given prison sentences of 28 days each for having stolen eleven teddy bears and a number of plastic flowers from the pile of tributes outside Westminster Abbey. In defence they said it was the custom at Slovak funerals to take home tributes left on the grave, as a memory of the dead. The teddy bears were dirty, and the women thought these would be thrown away. The judge justified his severe sentence by saying he had to take current public sensitivity into account; Nazi justice on the basis of healthy popular sentiment (gesundes Volksempfinden).

What a civilised judge should have taken into account is the law, and nothing else. That's why we have to study law at university for many years and why we have judges and courts, rather than revolutionary tribunals and lynch mobs. Unhappily these poor foreigners had strayed into an atavistic society where they were punished not for theft but for sacrilege and blasphemy.

Diana, like God in blasphemy cases, does not give a tinker's curse about a handful of flowers or gifts taken from the tons which the people had piled up in the street: in cases of blasphemy God is never offended and never reacts. Only his henchmen do, with lust and with a vengeance. When Jesus blasphemed (26), High Priest Rumpelstiltskin became as furious as an Ayatollah and rent his clothes. "'He is the Devil, he is the Devil! What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy', shrieked the little man, and stamped his right foot so hard in the ground that he could not draw it out again. Then in his fury he took hold of his left leg with both his hands, and pulled away so hard that he tore himself into two halves". That is the grim truth. Is this the way English justice is going in Diana's wake?

Good night, lady; good night, sweet lady; good night, good night.  
(27)

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**NOTES**

**Note for editors:** Some of the footnotes are spoofs; they are an integral part of the essay and it is intended that they should be printed. The 'serious' footnotes can be omitted at the Editor's discretion.

1. Even "paradise" has turned out to be an extension of Di (singular: para-Di - plural: para-dise). "The deaths of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her lover, Dodi al-Fayed, raised many questions for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Did Di die a Muslim? Gujarati wives certainly thought so. Around the country, reports surfaced of women seeing visions of Di in Paradise." (Q News, The Muslim Magazine, No 281-3, Jan 1998, London, p 15, col 2)
2. Nomen est omen. = A name is an omen.
3. The name of the Head of the Associated Press Agency at the time is no longer known, but his successor, called Saul, later switched sides, became Minister of Propaganda, and was so successful that, like Diana, he was made into a saint. His pen name was Paul.
4. Matthew 27:64
5. This is not an invitation to copulate with that pious man but a conventional way in which deeply religious protestant Scots and Irishmen express their distaste of him and air their deeply held religious feelings. King Billy, by contrast, is deeply loved by them. He was the protestant King William of Orange of the Netherlands who, in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, defeated the catholic King James II. If Diana were to be usurped in the propaganda battle of one political party against another, she might similarly become the object of extreme expressions of affection or distaste.
6. In 1966 Myra Hindley and her lover Ian Bradey were convicted of murdering two children. The court accepted that young Myra Hindley was motivated largely by her infatuation with Ian Bradey. Bradey alone was convicted of the murder of yet another child. A few years later Myra Hindley confessed to the murder of two more children.

She claims that she has been reformed and led to repentance through her stay in prison. This claim is accepted by Lord Longford and a small group of people who campaign for her early release. Popular opinion, however, sees her as an incarnation of evil so that no politician, since he depends on votes, could dare to support any parole for her.

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It is customary that people who receive life sentences do not serve more than 30 years in prison and that their cases are reviewed by the parole board after 10 years, 25 years and then every five years. David Waddington was the British Home Secretary (Minister of the Interior) who had to consider the Myra Hindley case in 1990 and did not dare to release her because of the public outrage which made itself heard at the mere suggestion. Home Secretary Michael Howard considered her case in 1997 and came to a similar conclusion. He informed Myra Hindley that she would not leave prison alive. (See THE TIMES, London, 23.1.97). These decisions are not based on the consideration whether Myra Hindley "merits" release at a particular time (in the eyes of a professional person, unguided by prejudice and emotion, e.g. judge, a minister of religion, c.) but on the question whether public opinion would approve of it. The 30-year sentence was fixed for Myra Hindley by the Home Office (Ministry of the Interior) in 1985, but this "promise of release" was broken by Michael Howard in 1997 (See THE TIMES, London, 21 May 1997). In the British justice system, politicians, who depend on the votes of the mob, are responsible for modifying the sentences (e.g. life sentences) imposed by professional and independent judges. In this sense, such prisoners can be called "political prisoners", and our system of justice, in this respect, a form of mob justice.

