

ARTICLE

Post-mortem Projections: Medieval Mystical Resurrection and the Return of Tupac Shakur

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Medieval hagiographies abound with tales of *post-mortem* visits and miracles by saints. The saint was a powerful religious individual both in life and in death, a conduit of divine grace and lightning rod for Christian fervour. With her post-mortem presence, the presumptive boundary between living and dead, spirit and flesh, is rent apart: showing the reality of the hereafter and shattering the fantasies of the mortal world. The phenomenon of a glorified individual returning to a worshipful community after their apparent mortal expiration is not just medieval. In April 2012, the rapper Tupac Shakur “performed” on stage at the Coachella music festival. Tupac was murdered in 1996; his ghostly presence was the result of a hologram. His holographic form, the “Pac-O-Gram”, took to the stage to a breathless crowd of fans. The holographic performance is a product of technological advances. Yet reports of the holographic performance were filled with references to Tupac’s “resurrection”, a significant word choice, and one which links the rapper’s return with medieval hagiography more than the advance of technology. What can an examination of the modern example of the Pac-O-Gram and examples drawn from medieval hagiography of the dead returning to life add to each other?

Introduction

Renowned American rapper and actor Tupac Shakur was gunned down on 7 September 1996. Six days later, he died in hospital. On 15 April 2012, Tupac returned to the stage at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival to the rapturous reception of 75,000 spectators, in an unexpected appearance during Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg’s headline set. The Tupac “hologram”, created by Digital Domain Media Group and also known as the Pac-O-Gram, performed some of his own songs, accompanied at turns by Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg (Collins 2012). The audience

‘felt like they were seeing Tupac rise from the grave,’ according to one source (Dinar 2012). Another was impressed that the Pac-O-Gram’s performance of the song ‘Hail Mary’ was ‘incredibly lifelike’, and applauded the creators with successfully ‘reanimating corpses’ (Souppouris 2012). The performance was described as a ‘resurrection’ in three other sources (Gardner 2012, Magrath 2012, Wappler 2012).

The technology to “reanimate” Tupac is a form of optical illusion called Pepper’s Ghost (Souppouris 2012, Wappler 2012, Orr 2012). Pepper’s Ghost, named after co-developer John Henry Pepper, was in wide usage from the end of the nineteenth century (Posner 2012: 149-204). In 1862, Pepper unveiled an improved and simplified version of technol-

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ogy initially created by Henry Dircks which would allow for the apparent projection of spectres in any space large enough to contain the necessary mechanisms (Posner 2012: 191-92, Pepper 1890: 3). Pepper and Dircks patented the device shortly thereafter in 1863 (Posner 2012: 192). In Pepper's Ghost, a thin metallic film screen is placed in front of the stage, at an angle of 45 degrees to the audience (Pepper 1890: passim; Beech 2012: 59-60). An image is projected on to the film, from an LED screen of projector placed in a recess below the screen. From the perspective of the spectators, the reflected visuals are onstage. Thus, the Pac-o-Gram is not actually a product of cutting edge holographic technology – nor a hologram *per se* – but rather an old conjuring trick¹. “Hologram” in the popular parlance, and media sources consulted for this research, equates to the spectral appearance of (computerised) bodies through unobtrusive or overtly unacknowledged artificial means. It is the strange ghostliness of the Tupac hologram which is almost universally acknowledged, whilst the technology underpinning it is almost irrelevant. Reports on the Tupac hologram are solidly focussed on the blurring of the boundaries between life and death rather than the development of technology.

Resurrection, at first glance, appears to be a topic more pertinent to a discussion of medieval Catholic theology than modern rap music performances. In I Corinthians 15:12-17, St Paul proclaims that a belief in general resurrection follows from the fundamental cornerstone of Christian theology, Christ's own resurrection:

Now if Christ be preached, that he arose again from the dead, how do some among you say, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have given testi-

mony against God, that he hath raised up Christ; whom he hath not raised up, if the dead rise not again. For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. (Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible)²

Moreover, medieval hagiographic tales have a number of examples of saints' resurrection. Such occurrences of resurrection echo the first resurrection of Christ. Thus, such occurrences both depend on doctrine for authenticity but also bolster the validity of the doctrine itself. The biography of Christina *Mirabilis* (c. 1150-1224), written Thomas of Cantimpré ca. 1232, begins with the first death of its protagonist, a humble cow-herding orphan from Sint-Truiden (Cantimpré 1868). Devout religious meditation has led to a fatally severe illness. However, after a day's wait, her corpse springs to life and the holy woman is delivered back to the earthly world (Cantimpré 1868: 651). Christina has been returned to the living in order to experience the torments of purgatory on earth by divine will (Cantimpré 1868: 651-2). Her *post-mortem* body will be able miraculously to withstand such suffering, and she will remain essentially corporeally intact – unable to die – by the myriad punishments to come. After her initial death, Christ tells Christina that if she chooses to return to earth, she will receive an '*immortalis animus*' ('immortal soul') in a '*mortale corpus*' ('mortal body') that will receive purgatorial punishments on earth '*sine detriment sui*' ('without damage to it') (Cantimpré 1868: 652 and 2008: 131). Christina dies a second time at the end of the narrative, only to be resurrected for a few moments by an inquisitive nun (Cantimpré 1868: 659). The holy woman experiences three deaths in total, but only the last one sticks. Christina's returns to life are examples of "literal" resurrection, as it were, with Christina returning to her life on earth complete with a (glorified) body, awaiting her next death.

