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Resisting the Grave: Value and the Productive Celebrity Dead

Ruth Penfold-Mounce and Rosie Smith

Introduction

On the 23rd December 2016, on a flight back from her book tour, actress Carrie Fisher experienced a medical emergency and died four days later in hospital as a result of cardiac arrest. Tragically the following day whilst planning her daughter's burial arrangement her mother, Debbie Reynolds (of *Singing in the Rain* fame) died following a severe stroke. Her son Todd Fisher reported that only fifteen minutes before her death she had said she longed to be with Carrie again. Fisher and Reynolds had a joint, private funeral service and were subsequently buried together in Los Angeles. Following their deaths, there was widespread public hysteria as members of the public follow events using both social and mass media platforms. Outpourings of grief were rife across twitter with hashtags such as #Debbie&Carrie being used as anchors for a globalised sense of loss and tragedy. In an age defined by mediated spectacle, the deaths of Reynolds and Fisher epitomised how celebrities can become spectacularized right through the end of their lives. Even the public memorial for mother and daughter was streamed live on Reynolds website. For such high-profile individuals, dying is not the end of their highly mediated spectacle based careers but can instead be a new stage of productivity and value.

The mediated spectacle of high-profile celebrity deaths and outpourings of grief and memorialisation have become prominent in the twenty-first century. To the extent that Glennys Howarth (2010: 103) declared that 'death has replaced sex as a source of pornographic entertainment'. Nowhere is death more entertaining, titillating and a stimulant of raw emotion than the death of a high-profile celebrity figure. However, for many high-profile celebrity individuals', death is not the end but a beginning to a new stage of existence - a posthumous career (see Penfold-Mounce 2018). Although the celebrity body is dead and gone celebrity 'traces' (Skeggs 2011; Penfold-Mounce 2019b) linger leaving a legacy amongst the living that continue to have symbolic and commercial value as consumable goods. These traces refer here to the celebrity image, including name, likeness, voice, signature, photographs and film footage etc which act as a proxy for the celebrity after their death. Celebrity as a form of popular culture reveals that despite 'concealment of the realities of death and dying...popular culture increasingly focuses on the body in death' (Howson 2013: 203) positioning it as a site of both

spectacle and productivity. The dead body is both object and subject. To best understand the productivity of celebrity death, and their ability to have posthumous careers (see Penfold-Mounce 2018; 2019a; 2019b; Jones and Jensen 2005; Petty and D'Rozario 2009; D'Rozario 2016) that are, in some cases, even more profitable and consumable than in life, we must consider the social and cultural dynamics that facilitate this ability to resist the grave.

We argue that contemporary culture is defined by mediated spectacles of all shapes and forms making it unsurprising, and even predictable, that even death has become spectacularized. Drawing upon Michael Hviid Jacobsen's (2016) notion of spectacular death we provide an examination of how dead celebrities encapsulate the visibility and commercialisation of mediated death. Notably we develop Jacobsen's work and take it further, arguing that it is not the actual dying of a celebrity that is spectacular but rather their transition into a valuable and consumable posthumous career. For high-profile dead celebrities, the commercialised and mediated productivity they achieve after death as 'the productive dead' is an exemplar of spectacular death. Dead celebrities as a mediated spectacle have significant potential to be financially lucrative for those who commodify and control their traces after death. We build upon Beverley Skeggs's (2011) concepts of 'bodies of value' and 'traces' by applying them to dead celebrities allowing a focus upon their posthumous careers. A case study of Marilyn Monroe is used as a clear example of the productive celebrity dead as she reveals and encapsulates so many of the facets of what it is to be a dead celebrity who continues to be productive after death. Monroe is used to explore the productivity of the celebrity dead through performance after death. Further, we address the conflict and challenges surrounding Monroe as a member of the productive dead, who resist the grave and work amongst the living contributing to contemporary culture as an age underpinned by the spectacle of death and the dead.

