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THE TWO BODIES OF ACHIEVED CELEBRITY

Abstract

From Medieval to Tudor times, the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies was fundamental in government and the reproduction of social order. The doctrine held that the body of the Monarch is simultaneously mortal and immortal. In terms of the hegemony of the power regime, this was given by God. It has long been assumed that the rise of Liberal Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy put an end to Royal absolutism. This paper uses the political thought of Carl Schmitt and Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz to examine if this assumption is valid. The paper argues that the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies survives in greatly translated form. The highest achieved celebrities today have two bodies, the one (biological and incorrigible), the other (mediated and incorrigible). The paper uses data from the

posthumous existence of the highest achieved celebrities to substantiate this proposition. In turn, this leads to the beginnings of an enquiry into what the role of achieved celebrity in Liberal, Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy i.e. a society based on the principle of homogeneous equality, might be.

It is in the nature of ascribed celebrity to make ultimate appeals to the necessity and relevance of its *raison d'être* by reaching out to the rubrics of cosmology and tradition. After all, in the matter of ascribed celebrity, fame is not primarily a subject of talent, skill or accomplishment. Rather, it is the gift of

heredity (Rojek 2001). Prestigious bloodline delivers public renown, so that even an infant of royal blood is instantly famous. This is a direct reflection of immemorial privilege and custom. Typically, it is originally justified on *a priori* grounds, by reason of popular faith in the decree of a deity, a group of deities, or some other supernatural force, of this sort. Historically speaking, this is apparent in the doctrine of the king's two bodies. To our way of thinking, it is absurd to claim that a mortal can have two bodies. **Granted, most people would like to think that they are remembered when they are gone. But in ordinary life, the notion that a body can, by right, be an immemorial, ongoing, developing, political, cultural and economic force in subjectively meaningful relations with *strangers* would be rejected as unsound.** Conversely, for the Tudor Kings of England, and their courtiers, it was an article of faith, no less obvious and steadfast than the certainty that the sunset will be followed by the sunrise. The doctrine may be

investigated here to clarify some of the unusual features of ascribed and achieved celebrity, and the metaphysical nexus that both ultimately, share.

In this respect the hitherto neglected work in Celebrity Studies of Carl Schmitt and Ernest Hartwig Kantorowicz will prove to be useful resources. Before endeavouring to put flesh upon these bones, it is incumbent to declare plainly that, procedurally, there are technical impediments in the path of adopting Schmitt and Kantorowicz as reputable influence's. No doubt, these have already been factors in restricting their influence in the study of celebrity. As a *Weimar* legal theorist, and, in time, a 'Crown Jurist', Schmitt participated, eagerly, and enthusiastically in the attempt to justify Nazi rule (Minca and Rowan 2014: A1; Mehring 2014). He was a fervent anti-semite. He defended Hitler's extra-judicial killing's of political opponents and the 'cleansing' of German Jurisprudence of Jewish influence (Gross 2007). His vigorous

defence of the necessity for 'he who decides the exception' in the moments of crisis faced by liberal democracy, brilliantly revealed the hypocrisy of Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy in submitting that it had done with absolutism and sovereign rule and was, *ispo facto*, morally superior. However, Schmitt's contribution was not just to invert a fallible load-bearing beam of liberalism. Inevitably, it also opened-up a pretext for justifying absolutist solutions to be imposed upon the body politic. Schmitt's writings made it easier for Hitler to bootstrap his way to dictatorship in Germany. This is hard to ignore, and difficult to forgive.

What of Kantorowicz? A disciple of the German poet and mystic, Stefan George, he was a German Jew who volunteered for the First World War and fought at the front. After the Allied victory, he returned to join the right-wing *Freikorps* militia. He was personally involved in destroying Polish forces in the Greater Poland Uprising (1918-19) and the general strike in Berlin

(1919), known as the *Spartacus* or *January*, uprising. Later, he was wounded in street-fighting in Munich, while fighting with nationalist's against the socialist government (Fleming 2016: 105). Once it became incontrovertible that Nazi racial policy put even assimilated German Jews at risk, he fled Germany in 1938. He made first, to Oxford for a short interlude, then, to the University of California, at Berkley, and finally, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. Yet his enthusiastic involvement in the *freikorps* continued to mire his work in controversy and scandal.

In mitigation, it need hardly be added that the virtues of an idea, or argument, bear no necessary correlation with the virtue, or want of virtue, in the life of the begetter. It is perfectly consistent to deplore the brutal, personal histories of Schmitt and Kantorowicz, while allowing that their respective, accounts that metaphysics are part of the composition of secular law and politics, are of interest, and

repay consideration. These resources are contributions to a phenomenology of celebrity. That is, they offer intimations which go beyond orthodox scientific and technological method in accounting for why some forms of celebrity is such a galvanizing force in subjective meaning. This is the position adopted in the present study.

In a famous historical study, it has been argued that the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies has its roots in Medieval theology (Kantorowicz 1957). Like all counter-intuitive doctrines, a little elucidation is required to illuminate this now forgotten cast of mind. After all, we are accustomed to the idea that we have a single body, which is born, matures and eventually dies. For most people this is the beginning and end of the matter. Against this, it must be said that we are not Monarch's, or perhaps it is better to say, *Tudor Monarch's*. The latter took it as an irreproachable given, that they possessed two bodies. As with all men and women, one body, is

biological and corruptible. The other is ruled by God to be incorruptible, and so eternal. In this second, but co-equal sense, the Monarch is not a mere man or woman, but a *character angelicus*, a living immortal (Raffield 2017: 37). Somewhat more than a self-regarding, cranky point of view is at issue here. It is not just that Tudor Monarchs thought about religion and embodiment in ways that contrast starkly with the present day. They also used this way of thinking, and acting, for political ends.