Christina's resurrection experiences are not unique within hagiography. At least eight other medieval saints are shown to experience mystical resurrection. Elizabeth Petroff cites the mystics Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Magdalena Beutler (1407-1458), St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416) as experiencing miraculous resurrection (Petroff 1986: 40-1)³. Christine Quigley suggests the following individuals as further cases of mystically resurrected saints: St. Winifride (d. c. 660), Blessed Peter Amengol (d. 1304), Saint Agnes of Montepulciano (d. 1317), and Blessed Margaret of Castello (d. 1320) (Quigley 1996: 192-3). I add the further example of Saint George (d. 303) who experienced three deaths and subsequent resurrections during his martyrdom, chronicled by Simund de Freine (1909) in an early twelfth-century version of George's life.

Another form of momentary resurrection is evident in medieval hagiography: the return of the dead, complete with a physical body, in mystical visions. For example, Margaret of Ypres (1216-37) appears three times *post-mortem*, both in the mortal world in a hall at the side of a preacher and in visions of heaven (Cantimpré 1948: 129-30). The Pac-O-Gram corresponds to a short-lived literal resurrection—the rapper “comes back to life” once the hologram is switched on, and then “dies” when the apparatus is turned off. The projection also functions as a *post-mortem* spectral apparition that appears from, and then returns to, the hereafter: revivification in the form of a mystical vision. Similarly, medieval resurrections can be understood as holographic projections of longer or shorter length with some sort of tangible corporeal presence. The resurrected body, however, is incorruptible — whether because it is paradoxically spiritual, in the case of saints in *post-mortem* visions, or a glorified body, in cases of ‘literal’ revivification. Resurrected Tupac, manufactured from audio-visual material recorded during the rapper's life, equally has an inviolate body which does not

degrade and cannot seemingly be altered by the mortal world.

Andrew Joynes maintains that medieval tales of the dead returning to life ‘indicate various aspects of medieval belief about the possibility of traffic across the mysterious border between the living and the dead’ (2001: xi). Given the loaded language of “resurrection” used to describe the Tupac hologram, it is hard not to draw a similar conclusion about modern beliefs, at least at first glance. What facilitates such meditations on the boundaries between life and death within modern secular society? What other signification does the Pac-O-Gram offer upon further examination? Can alternative interpretations of the Pac-O-Gram add to medieval scholarship on saintly resurrection?

‘Forget keeping it real; thug life just got surreal.’ (Wappler 2012)

As Jesus' resurrection is at the very core of Catholic doctrine, the possibility that Tupac still lives is at the heart of his celebrity mythos. Tupac is an individual whose life/death status is already problematic, which accentuates the unsettling, ghostly nature of his holographic projection at Coachella. Days after the Coachella performance, Suge Knight, former CEO of Tupac's home label Death Row Records and eye-witness to Tupac's fatal shooting, suggested that the rapper could still be alive in a Los Angeles interview with radio station 93.5 KDay. In response to questions about his own alleged participation in Tupac's death, Knight replied: ‘Maybe the question is, Pac's not really dead. Pac's somewhere else’.

Pressed further by his interviewer, he added that he had never seen the rapper's corpse, and further: ‘Nobody seen [sic] Tupac dead’ (all Magrath 2012). Myriad conspiracy theory websites, created by fans, dissect the evidence of Tupac's continued mortal existence (e.g. Belmont 2009; Everage 2011; Maxwell 2006; Mooch 2006; Wilson n.d.; Anon n.d., ‘Makaveli Returns 2014’; Anon 2012, ‘TUPAC alive or dead’; Anon n.d., ‘Is Tupac

alive or dead?'). Rumours are repeated, almost verbatim, in the online echo chamber of Tupac "believers". Denard McClairne summarises many of the most prevalent theories in his 2003 self-published e-book, *Tupac and Elvis: Inevitably Restless* (2003: 69-83). This fan biography is by no means a scholarly text, nor seemingly rigorously researched. However, it does chronicle the conspiracy well, and illustrates the viewpoint of one fan, the author, as he reacts to key elements of the Tupac death conspiracy debate. (McClairne, however, ultimately refutes the theories, and believes Tupac to be dead.) There is simply not enough space to detail all of the specific claims of signs and proofs, nor the nuances of each of these, in this article. I will, however, provide a flavor of the conspiracy debate below. It is noted, for example, that the video for the song 'I Ain't Mad at Cha' (2Pac 1996), released days after Tupac's murder, features the rapper being gunned down, thereby invalidating the real Las Vegas shooting (Anon n.d., 'Makaveli Returns 2014', Anon n.d., 'TUPAC alive or dead'). Further, in the next video release, for the song 'Toss It Up' (Makaveli 1996), he is seen alive and well. This song was released under Tupac's alias of Makaveli. Some posit that Tupac was reborn, not just musically but quite literally, as Makaveli, taking on the new identity after his faked death (Anon n.d., 'Makaveli Returns 2014'). This theory is believed to be substantiated in the lyric '[t]he only way for me to come back is by Makaveli — that's it' which Tupac speaks as the introduction to the song 'Ghost' (Everage 2011). 'Ghost' appeared on the 2003 album *Tupac: Resurrection* (Tupac 2003). The title of the track and album, alongside the opening line presumably taken from unreleased earlier material, create an uncanny, unsettling lack of certainty regarding the rapper's death. It is noted that Makaveli is a partial anagram of "am alive", if one discounts the "k" in the name (Belmont 2009; Anon n.d., 'TUPAC alive or dead'). Makaveli is also identified as a reference to the Italian political theorist Niccolo