The Age of Mediated Spectacle and Spectacular Death

The saturation of contemporary culture with mediated spectacle is a defining feature of the twenty-first century global north (Kellner 2003). For Douglas Kellner, the global north is definable as an age of mediated spectacle where the mass media reports on, reacts to, and makes visible a myriad of social issues and events as part of its relentless pursuit of news and entertainment. Writing in the early twenty-first century, Kellner identifies key, yet notably diverse, cases of media spectacle, including the commodity spectacle as embodied within McDonalds; sport icon Michael Jordan; the murder trial of O.J. Simpson; the spectacle of popular culture such as *The X-Files* and aliens; and the political and cultural spectacle of US

President JF Kennedy. Each of these cases represent the global reach of media spectacle and their function within systems of globalization and celebrity culture. They speak of how living under conditions of a mediated, globalized society creates an insatiable desire for entertainment, commercialization, and consumption. We are witnessing the coming together of 'media and computer culture and of entertainment and information in a new networked and multimedia infotainment society' (Kellner 2003: 13).

A sense of mercilessness characterises this mediated spectacle age as multiple arenas of social existence from politics, sport, crime, commodities, and even death become spectacularized and made consumable through visually striking performance. Media spectacle pursue almost all corners of the social world, taking even the most mundane instances of social life and transforming them into an object to watch, survey, and consume. An age of mediated spectacle is underpinned by Guy Debord's 1967 seminal text on the subject of spectacle - *Society of the Spectacle* - where spectacle is most prominently a product of capitalism. Much like Kellner (2003), Debord's (2012) spectacle is ubiquitous, operating at the intersection between capitalism and media technologies. Taking a critical Marxist perspective, *Society of the Spectacle* presents readers with a reflexive and critical assessment of the capitalist motivations behind media spectacle. It calls on us to recognise the reach of media technologies and their spectacle, almost as capillaries running through the institutions and relationships of society. Thus, not only are media spectacles a product of capitalist forces and changes in production and consumption practices, but they also serve as mouthpieces through which ideologies are communicated by the capitalist elite and hegemonic ideals are solidified. Although Debord never explicitly defines what he means by 'spectacle', we can understand it as a phenomenon that has the power to cement and justify social structures by demanding obedience; the spectacle has turned appearance into commodity to which social actors are enslaved. Echoing Orwellian (2013) narratives, *Society of the Spectacle* not only describes how modernity is defined by a media, technological, and capitalist spectacle, but also how contemporary media spectacle are bound up with the manufacturing of dominant ideologies and the commercialization of social life.

Media spectacle is therefore less about the glamorization of social life, the visually powerful, entertaining or connecting distant individuals, but more an example of how capitalist structures dominate and demand obedience from its consumers and observers. Consequently, society is being defined by mediated spectacle that is driven by capitalist driven consumerism and the visual, commodification of everyday existence. As such, living in a spectacle based society is somewhat bleak as capitalist motivations result in the isolation and loneliness of

individuals ‘linked solely by their one-way relationship to the very centre that keeps them isolated from each other. The spectacle thus reunites the separated, but it reunites them only in their separateness’ (Debord 2012: 40). From this perspective, the age of mediated spectacle is more than an example of frippery or an indulgent interest of the media scholar. Spectacles are triumphing in all arenas of contemporary life, so much so that it has become ‘one of the organizing principles of the economy, polity, society, and everyday life’ (Debord 2012: 1). We are witnessing the ‘spectacularization of...consciousness’ (Debord 2012: 14) where our social world is steeped in readily consumable profit driven mediated content.

Building on the work of Kellner (2003) and Debord (2012), it is not only important to examine media spectacle because of the snapshot they offer into the intimate workings of a capitalist system, but also because of the power they hold to make everyday life visible and visual. Indeed, it is hard to avoid mediated spectacles due to the visual impact of these striking events and performances ranging from international sporting events such as the Olympics to political debates such as the Brexit process in the UK, or criminal cases such as the #MeToo campaign and the trial of Harvey Weinstein. As John Urry (2002) writes, the visualizing powers of the camera and its ability to accelerate time-space compression has meant that ‘almost all environments across the globe have been transformed, or are being transformed, into diverse and collectable spectacles’ (149). The technological interconnectivity of a globalised mass media combined with the rise of social media and citizen journalists (Thurman 2008) allows for mediated spectacle to thrive, turning the mundane into the glossy (see Beer and Penfold-Mounce 2010). The media technology’s ability to spectacularize the everyday sculpts and directs consumers understanding of the world around them. The media (both social and mass) do not lie dormant, passively functioning in the background of social structures (see Adorno and Horkheimer 2002) but rather, cultivate and generate spectacle. Nothing and no-one are unworthy of becoming spectacularized and death is no exception. Considering the pervasive reach mediated spectacle have it is not surprising that human mortality has become spectacularized, it is in fact a rather predictable development. Death itself is becoming ‘spectacular death’ as it becomes embraced and domesticated, making it safe and familiar whilst colonizing chunks of our earthly and mortal lives (Jacobsen 2016: 16).