Consider, briefly the case of Henry VIII (1491-1547). Most readers will know that Henry VIII had six wives, and was responsible for the English Reformation. The role of the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies in his reign is less popularly appreciated. What is the issue here, and how does it relate to the topic of celebrity?

First, it is necessary to be clear about the unique nature of ascribed celebrity that Henry eventually claimed was his due. In 1503, the eleven year Henry VIII married Catherine of

Aragon, the widow of his brother, Arthur. The union failed to produce a surviving male heir. This created a major crisis in the relationship, and in the affairs of state. To Henry's way of thinking, the cause of continuity in Regal supremacy required him to have a son. This, together with his infatuation with Anne Boleyn, led him to press for a divorce from Catherine which, he knew, the Pope was unlikely to condone. Only something extraordinary could persuade Rome to grant Henry's desire for divorce. But whither the grounds? In order to understand the mind-set of the king it is necessary to remark that this was not a question that Henry asked of other men, he asked it of God. What in God's view could permit Henry to legitimately divorce Catherine?

It is not exactly accurate to say that he was 'alone' in speaking directly to God in this matter. As with all Monarchs, Henry had his advisors and cannon law experts, of whom Thomas More, Cardinal Wolsey and later, Thomas Cromwell, were the most important. Indeed, his unstable

character probably led him to be heavily reliant upon the counsel of others. Henry's advisors were tasked with the object of finding a religious pretext that would enable him to end the marriage to Catherine and take Anne Boleyn as his new bride.

The answer they found was in the *Book of Leviticus*. Henry, and his advisors, believed that a passage here, dissolved the legality of his marriage to Catherine:

If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an impurity. He hath uncovered his brother's nakedness: they shall be childless (Leviticus 20:12)

Henry was convinced that no Pope could contravene this edict. His argument was that scripture was superior to papal authority and cannon law, in faithfully interpreting the word of God (Redworth 1987:32). Leviticus provided him with the pretext to insist that only divorce would cleanse his

(unintended) sin. Even at this high point of ascribed celebrity, it was not sufficient for Henry alone, to make his case. Already, he required experts, or in the language of Celebrity Studies today, 'cultural intermediaries', to represent him to Rome and his subjects in the best light (Sharpe 2009). Foremost among his appointees was Edward Foxe, Provost of King's College, Cambridge. The tract that Foxe and his associates prepared was indeed, fit for a Monarch who saw himself as first among men, and answerable only to God. According to it, the Pope is categorized as nothing more than the 'bishop' of God's diocese i.e. Rome. In contrast, Henry is nominated as 'God's Vicar on earth'. It was not merely a distinction that privileged Henry over other Monarchs, it exalted him. This anointed position situated the King in a relation of supreme power over his dominions, the clergy and the laity (Guy 2014). By definition, no mortal was recognized to possess the authority to

question his jurisdiction. The King had a duty to God, and to God alone was he accountable.

The incisive effect of the doctrine of the King's two bodies was to achieve a type of cultural transference which, *prima facie* seems improbable, if not impossible (Greenblat 2009: 65). The immutability of the king in time was transferred from the sphere of theology, to the sphere of law. That is to say, the metaphysical pretext for granting the King consummate, earthly authority, was traced into the law books and court practices. **Divine law and public law became one.**

The logic of the law can be stated as follows. Since Man is imperfect, the ways of God are finally, beyond human comprehension. This very imperfection requires mankind to have a mouthpiece so as to correct the inadmissible ways that humans seek to fulfil God's purpose. The doctrine of the King's Two Bodies anointed the Monarch to be the legitimate steward of God's will on earth. God may be present in all earthly affairs, but his mouthpiece in England would now

be understood to be the King. The monarch then, did not claim perfection. Only God is perfect. What was claimed is that the Monarch is next in line to God in connecting the earth to the realm of the divine. The latter is finally unknowable, but propinquity to it is necessary in order to safeguard purposeful order in earthly affairs. Not only was this claim made, it carried the requirement that citizens must believe and honour it and suffer the pain of punishment if they did not. The chief consequence of this was that theology and metaphysics were, historically, the footprints upon which modern legality and politics took its cue. Revelation, drama and ritual, which were the hallmarks of Christian religion, became keynote's of Monarchical political practice (Kahn 2009: 77). This doctrine suited Henry and his advisors very well. It was highly convenient for Henry's purposes to defend the doctrine that the Monarch is the final court of earthly affairs. For it rendered the

adjudication of these matters to be ultimately subject to the King's conscience.

As Western society developed the plebiscitary form of Parliamentary Democracy, the naked influence of religious theology on political practice became sedimented with innumerable secular justifications, codicils and caveats. The fact that terrestrial factors have stepped up to take the place of the King in acting as the conscience of the affairs of mankind, did not mean that politics freed itself from its metaphysical roots. Rather, Reason, which after the Enlightenment, indiscriminately promulgated equality, liberty and justice as the fundamental Rights of Man, remained the servant of presuppositions that were metaphysical in origin.

