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RESPONSE

I would first like to thank Julia Lupton and CJ Gordon for organizing this forum and for so generously introducing the argument of *The Royal Remains*. It's a chastening experience to read a description of one's work that is clearer and sharper than anything one has written oneself. I especially want to thank the scholars who have taken the time and care to engage with the book and produce such fine and nuanced critiques.

I

The first set of interventions raise serious questions about some of the fundamental concepts I use in my argument. These questions concern the consistency of the use of terms, their purchase on the historical material at issue, the historicity of the terms themselves, and, finally, the capacity of the terms (and the larger argument) to open new ways of thinking about the modes in which bodies come to be symbolically inscribed and libidinally implicated in political collectivities. The first thing to say is that the emphasis of the book is largely on the dimension of libidinal implication, by which I mean the affective grip that a social formation is able to call forth—ex-cite—in its members (meaning also the body's "members"). The argument of the book is that such libidinal implication is sustained by a "collaborative" work of fantasy, one that is, in other words, never merely individual and never merely social but rather one that operates at—or *as*—the jointure of the two (fantasy, this seemingly most intimate dimension of our inner lives, can be grasped as what is least "proper" to oneself and often most visible to others by way of the peculiar "torsions" of our being in the world; in this sense, psychoanalysis makes available to the analysand what is already "out there"). Our sense of entitlement to enjoy the rights and privileges proper to the various "offices" with which we have been invested is subtended by another mode of enjoyment, a *jouissance* sustaining our attachment to these offices, to our socially intelligible, socially recognized places, positions, roles, identities. Our symbolic investiture with this or that "office" always produces a surplus of enjoyment that must be organized, managed, economized—*re-invested*. To put it in Weberian terms, our various "callings" within a social division of labor generate a pressure that can never be fully metabolized by any work performed in that vocation; these socio-economic interpellations generate a

surplus (of) voice, a sort of vocal object that induces ever more activity. Capitalism's greatness, if one wants to call it that, is grounded in its capacity to convert this surplus object into value, into a vast economy of "too muchness." *The Royal Remains* focuses on the more specifically political, rather than socio-economic, locus of this too muchness and argues that the practices, doctrines, and rituals associated with the political theology of sovereignty and, later, with the operations of biopolitical administration (as understood by Foucault), are sites where this work of fantasy is at always work, or at the very least, like Kafka's country doctor, "on call."

Jennifer Rust's remarks about the centrality of the liturgy of incarnation in the Catholic mass open up new avenues for adding greater range, depth, and complexity to my analysis of the modern and modernist afterlife of political theology. In response, I should first underline that the concept of political theology guiding my analysis is, at its core, Schmittian. It encompasses all efforts to transfer and appropriate religious concepts and practices, even and perhaps especially those that involve the formation of community—a *mass* congregated in and through the *mass*—to sustain the legitimacy of political institutions (the word "sustain" here means, among other things, to nourish, to supply life support). As Esposito would put it, this transfer implies a shift from a communitarian to an immunological sense of collectivity. It makes good sense, then, that Esposito invokes Pauline tropes to mobilize his own sense of a coming community newly congregated around an affirmative biopolitics of the flesh, or what he refers to as a "non-Christian form of incarnation" (see *Royal Remains*, 137). I have argued, however, that Paul's own use of the language not only of *incarnation* but also of *incorporation* already sets us on a path toward the immunological paradigm. The dimension that I am calling the flesh is for Paul already spectral, haunting, threatening, and, at some level, marked as Jewish. And it becomes so precisely because it is linked to the agency of the signifier, the impact of the letter yet unmitigated by the loving spirit of law. If the word becomes—or perhaps better: *produces* flesh—the task of Christ is to head the church that interiorizes or domesticates it, manages it in the house and household of God. As Giorgio Agamben has recently argued, this is the very beginning of an "economic theology" that will forever shadow the political theology of sovereignty in the West (an argument that ultimately deconstructs the boundary between political theology and political economy).