The notion that mediated spectacle involves an active audience and fluid dialogue between the public and objects of spectacle is conspicuous in a society defined by what Jacobsen (2016) coined ‘spectacular death’. Here, two of the characteristics that define spectacular death - the new mediated/mediatized visibility of death and the commercialisation of death - are explored before being examined in relation to celebrity death later in the chapter.

In his review of Philippe Aries's (1974) historical analysis of death Jacobsen argues that Aries 'forbidden/invisible death' is no longer accurate but rather redundant in contemporary culture. Our contemporary world is different to that of the 1980s described by Aries, there have been vast social and cultural developments that mean that rather than suppressing death and banishing it from the social imagination, 'we increasingly witness death...through the media' (Jacobsen 2016: 10). In an age of mediated spectacle there is according to Jacobsen (2016: 10) a 'new mediated/mediatized visibility of death'. Death is not forbidden or invisible instead it is seen and encountered in multiple media facilitated forms. The age of spectacular death, does not mean that death has re-established its place at the dinner table of families around the world, but rather, because of new media technologies, we experience death vicariously. Death is simultaneously everywhere, on our mobile phones, our TVs, our computers, but also kept at a safe distance; it is 'present whilst being bizarrely absent' (Jacobsen 2016: 11). Death is an object of mediated spectacle, but spectacular death is arguably a sanitised era of death in which individuals are separated from the reality of death, by a screen. The forbidden death that Aries discusses, is 'challenged by a death that is gradually coming out of the closet' (Jacobsen 2016: 10) and reflecting Bauman's contention that death is spectacularly present although we manage to live 'as if death was not or did not matter' (1992: 231).

The new mediated visibility of death is not alone in contributing to spectacular death according to Jacobsen but is also supported by the rise in 'commercialisation of death'. Jacobsen (2016) focuses on how the death industry has become commercialised however, it is not only funeral directors and other death industry workers that commercialise death. Instead death has become commercialised through mediated spectacle as a source of media curiosity and a means to increase sales (Jacobsen 2016: 12) in a capitalist, technologically saturated social world. Death has moved away from being something that the public get up close and personal with in everyday life, and is also no longer a constant, paralysing source of fear and anxiety. Instead it has become a commonplace consumable, often for entertainment purposes, as death and the corpse are being 'recoded, desacralized, and transacted by those who view it as a worldly commodity to exploit for profit' (Foltyn 2008: 100). Themes of the macabre, death, and dying are being 'constructed and circulated as...object[s] of consumption, knowledge, and desire' (Elliott 1999: 148). The public does not simply passively consume the death and the dead, watching them on the television or on their computer. Rather, new technologies such as the growth of social media and global mass media enables the public to have a front row position at all moments of death. We gaze, we surveil, we are voyeurs that consume as the boundary between us and them, subject and object becomes blurred (Kristeva 1982).