Among them, is the false belief that destiny ordains universal reconciliation in the affairs of mankind. To this, Manichean critics have responded with the argument that the state of being, in itself, cannot be transformed into a state of being, for itself. Reconciliation is a

false hope, because the struggle between good and evil is eternal (Kolakowski 1990: 77).

The main argument of this paper is that, in the politics and culture of the present day, the doctrine of the King's Two bodies survives. But, as we shall see presently, it does so in a form much altered since the Tudor period. It has transferred over from ascribed celebrity to achieved celebrity. Before coming to this in more detail, it is necessary to go a bit further into the proposition that political theology and practice is the child of metaphysics.

Schmitt and the Dance of Liberal Fictions

Kantorowicz's argument is partly an engagement with the discredited German legal theorist and prominent jurist, Carl Schmitt (1). The latter argued famously in the 1920s, that the modern secular state is based finally, not upon the might of Reason, but upon the unacknowledged legacy of Religion. The political concepts of the

state are secularized transformations of theological precedents. The base of all politics is therefore held to be metaphysics. Normative order is raised and maintained upon this foundation. However, it comes with a major problem. The metaphysical conundrums engrained in the central concepts of liberalism, saddle Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy with intractable, repeated dilemmas of system reproduction. For Schmitt, these conundrums stubbornly recur because the essential metaphysical contradictions of liberalism are insoluble. Liberal Plebiscitary Parliaments presuppose the will of a free and equal electorate. To Schmitt's way of thinking, it is perfectly obvious that men and women are not free or equal and that multinational corporations have no political loyalties, as such, to either freedom or equality. On this reckoning, the fate of Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy is sadly, a most, onerous and pitiable one. Because the real distribution of power is contrary to what

Parliament purports it to be, the fate of Plebiscitary Democracy is to perpetually promise what, perpetually, it fails to fully deliver. Therefore, it is continually vulnerable to the objection that the system, as a whole, is not working, and is unable live up to the lofty standards that it has set itself.

Schmitt contends that, what Habermas (1975) later called 'the legitimation crisis' of Western liberalism, is part of the bricks and mortar of Liberal Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy. **The only serious question is whether it remains containable, or degenerates into melt-down.** He (1985) deploys a battery of arguments to advance this case.

Foremost among them is the proposition that the logic of liberalism is profoundly faulty. The central tenet of every known democracy is equality (Schmitt 1985: 13-16). By this token, it is incomprehensible to describe the society of the Tudor Kings as a democracy. For one thing, the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies inflexibly

arrogates divine rights to the Monarch. Henry VIII believed that he was entitled to defy Papal law because the King is the exception to the public law and the law of the Vatican. The Tudor state, therefore, determined that it is in the essence of sovereign power to have one foot in normative order, and the other in the realm of the divine. The King's power derives finally, from the popular faith that the sovereign is, so to speak, 'super-normative'. In the sight of ordinary men and women, the character of the Courtly power that surrounds him, is a *corpus mysticum* (2). This means that in Medieval (and Tudor) theology the Monarch is understood to be *potestas absoluta in terra* i.e. to be among men, but to co-exist, with autonomous motion, not given to others (Herrero 2015: 1165) (3). Democracy expunges this principle from its estate. There is good reason for this. By definition, democracy is a society of equals i.e. equal rights of enfranchisement, equal liberties before the law. It cannot defer to a law of

division between that minority who are notionally granted divine rights, and the enlightened, public who, as free citizens, do not recognize these rights for themselves. Thus, liberal democracy cannot be *truly* tolerant and inclusive. It is compelled to show a militaristic lack of tolerance and vigilant exclusivity to individuals and groups that bear heterogeneous characteristics and traits of behaviour that imperil the principle of democratic homogeneity. This compromises the claim of liberalism to be a society of equals. In its bearing towards heterogeneity, it is finally, exclusive and punitive. Schmitt (1985) attacks the principle of liberal equality from another angle. Liberal democracy proclaims equality for all living within its territorial boundaries. Conversely, it suspects and punishes aliens and foreigners because they do not conform to its standards of homogeneity. Schmitt presents this as more proof that in liberal democracies the law of Reason rests upon metaphysical sands.

Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy is, in actuality, the indentured servant of metaphysics. According to Schmitt (1985), this is far from being the end to the matter. For one thing, the proposition that liberalism is antithetical to heterogeneity means that it actively requires enemies and foes in order to uphold and refurbish its 'way of life'. This means that liberal democracies oblige a war-like orientation in their framework, if not always in their demeanour.