Machiavelli (1469-1527), whose books Tupac studied whilst serving time in prison, mining the texts for ideas about strategy for the rap game (Everage 2011, Hess 2007: 407). The title of the song 'Empty Coffin', reputedly a B-side to a never-named album, suggests Tupac's closed casket was devoid of a body (Mooch 2006, Wong 2007). This song, which I have not been able to source, may or not actually exist. Truth is of little import in the online theory forums, however. Claims and proofs gain a sort of critical mass of veracity as they are repeated over and over across the web.

For others, even non-believers and non-fans, the possibility of Tupac still being alive is lodged in the cultural memory, and widely known conspiracy theory. For example, David Wong commented that the majority of search engine traffic to *Cracked.com* came from those researching the "death" of Tupac, after his first article for the website on the subject in 1999 detailed the conspiracies (see Wong 2007). On 2 April 2005, a website made to resemble the webpage of popular North American news outlet CNN hosted an article entitled 'Unexpected twist: Tupac Shakur alive and well' surfaced online and went viral (Wong 2007; Anon 2005). The false article notes that Tupac has been spotted alive and well, nonchalantly browsing shops in Beverly Hills. Relaxing in tropical locations during his *post-mortem* hiatus, Tupac is now, reportedly, ready to reclaim the stage. The bottom of the page reveals that this is, in fact, an April Fool's Day prank. [The faux CNN website has since been taken down, but it is still available for viewing as screenshots on other webpages (Wong 2007).]

At Coachella, the audience certainly didn't see 'Tupac dead', the rapper as corpse. Some *YouTube* commenters to the video recording of the performance appear to hold similarly with the resurrection of Tupac, momentary or otherwise. For example, user KillerCotton posted simply 'Hes [sic] not dead' (KillerCotton 2012). User 1337vIKz (2012) posted 'RIP Tupac 1976–2012', suggesting that s/he con-

siders the disappearance of the Pac-O-Gram as a new “death” for Tupac, with the rapper’s date of death not posited as 1996 but 2012 (1337vIKz 2012). Exactly what Tupac might have been up to in the years between 1996 and 2012 is left up to the reader’s imagination.

Seeing the Pac-O-Gram is encountering a conception of the rapper which circulated widely during his career and after his death: we hear his unique voice and rapping style, see him shirtless and tattooed with his notorious “Thug Life” motto, as we did in publicity of him during his life, and shortly after his death. *Rolling Stone* magazine, for example, featured Tupac – bare-chested, with tattoo emblazoned upon his chest – as its cover star in October 1996, six weeks or so after his murder (Rolling Stone 1996). We look at the Pac-O-Gram and recognise Tupac. The eyes and ears are easily tricked, and with them, if only for a moment, goes the brain and heart: a much loved idol is back from the dead.

The draw of the Pac-O-Gram resides in its seeming revivification of an idol: we know Tupac is dead, and yet here he is on stage, looking – at least from the distance of the massive festival crowd – as he did at the peak of his career, and seeming somehow, impossibly alive. *YouTube* user dayati reports initial jubilation at watching the Pac-O-Gram perform, seeing a beloved rapper back from the dead momentarily (dayati 2012). As the hologram fades at the end of the set, dayati is saddened and demoralized, faced with the reality of Tupac’s death and/or the second “death” of the expiration of the hologram itself: ‘I remember freaking out when I first saw this, then getting all sad and shit when he disappears at the end. Fuck’ (dayati 2012). Moreover, the Pac-O-Gram is unsettling because it feeds into the conspiracy debate, and opens the door to a life after death. This is why, as Gillian Orr notes, seeing the Pac-O-Gram is ‘markedly eerier’ than seeing other similar “holograms” of dead/living celebrities (2012). The usual secular attitude towards the absolute finality of death is tem-

pered because of the framework of potentiality thrown up by the Tupac mythology. Within the medieval theological framework, saints can come back after death because the spirit lives eternally in the divine hereafter, and the boundaries between here and there are permeable. The Pac-O-Gram presents a vision of resurrection unhooked from the Church and the Lord. Momentarily, even the non-religious can witness a return from the dead, thanks to the development of Pepper’s Ghost and digital technology. The abundant conspiracy theories around Tupac’s death form a sort of fan doctrine, which shores up the continued potentiality of Tupac’s return.