A key route for the commercialisation of death is through the catapulting of celebrity death into the public eye. The lives of celebrities are lived out in the spotlight and subsequently so too are their deaths. Sitting at the heart of twenty-first century glossy, mediated culture, celebrities are highly consumable and bound up with meaning making, representation, and symbolization (Rojek 2001; 2012). Both living and dead celebrities feed a world where the ordinary are transformed into the extraordinary, and every aspect of existence has the potential to be 'uploaded and downloaded, copied and cross-posted, Flickr-ed, Facebook-ed and Photoshop-ped' (Hayward 2010: 1). Mediated spectacle based culture (Jewkes 2015) is constantly, and simultaneously, balancing its ability to 'record the truth authentically and to represent a radically new way of seeing the world' (Carrabine 2014: 135) as well as its power to construct an 'image [as]…contingent and metaphorical, standing in for an infinite number of alternative imaginings' (Young 2010: 94). As such, mediated spectacle has become so all-consuming that it can perhaps be argued that no longer do we interact with the social world as a 'simple pre-existing reality simply waiting 'out there'' (Urry and Larsen 2011:1). Rather the social world has been constructed into an all too often sparkling mediated environment in which people navigate being simultaneously individuals, audiences, and influencers, and wherein the distant are made familiar, and the unimaginable become the everyday. Online platforms, in particular social media, serve as 'active *mediators* between users, technologies and content' (van Dijck 2013: 142) and the spectacle of death is not exempt from this dialogue. This section has made clear how firstly we are living in a mediatised society characterised by spectacle and a complete saturation of technology and popular representation. Beyond this it has demonstrated that death is a core feature of this society of the spectacle, and that the media industry and popular culture not only represent death and dying as part of its thick catalogue of content to attract audiences, but rather the visibility of death and its commercialization is perhaps one of the most powerful weapons in its arsenal aimed at generating profit and attracting audiences. In essence, the media draw upon the celebrity traces (see Skeggs 2011; Penfold-Mounce 2019a) that linger after death cultivating certain high-profile deaths to hold a unique place in our cultural imagination.

Value, 'Traces' and the Productive Dead

In a media spectacle-driven society, where the high-profile celebrity is central to the consumer gaze, the celebrity is a 'body of value' (see Skeggs 2011). For Skeggs (2011) bodies of value are interwoven with imagining personhood differently. She highlights how people can be

excluded from possibilities of accruing and attaching value to themselves if they are outside of the dominant cultural understanding of value. In the case of dead celebrities, being excluded from the accruement of value is not the issue but rather how this value is actively cultivated and maximised for financial gain after death. As bodies of value dead celebrities are able to generate commercial value through control of their personhood (or celebrity image) as a form of bodily capital. Celebrities as bodies of value produce 'traces' of their personhood that embody value and this value is not dispelled by death (see Penfold-Mounce 2019a). The value of celebrity goes beyond the physical body and is bound to the 'traces' of the celebrity dead. It is these traces that can be owned and managed by the living, reviving celebrity careers for although the body is gone the celebrity image and the value they acquired in life continues. Notably the traces of the celebrity dead become a significant resource within the entertainment industry (Baker and Faulkner 1991) as they offer capitalism a new realm for profit and productivity. Celebrities in life become brands and this extends beyond the grave confirming their value as a consumable good for the living and their embodiment of spectacular death. Acting as a proxy after death, celebrity traces create and reinforce continuing bonds with the living meaning the celebrity dead do not undergo a social death where they disappear from living memory (Mulkay 1992; Jonsson 2015). Instead these traces, as a consumable for the living, suggest a degree of activity and productivity that does not end with death. Being dead is merely an inconvenience for the career of many celebrities who exist after death through their posthumous careers rooted in the traces they leave behind. Instead the celebrity dead remain and display remarkable productivity as they continue to work with the aid of the living. They become the productive dead (Penfold-Mounce 2019b).

The posthumous careers of the productive dead are driven by the living, namely family who are left in charge of the estate of the dead or professional management groups, such as CMG Worldwide and Authentic Brands Group (ABG), who own and control the traces of dead celebrities. These cultural intermediaries (Smith-Maguire and Matthews 2012) manage the dead celebrity as a brand enabling them to facilitate dead celebrities to become highly visible pawns in a spectacular capitalist society and as a result effectively 'the productive dead' (see Penfold-Mounce 2018; 2019b). Much like the raw materials and machinery of a Marxian capitalist society, dead celebrities become a means of production for those that control and possess their traces after death meaning that their financial and symbolic value is interwoven with the management of their bodily capital (see Mears and Finlay 2005). This capital is not just tied to the body but the performance of skills and talents that define their celebrity image and career in both life and death. For example, Fred Astaire controversially continued to

perform in 1997 when his dancing props from *Easter Parade* (1948) and *Royal Wedding* (1951) were replaced with Dirt Devil Vacuums for television advertisements. Astaire's widow Robyn agreed to the commercial deal but led his daughter, Ava to claim she was 'saddened that after his (Fred's) wonderful career he was sold to the devil' (Archerd 1997). The productivity of the dead is heavily directed by the cultural intermediaries who manage the celebrity dead's posthumous career and who direct the consumers gaze.