There is also the problem of the fictive nature of equality under liberalism. In order to illustrate what is at stake here, Schmitt (1985: 10) tellingly, alights upon the example of the British Empire (4). The British portrayed their Empire as a morally virtuous project of nation-building, on the grounds that it proclaimed and enforced equal, impartial standards of liberty and justice, wherever its flag was raised and flown. With inexorable logic, Schmitt admonishes the moral politics of this project as an absurdity. He regards it to be a

grotesque, self-serving philosophy, fit for a bargee land-grabber, but in no way acceptable to any jurist worth his salt. Of the more than four hundred million inhabitants in the British Empire of Schmitt's day, he calculated that over three hundred million were not recognized as British citizens (Schmitt 1985: 10). British ideologues fudged their rights and status by spinning constructs of administrative convenience. By designating the adopted lands as 'colonies', 'protectorates', or governed by 'mandates' or 'intervention treaties', their heterogeneous cultures were permitted to persist in their accustomed way of life, but only under sufferance to the sovereign Parliament of Westminster. If ultimate proof were needed to show the fictive character of equality in the British Empire, all that is required is to look at the condition of the 'native' population. Deprived of the franchise and the Civil Rights enjoyed by the white settler and colonial governing population, the natives are embraced by the Empire, but

strictly as subordinate citizens. The Empire depends upon their labour, but requires them to be a subject class in the public realm. When all is said and done, Schmitt (1985) concluded that, under the roof of liberal democracy, in which all nominally, enjoy the same shelter, rights and advantages, there is, in actuality, one law for the few, and another for the majority. Thus, the feted principle of equality is specious. In Schmitt's perspective, there is nothing surprising about this. If one moves away from the case of the British Empire, to consider the validity of equality as a universal political Right, things in liberalism fall apart in short order. People do not face one another as abstractions, but as 'politically interested', 'politically determined' persons (Schmitt 1985: 11). To subtract these interests and determinations from human encounters would be very far from leaving a balance of abstract equality which, 'under the surface of difference', genuinely unites mankind.

'An absolute human equality, then,' Schmitt (1985: 12), concludes,' would be an equality understood only in terms of itself and without risk; it would be an equality without the necessary correlate of inequality, and as a result, conceptually and practically meaningless, an indifferent equality.'

The New Caesarism and the Problem of Jurisdiction

Where the reproduction dilemmas of liberalism become manifest and resist Liberal Parliamentary homilies, the stage is set for strong leaders to step out of the wings and take charge (Schmitt 2005). Schmitt uses the term 'the new Caesarism' to refer to this phenomenon. The strong leader/new Caesar is an achieved political celebrity who possesses boldness combined with a clarity of vision to sweep aside the Parliamentary bottleneck and take decisive actions that count. The superior power of the sovereign leader resides in the capacity to

'decide the exception' (Schmitt 2005: 36). In spite of their differences then, Monarchies and Republics are alike in important respects. The omnipotent dictator resembles the omnipotent God, both analogically, and in terms of autonomous motion (Roberts 2015: 467). Thus, the strong leader in the Republic operates on the logic that he too possesses the power to 'decide the exception'. Correspondingly, it should be noted, this feature is a prime element in accounting for their celebrity and glamour with the public. In conditions of emergency or crisis wherein Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy is in default, liberalism, unintentionally provides for 'strong leaders' to save the day. At the time that he was writing the studies for which he remains most famous (and notorious), Mussolini and Hitler were emerging as veritable 'saviours' of their respective nations. But this is not the main component in the balance to be extracted from Schmitt's thought here.

In Tudor England, an obvious question was raised by the doctrine that the Monarch has absolute jurisdiction over people of all ranks. Was the King, who issues the laws of the land, also bound by them (Shoemaker 2017)? Not surprisingly, Henry's attempt to use Leviticus to annul the marriage to Catherine was refused by the Pope. In revenge, Henry sacked the authority and privileges of Rome. He declared himself Supreme Head of the Church of England and broke with the Papacy. Eventually, his hubris was ablated by excommunication from the Church of Rome. Far from being downcast, Henry regarded excommunication to vindicate the justice of his case. Those in England who opposed the Acts of Supremacy and Succession were brutally punished. In fine, Henry proclaimed that he had breached the rule of a thousand years, which ordained that King's rule the bodies of their subjects, while it is for Pope's to govern their soul's. Now he declared himself to be doubly empowered: the body and soul of all in his dominion were henceforth, to be at

his command. Among all ascribed celebrities in history, he determined to be first without equal.

As a case study of ascribed celebrity, Henry VIII is peerless. He was the double exception. As we have seen, merely by virtue of bloodline, the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies was sufficient to afford him instant fame. What heightened this to a stratospheric level was his insistence that he was the Vicar of God, overriding the Holy Church of Rome. Thus, he became the defender of, not only a territorialized earthly realm, but also a divine religion in defiance of Rome, which was destined to girdle the world, by means of Empire. In Christendom this was unprecedented. For our purposes, it should be noted that this was not only a matter of practical statecraft, it was also, quite deliberately, a strategy of personal aggrandizement. Henry's intent was to make his fame ubiquitous, and beyond peradventure. **The stakes in breaking with the Papacy demanded nothing less.** By his own lights, the Most High

and Most Excellent of King's, was also meant to be venerated as the world's foremost ascribed celebrity. Prior to him, no other Monarch in Christendom had sought to 'decide the exception' with such dramatic force.