In medieval hagiography, the doctrine of Christ’s resurrection legitimises cases of mystical resurrection. Ida of Louvain’s *vita* details the death and immediate resuscitation of the mystic’s own sister, brought about by Ida’s prayers and touch:

... Necdum a terra genua, necdum ab amplexo cadaver brachia subducendo levaverat; & ecce, qui per sanctos Prophetas suos, Helizeum videlicet & Heliam, per alterum quidem Sunamitis, per alterum vero Sareptanae filium, a mortis nexibus expeditos, beneficio prioris vitae restituit; quique per semetipsum tres mortuos Euangelicae Scripturae testimonio suscitavit; & hujus quoque famulae suae precibus inclinatus, exanimato corpusculo vitalem spiritum reddidit: ac hujus facti mirabili notvitate, ... Confestim siquidem, in pala, omnibus qui advenerant intuentibus, ad tam sanctae Virginis attactum oris, puella septies oscitavit, oculus aperuit; ac demum sospitati pristinae perfectissime restituta, surgens a terra, Deoque gratias agens, in ipso sospitatis tenore, multo post haec annorum spatio superna savente clementia, supervixit. (Anon 1867: 169)

(...Ida raised first one knee from the ground, and then the other; released one arm from around the corpse [of

her sister], and then the other. She thought of Elisha, of Elijah, of the daughter of Jairus, of the lad from Naim and of Lazarus of Bethany. She prayed that the Power at work in them would bend down now to her sister, would free her from the grip of death and would restore to her the gift of life. And these ancient miracles were indeed renewed...Ida had but touched the mouth, when the girl gave seven gasps and opened her eyes (II Kings 4:35). Thereupon, fully restored to her original health, the younger sister rose from the ground and thanked God. And with that same condition of health, she lived on many years under the favour of an All-considerate God.) (Anon 2000: 34)

This passage reveals the Biblical framework which underpins resurrection: Elisha (II Kings 4:32-37), Elijah (I Kings 17:8-24), the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56; Matthew 9:20-26), the boy from Naim (Luke 7:11-17), and Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:1-45). Ida evokes both agents of resurrection (Elisha and Elijah) and the resurrected (the daughter of Jairus, the boy from Naim and Lazarus, all resurrected by Christ) — emphasising that raising the dead is possible, and not just by Christ Himself. Ida mimes the actions of Elisha in this scene. As Elisha bows upon the dead child and puts his mouth on the dead child's mouth (II Kings 4:34), so Ida prostrates herself over her deceased sister, and gently touches mouths with her. On returning to life, Ida's sister, like Elisha's dead child, gasps seven times. By mimicking Elisha's actions, Ida is implicitly taking up a messianic role of agent of resurrection, figured in the account of the scene in her vita by the references to those miraculously revived by Christ Himself. Biblical examples shore up Ida's own case of mystical resurrection, setting precedents which legitimise her tale. In addition, the resurrection detailed in Ida's vita equally proves the power of the Lord to act in the mortal realm, and authenticates

Biblical cases of resurrection (Quigley 1996: 191 and 195). Historically distanced Biblical mystical revivification need not simply be metaphorical or symbolic — Ida's resuscitation of her sister shows that such events are not just possible or plausible, but real.

As the mystical resurrections of saints showed the historical veracity of Christ's resurrection, Christ's resurrection, in a feedback loop, offers proof as to the authenticity of the saint's own revivification. Ida is not the sole example of saintly intervention leading to revivification. Christine Quigley lists the following twenty-nine holy individuals, culled from Christian history from the fourth to the nineteenth century, as agents of resurrection to their friends, spiritual colleagues, neighbours and even strangers: St. Ambrose (d. 397), St. Patrick (d. 493), St. Benedict (d. c. 547), St. Bernard of Abbeville (d. 1117), St. Malachy the Irishman (d. 1148), St. Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), St. Dominic de Guzman (d. 1221), St. Anthony of Padua (d. 1231), St. Elizabeth of Hungary (d. 1231), St. Hyacinth (d. 1257), Blessed Agnes of Prague (d. 1282), St. Phillip Benizi (d. 1285), St. Agnes of Montepulciano (d. 1317), Blessed Margaret of Castello (d. 1320), St. Catherine of Siena (d. 1380), St. Catherine of Sweden (d. 1381), St. Vincent Ferrer (d. 1419), Joan of Arc (d. 1431), St. Bernadine of Siena (d. 1444), St. Colette (d. 1447), St. Francis of Paola (d. 1507), St. Teresa of Avila (d. 1582), St. Francis Xavier (d. 1552), St. Ignatius Loyola (d. 1556), St. Stanislaus (d. 1079), Blessed Sebastian of Apparizio (d. 1600), St. Francis Solanus (d. 1610), St Paul of the Cross (d. 1775), St. John Bosco (d. 1888) (Quigley 1996: 191-96). To Quigley's twenty nine, I add Ida of Louvain (d. 1300) (Anon 1867). As the number of resurrections enacted proliferates, the feedback loop of authentication which binds Christ's resurrection and those of other individuals intensifies. Similarly, as almost endless rumours of Tupac's resurrection circulate around the internet, an incestuously self-referential tissue of "proofs" is constructed. This tissue, by dint of its size and reach, becomes

less of a bizarre marginality, something more worthy of contemplation.