The posthumous careers of celebrities as the productive dead through their lingering 'traces' enables them to resist the grave. Life for the celebrity body might be over but existence and productivity continues reflecting Loïc Wacquant's (1995: 67) argument, in reference to boxer's, that bodily capital, if properly managed, is able to produce more value than was put into it. The celebrity dead are a consumable in life and, more importantly here, death and as a consumable spectacle they are highly productive. The actual presence of the celebrity is unnecessary for the traces of the dead celebrity can replace them for example through body doubles and computer generated (CG) face replacement which are infused with the value of the dead celebrity's body capital acquired in life (Penfold-Mounce 2019b). This value is evident through the performances of the dead in film and television highlighting how the thanatological imagination of the entertainment industry is stimulated by the celebrity dead resisting the grave (Penfold-Mounce 2019b). The celebrity dead are productive in producing new and original performances after death that go beyond inserting past performances into television adverts. Performing live on stage is achieved by the productive celebrity dead. For example, Michael Jacksons' performance on stage at the Billboard Music Awards in 2014 entailed not just his hologram performing on stage but in the context of an elaborate set with backing dancers who performed with him. Jackson's traces produced a new and unique performance under live conditions which had not been achieved before. This feat of the 'productive dead' on stage has been replicated and expanded by the dead going on tour such as in 2019 when Roy Orbison toured as a hologram accompanied by fellow hologram Buddy Holly as well as living musicians.

These on-stage performances to living audiences by the celebrity dead offer a challenge to post-mortem social death (see Jonsson 2015) as the dead are both absent and present. They are the dead who interact with the living but with no direct personal agency or sense of the self - similar to the monstrous Undead such as the zombie but with no cannibalism (Penfold-Mounce 2018). The participation of the celebrity dead in the acting and music world expands the dimensions and understanding of performance and productivity in the arts along with a ripple effect into related industries. The celebrity dead now continue to labour within the film

industry, as legal professionals along with marketing and advertising experts work to keep celebrity posthumous careers going, turning and maintaining them as 'the productive dead' (Penfold-Mounce 2019b). The implication of the productive dead is that they blur the boundaries of life and death and potentially increase the competition for film and television roles for the living as the dead compete for them. In November 2019 actor James Dean, who died in 1955 in a car accident aged 24, was cast in a co-starring role in Vietnam film called *Finding Jack*. Mark Roesler, CEO of CMG Worldwide (a company specialising in managing celebrity posthumous careers) said: 'This opens up a whole new opportunity for many of our clients who are no longer with us' (Ritman 2019).

The possibilities of dead celebrity traces being productive and valuable is leading to a growth in posthumous career planning. Digital Domain, the firm that was responsible for special effects in films including but not limited to *X-Men* (2000), *Thor* (2011), *Maleficent* (2014), *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and even *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) also work with actors preparing for a day when their life is over but their traces continue to work. Darren Hendler, digital effects supervisor for *Digital Domain*, has revealed that the firm has a:

> digital archive menu…[in which] You can archive how your face works and every single expression you make, full body scans. You can archive your voice and the way your voice sounds. You can archive different wardrobes and scans of wardrobes that you may wear (Sydell 2018).

High profile actors, it would seem are already being faced with their own demise, and the productive posthumous career they can enjoy after death. In the future living actors may be competing for roles against not just icons of the 20th century, such as James Dean and Marilyn Monroe but potentially a digital Meryl Streep or Al Pacino. The celebrity dead do not 'rest in peace' as they do not truly cross the boundary into death instead they resist the grave and linger amongst the living (see Královà 2015).

The ability of dead celebrity traces to work reveals that there are substantial rewards for being productive after death as evidenced by the Forbes Top Earning Dead Celebrity List otherwise known as the Dead Rich List (DRL). Published in October on an annual basis since 2001, the DRL provides a significant and rare insight into celebrity earnings as an elite global group. It is the DRL that highlights that the most successful route to a posthumous career is by being a singer-songwriter, such as Elvis Presley, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, John Lennon or Michael Jackson. Writing and recording songs in life enables the person to be

able to keep performing and earning after death. Death is far from the end of a career but just a diversion towards a different manner of working. For example, Elvis Presley still sells more than one million albums every year and he is hugely productive in terms of tourism surrounding his traces and brand by enabling fans to access Graceland and an entertainment complex called Elvis Presley's Memphis. Presley has also had significant success in releasing new material after death through the reuse of his vocals helping him achieve four posthumous number ones. This productivity has resulted in him consistently holding 2nd to 4th place on the DRL since losing first position (which he has never regained) in 2009, to Yves Saint Laurent and subsequently Michael Jackson. Meanwhile, golfer Arnold Palmer is so productive from beyond the grave via his beverage line, that he achieved 3rd place in 2019 on the DRL with US$30 million whilst Bob Marley earned an impressive US$20 million aided not only by music sales but also House of Marley headphones and Marley Natural cannabis and smoking accessories.