Henry VIII was far from being the last English Monarch to make use of the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies as a stratagem of exceptionalism. In 1649, when the Stuart King, Charles I, was brought to trial on the charge of treason, by the leaders of the revolutionary army, of whom Oliver Cromwell was the foremost, he made repeated recourse to the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies. The prosecution alleged that the King was 'trusted with a limited power' which he rendered forfeit 'out of a wicked design to erect and uphold himself an unlimited and tyrannical power to rule according to his will' (Petrie 1935: 241). The prerogatives of Charles were condemned as sheer 'pretence' designed to 'advance' and 'uphold' a 'personal interest' against the public good, common rights, liberty, justice and peace

of the nation (Petrie 1935: 243). The heart of Charles's defence was that his prosecutor's had no lawful authority to submit him suffer trial. His privileged position over all other men and women, he argued, was 'commended', 'by old and lawful descent' directly ordained by God (Petrie 1935: 245). 'A king cannot be tried by any superior jurisdiction on earth' asserted Charles (Petrie 1935: 248). To the wrath of the Court, on this fundamental principle, he stuck to his guns. Like Henry VIII, before him, Charles insisted that he was 'God's vicar', and therefore independent of the commands and judgements of men. It came to nothing. The Court condemned him to death. On January 29th, 1649, as he faced the judgement of the axe, he was said to have commented, to the Bishop of London, 'I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown, where there will be no more trouble' (Petrie 1935: 273). To the end, he took it for granted that the King's mortal body comes to dust, while the divine body continues its immortal course.

Now, it might be considered that these matters between God and ascribed celebrity have no bearing on the analysis of achieved celebrity today. It is reasonable to suppose that the matter of the king's two bodies was settled with the execution of Charles I. To this line of argument, it might first, be objected, that the respect shown to the proposition that the dynamics of ascribed celebrity have anything to impart to achieved celebrities today, is untenable. It goes without saying that ascribed celebrity continues to be a feature of the social order. But its absolutist credentials have been falsified. The doctrine of the King's Two Bodies has no place in the world of science and one man/one vote. But is it valid to propose that achieved celebrity, which has supplanted it, is free from metaphysics or the vestiges of the *corpus mysticum* from which it emerged?

With the displacement of the Monarch from the pinnacle of renown, the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies fell on increasingly deaf ears.

Parliamentary Democracy had finally overthrown the absolutism of the Monarch, and formally, at least, crushed the divine precept upon which exceptionalism resided. Nothing could be clearer clearer or more binding. The body of the *demos* has replaced the two bodies of the King (Turner 2004, 2009). Contrarily, if anything is to be preserved from Schmitt's (1985) critique of equality, it is the insight that liberal Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy is a sham. Royal absolutism has been overcome. What remains is not however, a homogeneous, community of equals. Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy perpetuates a real heterogeneity of power, that the gloss of formal homogeneity denies. This is evident in the unequal political cultural power that the rich have in comparison with the poor. It is also apparent that some individuals, despite being formally equal with the body politic, accumulate and advance cultural capital over others, which makes them blatantly unequal in terms of status differentiation.

Within the Liberal Parliamentary system, Schmitt's (2005) principle of 'he who decides the exception' has survived in, what might be called, a 'reserve battalion' of political authority. This is perceived to provide stability and unity when the ordinary procedures of Liberal Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy are perceived as being unable to resolve major structural vicissitudes or emergencies. But this reserve battalion does not consist of ascribed celebrities. Nor is the exception concentrated in matters of politics. The attraction of 'he who decides the exception' is most keenly felt in issues of lifestyle and personal integrity. It is a matter managed by the regiment of achieved celebrities.

By way of immediately interjecting a cautionary note, it might be thought that the rise to power of elected achieved celebrities such as, Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump suggest that the public see these figures as having the power to 'decide the exception'. To be sure, it is no part of the

argument that Putin and Trump do not possess political and economic powers that can change the conditions of life for the majority of their citizens. But there is no general public conflation between them, as mortal bodies, and the divine. Moreover, their powers are recognized as technical and finite, not transcendent and immutable. Even under conditions of secularization, citizens still hunger for high trust relations with figures who can 'decide the exception' and whose actions can be revered as transcendent and immutable. On the question of these powers, over the last half century or so, there has been a slippage from the front rank of elected achieved political celebrities to the reserve battalion of achieved celebrities in the fields of, sport, television, film, music and the other branches of the entertainment industry. Students of achieved celebrity have certainly commented upon this. For example, Roach (2007: 36) operates with a version of a two bodies thesis as it pertains to achieved celebrity.

According to him, the star has corporeal body which is fated to decay and die; and a 'body cinematic', which does neither. However, he does not fully develop the implications of his insight. It is not just that major achieved celebrities have a 'cinematic body'. They are also intuitively, revered for possession what might be termed here, special powers, that are not given to ordinary mortals and influence on popular culture in ways which are transcendent and the immutable. Thus, achieved celebrities today have been proclaimed to be 'intercessionary figures, gods in human form' with a 'presence (that) spans and translates between two worlds' (Frow 1998: 202). It is considered, unremarkable to describe them as 'objects of worship' who 'mediate between internal and external reality' (Alexander 2010: 325). Theoretically, all of this suggests a deep homology between achieved celebrities and the sacred. It need not be held that the homology is, or should be, codified. The

essence of spirituality is to be transparent in practice, but unwritten.

Like Banquo's ghost, the Tudor doctrine of the King's Two Bodies has returned, but now it has exchanged its space of manifestation from the Court, to popular culture. The connection of achieved celebrity with the sacred accounts for the popular associations it has with autonomous motion, transcendence and immutability.