As with the medieval saint, connection with the resurrected Christ also sustains the reality of Tupac's resurrection. Tupac's last album to be recorded during his lifetime features a drawing of the rapper's crucifixion on its front cover which cannot but feed into the confusion of his life/death. Indeed, one website listing theories as to Tupac's faked death jumps upon the crucifixion cover as potential evidence: 'The cover of his next album, [sic] has 2Pac looking like Jesus Christ. Could he be planning a resurrection?' (Wilson n.d.) This sentiment is echoed on various other websites almost word-for-word (Belmont 2009; Maxwell 2006). Comments on *YouTube* align Tupac with a quasi-Messiah figure too. One, by cute1337, simply refers to him as the "GOD": 'The GOD IS BACK!' (cute1337 2012). Liner notes from Tupac's *The Don Kilmuminati: The 7 Day Theory* (Makaveli 1996) identify the executive producer as Simon, from which one theory site extrapolates a fairly stretched Biblical parallel:

The executive producer of The 7 Day Theory [sic], as listed in the CD booklet of the album, is Simon (who is a previously unknown producer in the rap music industry). In the bible [sic], Simon was an apostle of Jesus. Simon was one of the first witnesses of the Resurrection listed by Saint Paul (1 Cor. 15: 5). The Outlawz [co-creators of the album] have confirmed Simon is a reference to Suge Knight who was with Tupac the night of the shooting. (Anon n.d., 'Is Tupac alive or dead?')

For at least some fans, justification for Tupac's potential resurrection lies within the Bible. Alongside referencing Biblical resurrection as a legitimization of Tupac's resurrection, this passage also implies that Tupac *is* Christ. Christ died to cleanse the stain of sin from humanity, and his sacrifice attained full value at his resurrection (Romans 4:25) (Maas 1911). How are we

to interpret Tupac's resurrection then? Is he a religious salvific figure? Or one more secularly rooted, positioned as savior of the rap game upon his return? The questions remain unanswered.

Tupac-the-rapper (Pac-O-Gram) versus Tupac-the-man

Not all fans buy into the resurrection of Tupac. In response to a video of the Pac-O-Gram's Coachella performance, the *YouTube* commenter xEMOzGirlzx fulminates: 'he just look like him , how can someone back from dead ? [/] juses [sic] can't do that from him self [sic] so STFU Plz' (xEMOzGirlzx 2012). Others make a clear distinction between the real Tupac and the Tupac Hologram. This is most obvious when lists of best rappers are compiled beneath the *YouTube* video of the Coachella performance. For example, user GabroYoh maintains that 'The world [sic] best rapper is Tupac [/] The world [sic] best second rapper is Hologram Tupac' (GabroYoh 2012). User skiingsimondumont split out his top seven rappers, with Tupac similarly placing first and the Tupac hologram featuring second: 'Best Rappers! [/] 1. Tupac [/] 2. Tupacs [sic] Hologram [/ ...]' (Skiingsimondumont 2012).

Whilst the Pac-O-Gram may look like Tupac, act like Tupac and be voiced by Tupac, he is certainly not the real Tupac. [One *YouTube* commenter, Anton Svensson, argues that the hologram nevertheless shows that Tupac is still alive and will return, as the rapper uses the Pac-O-Gram as a means to communicate with fans: 'The hologram is a message from tupac! At the beginning he comes up like risng [sic] from the stage, that means he rises up from the dead. At 0:13 he was like this is me! Tupac Back!!' (Svenson 2012).] The real Tupac, whether communicating via the Pac-O-Gram or not, is clearly superior to his holographic doppelganger. This hierarchy is reversed in the *post-mortem* visitation of medieval saints. The saint's 'holographic' *post-mortem* intrusion into the mortal world is, in fact, the most authentic version of their

personhood, their soul. The soul, released from the mortal body, can revert to its most representative appearance, which may or may not map with their physical body. For example, Margaret of Ypres' (1216-1237) appears to one of her friends with *crystalino corpore et rubicundam in pectore* ('with a transparent, crystalline body and a rosy colour in her breast') after death (Cantimpré 1948: 129 and 2008: 205). Her biographer glosses her appearance as linked to her pious virginity (*virginitas*) and charity (*caritas*):

*Dum lilliceo candour translucido
ruber roseus et transparentis iucundius
admiscetur, in candour notatur virgin-
itas, in rubore eius caritas designator.*
(Cantimpré 1948: 129)

(...when the diaphanous red of roses is pleasantly mixed with the translucent whiteness of lilies, virginity is signified by the whiteness and her charity denoted by the red.) (Cantimpré 2008: 205)

The anaphora of 'in' with a following colour and repetition of explanatory verb ('notatur', 'designator') creates a balanced phrase which highlights that importance of Margaret's appearance lies in its underlying signification, a representation of her pious qualities. In life, Alice the Leper (d. 1250) is described as looking like a horrible monster (*monstri horribilis*) due to the ravages of her illness (Villers 1867: 482). After death, however, her soul takes on the appearance of a young child bathed in a glowing light which represents her exemplary pure soul (Villers 1867: 482 and 2000: 27). The Pac-O-Gram is a representation of the essence of Tupac the celebrity rapper, and not Tupac the human man: signifying his "soul" as an entertainment idol, but not of Tupac himself.