The DRL reveals more than that celebrities can have immense incomes through posthumous careers. It unveils evidence that gender inequality continues even after death (Penfold-Mounce 2019a). Since its inception the DRL has published the earnings of 52 dead celebrities all of whom has been men barring five women: actor/model, Marilyn Monroe; actor, Elizabeth Taylor; model, Bettie Page; singer-songwriter, Jenni Rivera; and singer-songwriter Whitney Houston. The representation of dead celebrity women on the DRL is particularly significant in terms of gender inequality amongst posthumous careers in terms of actual income and the types of labour they conduct after death. Women are scarce on the DRL, for example, it was not until 2011 that more than one woman was present - Monroe was joined by Taylor and Page - and 2013 was a landmark year when four women featured for the first and only time - Monroe, Taylor, Page and Rivera. Since this peak of four women numbers have declined again with three women appearing between 2014-2015 (Monroe, Taylor and Page) and reducing to just two in 2016-2017 (Taylor and Page), in 2018 (Monroe and Page) and in 2019 (Monroe and Houston). The DRL reveals not only how few dead women celebrities achieve financially successful posthumous careers but how precarious their position is amongst the huge earnings of many male posthumous careers. Women on the DRL struggle to maintain a position on the list (for example Rivera appeared for a single year in 2013 and Houston makes her first appearance in 2019) or to hold the top positions on the top ten earners list with only Elizabeth Taylor having achieved the number one slot for a single year in 2012. From the five women who appear on the DRL it is Monroe who stands out as a successful productive dead female celebrity due to her longevity on the list. She has appeared on the DRL since its first publication in 2001 and every year since apart from 2009-2010 and 2016-2017, leading to the

question of what is the secret of her posthumous success? The final section of this chapter uses Monroe as a case study of how a dead female celebrity can have a successful posthumous career as the productive celebrity dead. She is used to explore the ways the celebrity dead continue to be productive from beyond the grave and to highlight the conflict that can ensue over the ownership and control of posthumous careers. Monroe has an impressive capacity to encapsulate spectacular death through her productivity.

Dead famous, Dead Successful, Dead Productive: Marilyn Monroe

In 1962 at the age of just 36 actor/model Marilyn Monroe died of a barbiturate overdose. She had been a huge sex symbol and popular Hollywood star during the 1950s and early 1960s despite grappling with mental illness and eventually substance abuse. Monroe was in life, and has continued to be in death, an icon (see Rollyson 2005); she cultivated her celebrity personhood forming a revered and idolised status. She uniquely captured vulnerability, difficulty and provocation, whilst being a high-profile star she still managed to remain elusive. Monroe's death was the death of an icon. Her death led to a variety of conspiracy theories suggesting murder and links to President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert, as well as union leader Jimmy Hoffa and even mob boss Sam Giancana. In both life and death Monroe courted controversy and speculation. Therefore, it is unsurprising that her posthumous career, although financially and symbolically successful, has been defined by both productivity and conflict. Monroe is an exemplar of spectacular death, not through the spectacle of her demise but rather through the spectacular nature of her posthumous career.