Strictly speaking, there is nothing exactly, new in the proposition that achieved celebrity and the sacred are enmeshed. Morin suggested that the celestial position of 'the stars' in modern culture, owes something to the popular perception that achieved celebrities possess super-natural, or quasi-super-natural, powers (Morin 2005, original 1957). The idea, one might say, has been around for over half a century. Notwithstanding this, there are many sceptics. The objections are predictable. If achieved celebrity is analogous to, or presumptive of, the sacred, what set of religious or metaphysical beliefs and

institutions is at issue: pagan, animist, Christian, Muslim etc? Is it not more persuasive to analyze the influence of achieved celebrity by making excursions into economics and politics, rather than into religion or metaphysics i.e. by investigating the commercial and political strings attached to the elevation of achieved celebrity? Nathalie Heinich has perhaps, presented the strongest articulation of this point of view. She dismisses the notions that celebrity culture entails religious connections of recognition and belonging, and Christian motifs of transcendence and immutability (Heinich 2014: 73). Instead, she regards celebrity to be a commodity, plain and simple. **Achieved celebrities are social constructions involving the labour of cultural intermediaries who work as image-makers. The processes of celebrity elevation in public consciousness, is a matter of commodification. Part of this process may involve cultural intermediaries attributing 'special powers' to the achieved celebrities that they are contracted**

to represent. This has nothing to do with sanctification, or real metaphysical powers. More accurately, it is better described as part of the process of celebrity 'image packaging'.

Heinich pushes ahead with her case by citing and critically interrogating Halpern's proposition that the 'enthronement procedures' of a celebrity on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, are analogous to the procedures of beatification in the Catholic Church, (Halpern 2007: Heinich 2014: 76). For Heinich, Halpern does not compare like with like, and therefore, his proposition cannot carry. In Heinich's view, the 'crucial' ball that he drops is that Hollywood enthronement procedures are entirely 'civil' in substance. Conversely, the Vatican's conferment of beatification is entirely religious i.e. it refers to the judgement that an act (or acts) made by a mortal is of sufficient super-normative value as to be classified as 'saintly' and, *ipso facto*, related to God.

Effectively, Heinich submits that to situate religion alongside commodification is a category error. Too much can be made of this. It is true that the pure form of religious belief is disinterested. However, saying that the pure form is disinterested in a world in which original sin is universal, does not make the representation of disinterest less compelling. Religious believers are still moved by the ideal of devotion to God, the word of Mohammed etc, even when the articulation of belief is wrapped up in financial transactions. As soon as the offertory plate found its way into the temple of religious observance, the argument that religion is separate from commodification has been tricky to make.

It is one thing to demonstrate over-confidence in the nomination of category errors, but Heinich compounds difficulties by implying that religious sentiment is absent from the culture of achieved celebrity. Like Cashmore (2006), she maintains that to explain achieved celebrity, it is not

necessary to get involved with the murky waters of metaphysics, the sacred and theology. One need look no further than the commodification process, as it obtains under fully developed capitalism.

To this it may be countered that it is one thing to pay due respect to the importance of commodification in the culture of achieved celebrity. However, very little is gained by permitting it to hog centre stage. In order to fully explain the affective intensity that first rank achieved celebrities have over subjective meaning, the question of the phenomenology of celebrity must, at least, be raised.

Phenomenology is the philosophy of experience and consciousness. A powerful component in its composition is the idea, found in Spinoza, Liebinz, Pascal, Husserl, Bergson and Merleau-Ponty, that some forms of meaning can be experienced and observed which have no name. Another way of putting this is that these forms of observation and experience exceed the capacities of science and technology (which rule

the modern world) to encapsulate them. It might as well be stated at this point, that the subject of the King's Two Bodies (and the Two Bodies of Achieved Celebrities) touches upon questions of phenomenology at every point. To bring them out in a detailed, rigorous fashion would require more space than remains at my disposal here. Nevertheless, something of what is at issue can be flagged by referring briefly, to Leszek Kolakowski's treatment of phenomenology and the ultimate questions of life Kolakowski (1972; 1987; 1990).

In one respect, if in no other, Kolakowski stands shoulder to shoulder with Schmitt in insisting that modern society is underpinned by metaphysics. Science and technology are dominant in culture because they provide technical solutions to most of life's day to day problems. Despite this, they cannot answer the ultimate questions of what is life for, why is the world given in one form and not others, and how should we live? These are questions that every child

learns, and which adults spend their lifetime's trying to answer. Might they not be of interest to question of why societies appear to need celebrity culture? Viewed from this stand point it might be said that Kantorowicz's (1956) study of the Tudor Kings and the doctrine of Two Bodies gets things back to front. It over-theorizes the political dividends that accrue from the Tudor Kings claiming immutability, and under-theorizes the need among the Papacy, the clergy and the laity for a belief in purposeful order and eternal, invulnerable levels of meaning. Viewed from this standpoint, it is possible to suggest intriguing parallels between the ascribed celebrity of Tudor times and the achieved celebrity of today. In both cases, celebrity symbolizes transcendence and, in the midst of a world hectically governed by incident's, episode's and emergencies, the reassurance of permanent, non-transparent, purposeful order. The two bodies of the ascribed and achieved celebrity at issue here, may be separated by half

a century, but in matching a felt need among citizens for a tangible physical presence to communicate transcendence and purposeful order they are at one.