Writing on celebrity and stars, theorist Richard Dyer maintains that a celebrity does not exist outside of media texts, be they films, news print, advertisements or televisual programmes: stars are 'images in media

texts' (1998: 1). For example, the star "Brad Pitt" may bear little authentic resemblance to Brad Pitt himself, his wants, needs, desires and so on. From Dyer's perspective, '...we are dealing with the stars in terms of their signification, not with them as real people' (1998: 10). The Tupac Hologram is an exemplary model of Dyer's stardom thesis. The Pac-O-Gram is constructed out of splicing together media texts, videos of the rapper and audio files of his voice. The performance at Coachella does not signify the return of Tupac-the-man from the grave, but instead an apparition of the pure essence of Tupac-the-rapper.

The pure essence of Tupac-the-rapper generates a vast amount of money for Tupac's estate and record labels: he is the very model of the successful music artist from the perspective of the record label. He is a well-known, successful, and beloved artist that they can manipulate to their heart's content. He never tires, will never go off the rails, and will always say "yes". They can repackage him perpetually. An article in the Tasmanian newspaper *The Mercury* published in July 1863 lauds Pepper's Ghost not for producing a terrifying ghost in a recent theatre production, but instead for the conjuring of '... a well-behaved, steady, regular, and respectable ghost, going through a prescribed round of duties, punctual to a minute—a patent ghost, in fact (Anon 1863: 3). Tupac-the-rapper in the form of the Pac-O-Gram exemplifies this conception of a 'patent ghost', obedient to the letter, performing in an orderly and responsible fashion at the behest of countless conjurers behind the scenes. Indeed, Tupac has had a 'very lucrative life after death', earning millions of dollars for his estate and musical collaborators (Greenburg 2010 and 2011). The six solo Tupac albums that have been released after the rapper's death are: *The Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory* (1996; completed during Tupac's lifetime with "live" vocals), *R U Still Down? (Remember Me)* (1997), *Until the End of Time* (2001), *Better Days* (2002), *Loyal to*

the Game (2004), *Pac's Life* (2006) (see also Makaveli 1996; 2Pac 1997; 2Pac 2001; 2Pac 2002; 2Pac 2004; 2Pac 2006). Another collaboration album was also released posthumously: *Still I Rise* (with the Outlawz; 1999) (2Pac + Outlawz 1999). In addition, two compilation albums were released after 1996: *Greatest Hits* (1998) and *Tupac Resurrection* (2003) (2Pac 1998; Tupac 2003). Seven of his eleven platinum albums were released after his death, and as of 2010 he had sold over 75 million albums worldwide (Greenburg 2010 and 2011). In 2007, 11 years after Tupac's death, his estate earned \$9 million, more than the living artists 50 Cent or Eminem made in 2010. In 2010, his estate reportedly raked in \$3.5 million.

The ability to release so many records posthumously is due to the large catalogue of unreleased material available to Tupac's estate, reportedly 153 songs. His estate, or his label, has chosen to continue to release songs to profit from the dead star's oeuvre, and continue his career *post-mortem*. Further, the estate has chosen to release albums titled with more or less explicit references to the possibility of Tupac's life after death: *Still I Rise*, *Tupac Resurrection*, *Pac's Life* (see 2Pac + Outlawz 1999; Tupac 2003; 2Pac 2006 respectively). Tapping in to the conspiracies surrounding the rapper's death seems to be a means of profit production after Tupac's shooting. The Coachella performance of the Pac-O-Gram functions as an extraordinary amplification of this strategy. Instead of oblique references in album titles or song lyrics dissected by fans, the Tupac projection seems to bring the rapper back to life, muddying the conspiracy-filled waters further, if only for a few minutes. Indeed, the spectre of Tupac onstage generated a huge amount of revenue. Sales of Tupac's music catalogue experienced a significant resurgence after the Pac-O-Gram performance. After Coachella, Tupac's *Greatest Hits* (1998) album re-entered the Billboard 200 for the first time since 2000, placing at 129, with an increase in sales of 571 per cent compared to the

previous week (2Pac 1998; Caulfield 2012). Other Tupac albums also had improved sales: sales of *All Eyez On Me* (1996) hit 2,000 units (95 per cent week-on-week increase), sales of *Me Against the World* (1995) hit 1,000 records (53 per cent week-on-week increase) (Caulfield 2012; 2Pac 1996; 2Pac 1995). Sales of the tracks the Pac-O-Gram performed skyrocketed: 'Hail Mary' shifted 13,000 units in one week (1,530 per cent week on week increase), and '2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted' sold 9,000 units (881 per cent week on week increase) (Caulfield 2012; Makaveli 1996; 2Pac 1996).