In death Monroe has become a lucrative brand that is proving to have longevity in terms of earnings. For example, Monroe is the first and only woman to feature in the first eight years of the publication of the DRL (2001-2008) hovering between 6th and 12th place whilst earning up to US$10 million a year before ultimately achieving 8th place in 2018 with US$14 her highest income on the DRL. Monroe's posthumous career as a brand has certainly demonstrated an ability for longevity however she has failed to climb to the top of the DRL highlighting that the top dead celebrity earners are men. This lack of success in rising to the economic top amongst dead celebrities is interrelated with conflict over the possession and management of the value of her traces and her bodily capital. Several earning blips are evident on the DRL including between 2009-2010 and also 2016-2017 when she disappeared from the list. Both of these absences on the list reveal how conflict over the control of Monroe's celebrity traces, and subsequently her posthumous career, have impacted on her productivity and financial success. 2009-2010 marked the first in substantial disappearance of Monroe from the

DRL and coincides with the culmination of a litigation battle over who owned Monroe's image particularly relating to photographs. This resulted in Anna Strasberg, the widow of Monroe's acting coach Lee Strasberg to whom was left 75% of Monroe's estate and CMG Worldwide (the company hired by Strasberg to license Monroes' name and image) losing a court battle in 2008. This litigation battle resulted in Authentic Brands Group (ABG) purchasing the licencing rights to Monroe in 2011 for a rumoured US$20-30 million. ABG now control and manage Monroe's traces which led to the second disappearance of Monroe from the DRL in 2016-2017 as new licensing deals, including with Montblanc pens, were negotiated (Kirsta 2012).

Following ABG purchasing the rights to manage her posthumous career, Monroe's value has become substantially more financially lucrative than it was between 2001-2008. Their management of products rooted in her bodily capital has been hugely economically successful since 2011. Monroe has become very active with a previously unheard recording of her stating that she only wore Chanel No.5 to bed being used in 2012 to advertise the perfume, whilst in 2015 she appeared in Coca Cola adverts (alongside Elvis Presley), Max Factor and Dior perfume (with Grace Kelly and Marlene Dietrich) and even launched a clothing line with US retailer Macy's. A significant development for Monroe's posthumous career has been her conversion into an animated character in order to 'make the world a better place by inspiring others through her creative mindset and individuality'. This cartoon character called Mini Marilyn, according to ABG, 'She's dazzling, she's vivacious, and she's bursting to meet the world! With her trademark blonde hair and red lips, Mini Marilyn is the epitome of all things glamorous'. Mini Marilyn is an extension of the value of Monroe's bodily capital having been designed to target those aged between 17-34 (Young 2015); and to serve as an 'engine for licensing, retail and other brand opportunities' particularly in film, TV, video games and live venue attractions (Frater 2015) whilst having a major appeal to the Chinese market. Monroe's traces continue to work extensively through the symbolic, and subsequently financial, value generated by her physical attractiveness (see Gottschall 2008; Stephens, Hill and Hanson 1994). Monroe's bodily capital endows her posthumous traces with value that can be marketed to the consumer's gaze. In life Monroe was an iconic spectacle to be consumed through the news media, photographs and films. In death she epitomises spectacular death - a spectacle facilitated by the media to be gazed upon and consumed.

In life Monroe's celebrity status was rooted in being beautiful, young, sexy and unattainable. She was the ultimate 'blonde bombshell' who was emotionally complex and unpredictable which made her difficult to control. In death, the control and ownership of her traces have continued to affirm the difficulty in controlling Monroe through an extensive

barrage of litigation that has extended beyond her death. In 2007 a series of lawsuits were filed by the children of three of Monroe's photographers (Sam Shaw, Milton Greene and Tom Kelley who were deceased) challenging the right of Anna Strasberg (who owned 75% of the Monroe estate following the death of her husband Lee, to whom Monroe left much of her estate) and CMG Worldwide to control all rights to Monroe's image. The complaint was that the photographers owned the copyright to thousands of Monroe images and had the right to license the images for publishing and merchandising deals without sharing profits with CMG Worldwide and Strasberg. The photographer's descendants no longer wished to pay the hugely inflated 75%-90% of gross receipts of royalties to the licence holder namely, CMG Worldwide and Strasberg, when most US merchandising agreements involved paying only up to 15%. Shaw, Greene and Kelley's descendants also claimed their dismay at the tawdriness of much of the Monroe licencing granted by CMG Worldwide (Kirsta 2012).