Say what you will, in the literature, there is strong support for the notion that a confluence 'between finite and infinite forces', and a ready accumulation of religious symbolism, mounts-up around the body of the highest achieved celebrities (Celeste 2005: 33; Williams 2009: 41). It is surely not by chance that, like 'God', the potent, multi-layered, super-normative and sacred meanings of these figures is reduced to a single word. 'Elvis', 'Marilyn', 'Marvin', 'Dylan', 'Jagger', 'Lennon', 'Kurt', 'Amy', 'Bowie', 'Prince' etc., communicate, at once, distinctive, complex systems of escapist, transcendent beliefs, identity rituals, rites of social inclusion and social exclusion, and normative assumptions of social transactions, that have reciprocity with religion. They are doubly escapist, in that they transport attention

from the trouble-bound, apparently unstable, tension-strewn present and they suggest transcendence. Achieved celebrities symbolize escapism, purposeful order and transcendence. And what, after all, does religion mean, if not an institution that mobilizes types of meaning and experience that have to do with escapism, divine order and transcendence (Kolakowski 1982)?

Celebrity culture in its highest form, is dramatically presented and understood, as 'super-normative'. It uses religious imagery of revelation and magic to aggregate, and intensify, public narrative fantasies, and it reproduces, in translation, the doctrine of the two bodies, in ways that are acceptable to an age which has become, nominally, secular (Lofton 2011). None of this is adequately captured by invoking 'the cinematic body' as an account of the cultural impact of the most exalted achieved celebrities. To do so confines the field of analysis of technical, rational considerations (Roach 2007). The salient point here is, that in order to

explain the ultimate, boundless appeal of the most exalted, it is necessary to leave science and technology behind and enter the realm of metaphysics, phenomenology and the divine. In all of this, the ghost of Henry VIII haunts the estate.

Conclusion: Immutable Within Time

Unsurprisingly, because of their popular association with autonomous motion and transcendence achieved celebrities have regularly produced moral panics and religious hostility. In respectable society the main worry has not been so much that achieved celebrities will create a new Church, it is that they act as popular idols, drawing energies, loyalties and financial resources from the established Church. In the era of the Silent Film (1895-1927), moral panics against screen idols like Rudolph Valentino, Clara Bow, Louise Brooks and Theda Bara, ranged on the imagery of sexual licence symbolized by

their bodies. The latter were seen as escaping and transcending puritan, and respectable, boundaries, and engendering the emergence of idolaters (Cohen 2001; Koszarski 2008). These silent film idols were widely thought to possess dangerous, mysterious powers that could wreak magic, and havoc, upon the public, and conjure scripts of Godless salvation for the hopeless and the lowly. Subsequent vintages of achieved celebrity generated analogous moral panics and metaphysical, quasi-religious beliefs. Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, Bob Dylan, Marvin Gaye, David Bowie, Prince, have all been examined as, *inter alia*, metaphysical cults, crusaders of new narratives of elevated belonging, sacred icons of new religious sentiments, and beacons of non-Godly salvation (McCann 1988; Marcus 1991; Cowan 2010; Till 2010).

To be strictly balanced, in the case of all of these achieved celebrities, it is doubtful if the attribution of genuine religious status holds up. Ultimately, they have not generated a sanctified

liturgy, nor are they worshipped as the makers of undisputed miracles (8). However, their status in popular culture as idols, with exceptional, enigmatic powers of autonomous motion and transcendence, is much more persuasive.

Synthetically, the doctrine of the King's two bodies arrogated a triple lock of divine, legislative and judicial power around the body of the Monarch. Today, as befits historically significant, forms of ascribed celebrity, certain kinds of power over others are still automatically acknowledged to be at the disposal of the Monarch. The separation of the Monarch from decisive powers over the Church and the State has not eliminated honorific rights from the office. However, compared with the Tudor hierarchy of ascribed celebrity, triple lock of divine, legislative and judicial has been jemmied open.

It can be no part of any worthwhile argument to submit that the highest achieved celebrities have pirated these powers and taken them for their

own. Their position does not deliberately reside upon a divine pretext, nor is it popularly comprehended to possess a serious legislative or judicial reach. Despite this, achieved celebrity is not grasped at all, unless it is allowed that the authority and power of the highest achieved celebrities derive from the accepted, strength to 'decide the exception', and invoke autonomous motion, purposeful order and transcendence in their actions (Schmitt 2005: 36). The cultural importance of celebrity humanitarianism derives precisely from this premise. Under the 'demotic turn' part of the cultural power of achieved celebrity comes from their acknowledged right and responsibility to 'speak for us' (Turner 2004, 2009). Exalted highest achieved celebrities leave an indelible imprint upon the cultural biography of the times. Their capacity to reduce social barriers and boundaries to molten wax and reform, them according to the 'exception' decreed by the life course of the celebrity, goes much further and much deeper than the notion of 'the cinematic

body' allows. This means recognizing exalted achieved celebrities not only as a memory, indexing cultural features of a vanished era, but as a real political and cultural force that exerts influence over the actions of others in the present. Exalted achieved celebrities have become the unelected representatives of the people. The fact that their actions are formally unaccountable, does not impair their effects. The exceptionalism of autonomous motion and transcendence has a tenable, trans-historical significance. The two bodies of The Tudor King expressed first a biological fact and a relationship with the body politic. The corrigible body dies, as all bodies must. However, the incorrigible body is understood to be 'immutable within time' (Greenblatt 2009: 64). Like angels and spirits, they span the ages. The two bodies of the highest achieved celebrities have the same quality and same purpose, which is to symbolize continuity in the body politic.