As Tupac generates vast amounts of financial currency after his death, saints offer spiritual currency to the still-living, in the form of a direct connection to the divine. An episode from the biography of Christina *Mirabilis* has striking parallels to the technological figure of the 'patent ghost' (Cantimpré 1168: 659; Anon 1863: 3). After Christina's second death, the holy woman is recalled to life by Beatrice, a nun desperate for the beloved saint to answer an unspecified question. Learning of Christina's death, Beatrice is described as '*impatiens agens*' ('fearsomely impatient') (Cantimpré 1868: 659 and 2008: 153). She loudly protests that Christina died '*sine licentia, ... sine commendation sororum*' ('without permission and without leave of her sisters' (Cantimpré 1868: 659 and 2008: 153). With such declarations, Christina is posited as a subordinate to her spiritual community, bound by their whims for divine insight channelled through her. This is further emphasised by the thematic repetition of obedience in Beatrice's apostrophe to Christina's corpse:

O Christina! obediens semper mihi in vita fuisti; adjuro ergo nunc te...ut obedias mihi etiam nunc: quia potens potes per illum, cui nunc jungeris, quaecumque vis, revertarisque ad vitam, & dicas mihi, quod a te aperiendum in vita magno desiderio postulavi. (Cantimpré 1868: 659)

(O Christina! You were ever obedient to me in life! I now therefore beseech you an admonish you...that you obey me even now. For you are powerfully able, through him to who you are now joined [God], to do whatever you want. So return to life and tell me what I begged you to reveal to me with great desire while you were alive.) (Cantimpré 2008: 153)

After this speech, Christina is forced back to life immediately (*“mox ubi hoc...”*) (Cantimpré 1868: 659). Though clearly much desired by Beatrice, Christina’s resurrection is certainly not viewed positively by the saint herself. She is ‘grief-stricken’ (*“ianxioque vultu”*) by her resurrection, heaving a ‘great sigh’ (*“grave suspirium edidit”*) and demanding to know why she has been brought back to life when she was in the bosom of the Lord (Cantimpré 1868: 659 and 2008: 153-54). She beseeches Beatrice to ask her question quickly so that she might return to heaven and the peace which she has longed for so keenly. That Beatrice’s question and Christina’s response are absent from the text ensures the focus of the interchange rests on the power dynamic between Beatrice and Christina. Certainly, the question could be of crucial importance but it could equally utterly banal: we just do not know. What we do know, however, is that Christina must return to life at the behest of the nun and perform her duties, despite her personal wishes to the contrary. Whilst the Pac-O-Gram is a means of generating hard cash, the second resurrection of Christina is a mode of producing spiritual currency for the still living: intriguing connections are made between the signification and functions of modern celebrity and those of medieval sanctity. Unlike with the ‘patent ghost’ of the Pac-O-Gram, though, Christina is able to respond to the mistress of her conjuration. Her intense displeasure at resurrection is depicted, and we are given a glimpse of what it is like to be harnessed for spiritual power. We will never know what Tupac-the-man would make of his *post-mortem* career.

Some medievalists have argued that as a saint, an individual’s identity is constructed around her spirituality to the exclusion of any particularities of her personhood. For example, Alison Goddard Elliott contends that, in medieval (female) hagiography, the ideals which the saint represents – that which she signifies to her community – rather than the saint *qua* woman, are being venerated (1987: 18). Brigitte Cazelles (1982: 13) maintains that saints are *‘de fait interchangeables’* (‘in fact interchangeable’), products of a collective which ‘isolates and sacralises some of its members’ to harness their holy signification (1991: 81). Such a viewpoint implies an equivalency between the medieval saint, spiritual ‘star’ of her community, and Dyer’s view of the modern celebrity, idolised not for who she is, but what she represents. This perspective is persuasive, and certainly offers some interesting potential readings of hagiography. However, a note of caution is also needed. Medieval hagiographies, most often authored by men, were designed to authenticate the holy status of the protagonist and edify the Christian flock (King 1988). The focus in hagiography is explicitly on the exemplary piety (“spiritual celebrity”) of a woman, to the inevitable exclusion of other attributes. Moreover, some female saints are shown to access a notable – albeit limited – amount of power within social and political circles. The vision of Juliana of Mont-Cornillon (1193-1258), alongside subsequent lobbying by the saint and her colleague Eve of Saint-Martin (d. 1266), for example, lead to the institution of the Corpus Christi feast (Anon 1866: 457-77). Juliana’s Corpus Christi vision is relayed to the most illustrious and learned theologians in the region, including Jacques of Troyes (archdeacon of Liège and future pontiff), Hugh of Saint-Cher, bishop John of Cambrai, the chancellor of Paris and several Dominican friars (Anon 1866: 459-60). The response of such learned men to Juliana’s vision is overwhelmingly positive, all unequivocally agreeing to the institution of the Corpus Christi feast.

Dynamic social agency can also be seen in some cases after the saint's death. Unlike Christina, involuntarily resurrected by Beatrice, Yvette of Huy (1158-1228) appears of her own accord in a spiritual vision to one of her sisters to settle some important business (Floreffe 1867: 886). In the vision, Yvette invites her spiritual sister, Margaret, to go on a journey with her to Liège in order to secure support for the continued development of their religious community. Yvette had left an extensive list of tasks for her sisters to complete, which had been left uncompleted due to the lack of a decree from the Bishop of Liège. The holy woman's momentary revivification in this vision ensures the success of her political agenda, and is an example of her dynamism. The text states that '*ita tamen quod neminem huius beneficij auctorem interpretatae sunt alium, quod venerabilem luetam*' (all 'knew that no one but the blessed Yvette was the author of [the] happy outcome') once the Bishop agrees to the plans (Floreffe 1867: 886 and 2011: 141). Yvette's spectral appearance justifies the need for the Bishop to award the required decree, and thus could well be a neat textual manoeuvre. Nevertheless, it is significant that she is depicted settling the matter after death of her own accord.