Monroe's financially lucrative posthumous career raised the question of who owns her? And did Monroe have the legal power to bequeath her publicity rights to Strasberg? Notably when she died, America did not recognise posthumous rights of publicity meaning that the right to control or profit from commercial use of a celebrity's name and likeness died with them. The state of California had introduced the Celebrities Rights Act in 1985 creating publicity rights for dead celebrities whose names, signatures, photographs or likenesses had commercial value but was only valid for those who died after January 1985 and lasted up to 70 years (Decker 2009). Within the six weeks after the Monroe ruling in May 2007 in favour of Monroe's photographers' descendants a new bill was introduced in California allowing any star who had died since 1st January 1938 to transfer their publicity rights to their heirs (Decker 2009). Unfortunately for Monroe her legal executor filed her will for probate in New York making her a New York citizen at the time of her death meaning her estate (Strasberg) and CMG Worldwide could not claim her publicity rights (Krista 2012). Ultimately Authentic Brands Group (ABG) purchased Monroe's publicity rights from CMG Worldwide but legal battles continue to threaten Monroe's posthumous career and the value of her traces (see AVELA, Inc v. Estate of Marilyn Monroe, LLC, SDNY, No 12-cv-4828).

At the time of her death Monroe was not in a position to predict the conflict that would engulf her posthumous career. However more contemporary actors are thinking about their future working life after death such as actor Al Pacino who expressed that 'I feel like one's likeness and image should be protected in some way and not abused or denigrated for the sake of profit' (Kirsta 2012). Meanwhile actor, Liza Minnelli stated 'I believe only family or those entrusted with this right [legal rights over the ownership of dead celebrities image] can truly

know how to maintain the integrity, respect and dignity of a loved one's name, image and likeness' (Kirsta 2012). Facing the prospect of becoming the productive dead is leaving celebrities to plan for their posthumous careers. They are seeking to exert control and ownership over their traces from beyond the grave. They are effectively resisting death and not fully trusting the living to work in their best interests. No longer do celebrities after death have to pass over full control of their traces to family or a brand management company and trust they will act in a way that they would approve. Instead, dead celebrities can remain in control of themselves by leaving strict instructions for how they wish their posthumous career to be conducted and thus direct how their value is be to used and accrued after death. Actor and comedian Robin Williams set a precedent for controlling traces after his death in 2014 by leaving his rights of publicity to a foundation set up in his name and denying them the right to benefit from this legacy until 2039. What was distinctive about this move was twofold: firstly, Williams asserted control over his posthumous career and how his traces could be exploited and secondly, he recognised the value of the productive dead and took steps to mitigate the tax contribution his traces would have to pay to the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) (Anon 2015).

Conclusion

When German sociologist Nobert Elias wrote: 'Death is the problem of the living. Dead people have no problems' (2001: 3) he did not consider that although the dead might have no problems they are very able to cause problems. In an age of globalised spectacular death, the high-profile celebrity dead become highly consumable as a brand and product making them become extremely financially and symbolically valuable. Drawing on Skeggs (2011) concept of 'bodies of value' and the 'traces' which are left behind by dead celebrities as consumables enable posthumous career to thrive. It is the leaving behind of traces imbued with bodily capital after the death of their physical body, that reveals dead celebrities to encapsulate spectacular death that expands Jacobsen's (2016) vision of new visibility and commercialisation of human mortality. We have argued that spectacular death is not about the actual dying of a celebrity but their transition into a posthumous life and career and the productivity they display after death as the productive dead. Subsequently whether dead celebrities' process of dying may or may not be a visual spectacle (see Walter 2009; Woodthorpe 2010) the traces that linger after death enable them to achieve spectacular death through lucrative highly productive posthumous careers.

As the productive dead in an age of mediated spectacle, dead celebrities are a catalyst for spectacular death as their posthumous careers are spectacles producing products and images available to be consumed globally. As such the value of dead celebrities reveal a particular form of 'spectacular death' in an age of the spectacle. In using Marilyn Monroe as an exemplar of the productive dead it is apparent that conflict over control and ownership does not end with death. Instead the spectacular death of dead celebrities such as Monroe opens new channels for debate over ownership, control and the dignity of the dead in terms of preventing tawdry commodification. It is through the labour of celebrity traces and their commercial value that the deceased celebrity becomes the productive dead who resist the grave and coexist amongst the living and embodying spectacular death. The key to the spectacular death experienced by many high-profile celebrities through posthumous careers rooted in the traces they leave behind is that you need to be more than dead famous to be dead successful after death. To have a successful posthumous career in the age of mediated spectacle and spectacular death a celebrity needs to be dead productive, dead in control and ultimately have imbued their traces with drop dead gorgeous bodily capital too.

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