A cliché in a certain kind of (functionalist) sociology is that the individual is an *atom* of society. To extend the analogy, the biological life-term of the highest achieved celebrity is a crystal ball through which one may legitimately, hope to survey and understand the entire society and culture of the era and provide a routeway to the future. It is not fortuitous then, that the death of such a specimen produces waves of mourning and tributes that are not limited to the fan-base, but are culture-wide, unbounded in duration (we still 'miss' Elvis, Marilyn, Marvin and more lately, Michael, Amy and David). Despite being physically dead, they are palpably present in culture.

One initial, concrete articulation of this, is the assembly of 'spontaneous shrines', to commemorate a celebrity supernova (Santino 2001). Fans, and people who would otherwise be bystanders, are caught-up in official, socially inclusive, ceremonial commemorative rituals. It is one thing for the people to leave flowers,

messages and other offerings at a site associated with a beloved deceased Monarch or political leader. This is what one would expect of a dead figure who symbolizes the official system. But the dead star is often perceived and valued as someone who lived *outside the system* and who represent demotic powers that organized politics and state occasions fail to encapsulate. Frequently, those who leave offerings at spontaneous shrines display scrupulous attention and respect in their choice and positioning of leave-taking items (Graves-Brown and Orange 2017: 122). They are not only leaving markers that pay tribute to a great life, they are suggesting a template through which the life can be understood and its demotic significance, measured. Flowers and toys figure prominently, as they do in funeral rituals for a loved one that is directly a member of the kith and kin network. Visual data relating to the spontaneous shrines assembled outside Amy Winehouse's house in Camden Square, North London (where she died in 2011), were

reminiscent of the spontaneous offerings left outside the home of Freddie Mercury, where he died in 1991. They anticipated the spontaneous improvised shrines dedicated to David Bowie, who died in 2016, (the main one's were outside his apartment suite, where he also died, in Lafayette Street, Manhattan, and Tunstall Road, Brixton where he grew up) (Graves-Brown and Orange 2017). The spontaneous shrine is popular and democratic, but simultaneously, it resembles the traditional, religious altar of worship, i.e. the immortal tabernacle of forgiveness and retribution, that forms the axis of funeral rights in orthodox Christian religion. Life dictates that these shrines are eventually taken down and cast aside. Yet outside Amy Winehouse's house in Camden Square and Bowie's apartment in Lafayette Street, messages, flowers and other offerings are still evident.

The biological life of the star is popularly regarded to be just one of their manifestations. In Graham McCann's (1988) phrase, when the

highest achieved celebrity physically dies, what is left, is 'the body in the library'. In asking why high achieved celebrities such as James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland, Billy Holliday, Elvis Presley, John Lennon, etc., are immutable within time, the analogy of the star's two bodies is inescapable. Technology means that the mediated (incorrigible body) can theoretically, persist in culture *ad infinitum*. It is not however innocent. Like everything human, it is not free from politically interested, politically determined forces.

The aims of the present paper will have been served, if the reader is persuaded that the doctrine of the King's two bodies did not die with the overthrow of Royal absolutism. Its endurance in greatly translated form today, reprises old questions relating to conglomerations of autonomous motion, metaphysical transcendence and purposeful order around the body of celebrity. The troubling element in this proposition relates to the

survival of a version of the doctrine in a political system of Liberal Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy that formally, is based on homogeneous equality. Is it sufficient to regard the exalted forms of achieved celebrity as compensations for the failure of liberalism to perpetually deliver what it perpetually promises? Or does the complicity of achieved celebrity, with autonomous motion, metaphysical transcendence and escapism, suggest a deep, under-explored relationship between moral regulation and social conformity? For reasons of space, the exploration of relationships between the posthumous body of the highest achieved celebrities and these forces, must be a matter for future work. What can be claimed here is nothing more than a small lifting of the veil from a subject that is of great interest to the study of celebrity. That is, the elevation by exalted celebrities to a status only accorded to Monarch's between the Medieval and Tudor period: to be immutable within time.

References

- (1) Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), was a political theorist and legal jurist who, as we shall see, was ruined in academic and public life by reason of his perceived complicity with Nazism.
- (2) *Corpus mysticum* literally means 'mystical body' (Kantorowicz 1957: 15). Its original referent was the Eucharist or consecrated host. That is the symbol of Christ (and therefore God) in the normative order. Gradually, the notion evolved to refer to the idea that the Church is immutable.
- (3) The term 'autonomous motion' refers to frictionless movement over others.
- (4) Schmitt wrote after the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which was widely regarded to be punitive in its requirements over the Germans.

His doubts about the integrity of Liberal Plebiscitary Parliamentary Democracy surely derive from what John Maynard Keynes scathingly referred to as a 'Carthaginian Peace' of Versailles.

- (5) But *contra* Henich, Churches have been founded around secular achieved celebrities who are regarded to have miraculous powers and to be transcendent. For example, in 1978, in the city of Rosario, Argentina, the Church of *Iglesia Maradoniana* was founded to worship the Argentinian soccer star, Diego Maradona. The *Iglesia* is estimated to currently have no less than 80,000 faithful (Moller 2017: 55).

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