Books on Myra are:

Jean Ritchie: "Myra Hindley, inside the Mind of a Murderess". Grafton Paperbacks, London, 1991;

and: Fred Harrison: "Ian Bradey and Myra Hindley: the genesis of the moors murders", 1987.

Books on Myra Hindley are difficult to obtain in British Libraries. In 1997, I searched for the books by Ritchie and Harrison in five successive libraries who listed these books in their catalogues, only to find that no copies could be found. They had been lost, or not returned. I am not sure whether readers destroy them in anger, or steal them because they are fascinated by them.

On 18 Sep 1997, a portrait of Myrna Hindley, part of an exhibition of paintings at the Royal Academy in London was damaged by two members of the public who objected to it being shown. The MIRROR (a mass circulation newspaper), roared its approval in a front page headline: "Exhibited by the Royal Academy in the so-called name of art. Defaced by the people in the name of common decency." (The Mirror, London, 19 September 1997, p 1). The spiteful headline echoes the Nazi campaign against "entartete Kunst" (degenerate art) and the destruction of art in the name of the people in Nazi Germany and in

communist Russia.

"England erwache, Myra verrecke!"  
(England awaken, may Myra rot in hell!)

7. Give the people bread and sports to keep them content!
8. Revelation 5:12 and 14
9. Various quotes in this essay are from Shakespeare: Julius Caesar, 3.2: "Friends, Britons, countrymen"
10. "This was the most unkindest cut of all!"
11. Princes William and Harry are the sons of Diana and Prince Charles. Prince William is second in line to the British throne, after Prince Charles. Their uncle, Earl Spencer proclaimed during his funeral oration that his family, their "blood family", would take a strong hand in deciding how they should be brought up, differently from the traditions in the royal family.
12. Not, of course, identical with Queen Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603). She was granddaughter of Mary Queen of Scots.
13. People used to drown their sorrows in the many English pubs which used to be named after her.
14. For more information, see:

Carola Oman: "Elizabeth of Bohemia" (1938).

The biographer's name, I swear it, is not an invention of mine! "The nickname 'Queen of Hearts' which was to be hers for life fasted upon her. But in the Spanish Netherlands, and other parts of Germany, the fair royal lady who was deemed by her ambition to have brought such calamity to thousands, was bitterly dubbed 'the Helen of Germany'. She did all she could to refute the suggestion that from worldly and selfish motives she had goaded her husband to snatch a crown. She realized that even her present hosts considered that, except from the domestic point of view, their nephew's alliance had not fulfilled expectations. (Oman 1938, p 255)

Maurice of Nassau said of her: "The Queen of Bohemia is accounted the most charming princess of Europe, and called by some the Queen of Hearts. But she is far more than that - she is a true and faithful wife and that too, of a husband who is in every respect her inferior."  
(Oman, p 277)

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15. Let them eat cake (attributed to Queen Marie Antoinette, 1755-1793, when she had to bite the dust)
  16. Matth. 11:19: "A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and other sinners."
  17. Foreplay and Love Death (Wagner: Tristan and Isolde)
  18. "Dead as a dodo" is the ancient version prescribed by Royal Protocol.
  19. Dido's farewell aria in Purcell's opera "Dido and Aeneas".
  20. Henry Purcell (1659-1695) wrote the opera "Dido and Aeneas" and the Funeral Sentences which were sung at the beginning of the funeral service in Westminster Abbey. Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) covered the same subject in his opera "Les Troyens".
  21. "If it was so, it was a grievous fault."
  22. The British Broadcasting Corporation
  23. Do you want total war? We want it.
  24. Matthew 27:25
  25. Shakespeare, Henry V, 3.1:31-34. Princes William and Harry are the sons of Diana and Prince Charles. Prince William is second in line to the British throne, after Prince Charles.
  26. Matthew 26:65
  27. Shakespeare: Hamlet, 4.5:70