In previous writings on the concept of sovereignty (and the figure captured in the sovereign exception, the *homo sacer*), Agamben leaned heavily on Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies*. In his more recent project, he makes use of an earlier work by the scholar, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship*.¹ To put it in the terms I use in my book, what Agamben suggests is that the monarch's second body—the body that directly incarnates the sublime substance of his sovereignty—is nourished, kept "alive," by the activity

¹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory. For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

of glorification enacted in liturgical and profane performances of acclamations.² The king's second body and the vocal "object" produced by way of ritualized acclamations performed by the relevant assemblages of people and clergy, are, in a word, *made of the same sublime stuff*, belong to a single "metabolism," a single politico-theological economy in which the surplus element in circulation (and undergoing various changes of state) is the *Herrlichkeit* that subtends *Herrschaft*.³

Though Kantorowicz himself tends to understand the specifically liturgical acclamations the history of which he reconstructs as constative rather than as genuinely performative speech acts—they serve, that is, to formally *recognize* an exciting juridical state of affairs—he elsewhere suggests that the juridical and liturgical dimensions become fused into a single vocal compound endowed with "king-creating powers" (cited in Agamben, 190). In a passage quoted at length by Agamben concerning the coronation ceremony of Charlemagne in Rome, Kantorowicz admits the impossibility of sorting out the strictly politico-juridical from the strictly liturgical elements in the *sonorous mass* of acclaiming voices: "The shouts of the Romans and the laudes, as they then followed one after the other without a break, seem to have formed one single tumultuous outburst of voices in which it is idle to seek the particular cry which was 'constitutive' and legally effective" (cited in Agamben, 192). We might say, then, that what Kantorowicz later elaborated under the heading of the king's second body is a highly condensed sublimate of just such a sonorous mass. Rust reminds us that this "liturgically generated social flesh" (Rust's formulation) emerges in the early church as a communitarian or congregational bond that only later comes to be appropriated by and concentrated in a single sovereign. That, of course, is the very definition of political theology; that is precisely what it does. The question remains—and this is the question with which I end my book—whether the endgame of the long history inaugurated by the political theology of sovereignty, a history that, as I've argued, mutates into the biopolitical life of the People, involves a return of some kind to its communitarian beginnings. We should recall that Kantorowicz himself experienced firsthand the modern and in some sense "democratized" revival of this political theological performativity. In the tumultuous mass politics of the early years of the Weimar Republic he belonged to the militant—and violent—far right; as a Jew, he would be forced to flee a homeland whose maniacally anti-Semitic regime had put into operation a vast doxological machine to sustain its grip on the population, to hold it together if

² Kantorowicz's study focuses on the history of a particular acclamation that comes into use during the Carolingian period and through which, as Agamben puts it, the Carolingian kings "effect a form of liturgization of secular power" (189). As Agamben emphasizes, "the peculiarity of this long acclamation, which concerns Christ the victor, king, and emperor, is that it unites divinity not only with the names of the saints, but also with those of the pontiff and the emperor" (189). Because it "promiscuously united heaven and earth, angels and functionaries, emperor and pontiff, [it] was destined to play an important role at the point where profane power and spiritual power, courtly and liturgical protocol met" (189).

³ If one thinks of Lacan's *matheme* for the discourse of the master, the upper level of the formula refers to the dimension of *Herrschaft* while the bottom part points to the work of fantasy as the production site of *Herrlichkeit*.

not as a *corpus mysticum* then at least as a biopolitical *Volksgemeinschaft*. (I hope that others take up Rust's invitation to explore further the dynamic between "the sacerdotal powers of the king and the medical techniques of the doctor" in *Macbeth* among of works by Shakespeare.)