A medieval saint's access to social/political power, and position within the community, involved complex negotiations, and often produced shifting dynamics which are illustrated in biographies from the period. The saint was not just an inert object, animated by technology, at the whims of impresarios. She was an individual who exerted her influence, could speak up about her treatment, and shape her own spiritual role in more or less limited ways which vary from text to text. Further research on the points of contact and divergence between modern celebrity and medieval sanctity is required. Such studies would no doubt be fertile grounds for developing approaches on medieval hagiography.

Conclusion

In the autumn of 1863, the use of Pepper's Ghost skyrocketed in New York theatres (Posner 2012: *passim*). The extraordinary popularity of the illusion technique can partially be explained by the ever-present thirst for innovative theatrical staging, and anything of British origin in a staunchly Anglophile community (Posner 2012: 192). However, Dasia N. Posner argues that the audiences and theatre producers were drawn to the Ghost as a means of contemplating death and mourning in the midst of the ever increasing bloodshed of the Civil War (2012: 201). Posner notes that Pepper's Ghost 'offered a fright as well as a form of therapy. ...Audiences experienced an emotional thrill from what appeared to be the stuff of nightmares, as a way of looking changing definitions and mourning directly in the face' (2012: 201). Further, Posner maintains that it was the manner in which the Ghost was used – as a form of meditation on death and mourning – that is most significant about the vast appetite for the technology, rather than its popularity in and of itself.

The past few years seem to have been witness to a Pepper's Ghost 'craze' similar to that documented by Posner in New York of 1863. Myriad deceased stars have been "brought back to life" by Pepper's Ghost or similar technology. A projection of Freddy Mercury appeared on stage with the living Queen band-members at the tenth anniversary show of the "We Will Rock You" musical on 14 May 2012 (Anon 2012, 'Freddie Mercury'). In 2007, television talent show "American Idol" broadcast a duet between Celine Dion and Elvis Presley (Orr 2012). The company responsible for the Pac-O-Gram, Digital Domain Media Group, has secured the backing of Elvis Presley Enterprises to create an Elvis "hologram" for media appearances in future (Dinar 2012). At media mogul Simon Cowell's 50th birthday party, a "holographic" Frank Sinatra performed the song 'Pennies from Heaven' for 400 guests (Orr 2012). James Rock, the Director of Musion, the com-

pany which created the technology that produced the Pac-O-Gram, is 'certain [that] we'll see a lot more instances of deceased performers being brought back to life' in future [7]. With the pre-existing mythology of Tupac's uncertain death, the Pac-O-Gram is a means for a secular audience to embrace—even just for a moment—the possibility of some form of life after death. Relief from the insistent presence of death is fleeting, however. The Tupac hologram is revealed not to be the resurrection of the beloved Tupac, the man, but instead the figuration of his pure essence as celebrity rapper.

Comparing medieval saintly resurrection to the 2012 performance allows us to understand the true reality of what we are seeing when we watch the Pac-O-Gram performing. Not a resurrected Tupac, but a re-born construction of Tupac-the-rapper star. By consequence, new potential interpretations for medieval hagiography are revealed: a perspective of the saint as spiritual 'star'.

On 23 February 2012, the US Copyright Office registered the first ever copyright for an original (digital) character, "VM2-Virtual Marilyn" (Anon 2012, 'VM2 - Virtual Marilyn'; Gardner 2012). VM2-Virtual Marilyn is described by Digicon, the company responsible for the invention, as a computer-created figure with the 'adopted persona of Marilyn Monroe' (Gardner 2012). With copyright status, VM2-Virtual Marilyn is, as Digicon puts it, 'a copyright protected character like Batman, SuperMan, [and] Mickey Mouse' (Gardner 2012). The copyright registration of VM2-Virtual Marilyn supports the characterisation of the Pac-O-Gram as a distinct entity from Tupac the "real-life" man. VM2-Virtual Marilyn and the Pac-O-Gram may look like the original human figures of Marilyn Monroe and Tupac Shakur but they represent a pure distillation of their stardom into an entertainment machine. If Tupac, and medieval saints, are in the embrace of God, then the Pac-O-Projection is irrevocably and eternally in the embrace of the digital, at the mercy of his creators and operators.

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Notes

- 1 Despite the technical inaccuracy, I will continue to use hologram/holographic to describe Tupac's appearance at the Coachella performance as it is so widely circulated in writings on the event.
- 2 Further examples of St. Paul's insistence of the centrality of resurrection to the Christian faith can be found in Acts 17:18, 31-2, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 4:14, 5:4-5, Phillipians 3:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:12-16, 2 Timothy 2:11, Hebrews 6:2. Christ also preaches doctrine of resurrection in John 5:28-9, 6:39-40, 11:25, Luke 14:14.
- 3 Petroff also cites Christina *Mirabilis* here.

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