I'd like to respond to Nichole Miller's remarks by taking up her invitation to think more about sex and birth in relation to my understanding of the flesh. Here I would like to recall the passages in Chapter Five of *Royal Remains* where I suggest that Arendt's notion of natality needs to be grasped at two different levels. The first marks a human being's natural entrance into the world, his or her birth to a space of possibilities, to the genres of living (well or badly) available within a form of life. The second level of natality marks the emergence of an indivisible kernel of self-sameness, a dimension of pure self-reference that persists in all "possible worlds" and yet remains recalcitrant to any generic identification or community standard of goodness. This is what Franz Rosenzweig, in *The Star of Redemption*, referred to as the birth of the "metaethical" self. Rosenzweig abbreviates one's birth into the multiple genres of living as $B=A$: what is particular (*das Besondere*) enters into the general or generic (*das Allgemeine*).⁴ The equation stands for the "personality" or what we might call the *man with qualities*. The birth of singular selfhood is abbreviated by the tautology, $B=B$, and stands for the pulse of a defiant yet mute insistence that bears witness to—that is the "birth-mark" of—one's self-sameness: "*whatever* changes about me *I am still me!*" Rosenzweig characterizes the birth pangs of the *metaethical* self in dramatic terms:

One day it assaults man like an armed man and takes possession of all the wealth of his property... Until that day, man is a piece of the world even before his own consciousness... The self breaks in and at one blow robs him of all the goods and chattel which he presumed to possess [*Der Einbruch des Selbst beraubt ihn mit einem Schlage all der Sachen und Güter, die er zu besitzen sich vermaß*]. He becomes quite poor, has only himself, knows only himself, is known to no one, for no one exists by he. (71)

Rosenzweig goes on to link this birth to the emergence of the drives in a human life:

The self is a *daimon* ... in the sense of the Heraclitian saying, "*Daimon* is for man his ethos." This speechless, sightless, introverted *daimon* assaults man first in the guise of *Eros*, and thence accompanies him through life until the moment when he removes his disguise and reveals himself to him as *Thanatos*. (71)

In her own efforts to characterize the locus of natality in human life, the site where something genuinely new and unforeseen emerges, a new thread and

⁴ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William Hallo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985). Subsequent references are made in the text.

pattern in the web of relations that make up a common world, she gravitates to some of the same language used by Rosenzweig. Human life is marked by natality not because we are all constituted as unique bundles of differential relations but rather because we exist as a kind of *tear* in the web of relations, live “in excess” of any differential field of representations, differ in a different way than culturally recognizable (or not yet recognizable) predicative identities. This excess is what makes us a “who” rather than a “what”:

This disclosure of “who” in contradistinction to “what” somebody is—his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide—is implicit in everything somebody says and does. It can be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity, but its disclosure can almost never be achieved as a willful purpose, as though one possessed and could dispose of this “who” in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities. On the contrary, it is more than likely that the “who,” which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the *daimon* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters.⁵

In psychoanalytic terms, this self that discloses itself as the very (birth)mark of our “who-ness,” is linked to the emergence of human sexuality, of libidinal pressure that is always excessive, too much, in surplus; it is this surplus that Lacan calls *jouissance*, a dimension that arises as a kind of collateral damage to the body’s inscription in a web of relations, a field of signifying differences. This also means that this surplus bit of flesh that we acquire with our sexualization cannot be captured by the notion of sexual difference if that is understood as a binary opposition or signifying difference.⁶ By tracking the figurations of this surplus, the various ways in which the work of fantasy has shaped it and put it to use in specifically political contexts, we are, at some level, producing an alternative “history of sexuality,” one that intersects at numerous points with the Foucauldian version of that history yet doesn’t fully map onto it.

⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 179-80.

⁶ As Mladen Dolar has recently put it, “There is a wide-spread criticism around that aims at binary operations as the locus of enforced sexuality, its reglementation, its imposed mould, its compulsory structure. By the imposition of the binary code of two sexes we are subjected to the basic social constraint. But the problem is perhaps rather the opposite: sexual difference poses the problem of the two precisely because it cannot be reduced to the binary opposition nor accounted for in terms of the binary numerical two. It is not a signifying difference, such that defines the elements of a structure. It is not to be described in terms of opposing features nor as a relation of given entities pre-existing the difference.... One could say: bodies can be counted, sexes cannot. Sex presents a limit to the count of bodies, it cuts them from inside rather than grouping them together under common headings.” Mladen Dolar, “One Splits Into Two,” in *Die Figur der Zwei / The Figure of the Two. Das Magazin des Instituts für Theorie*, 14/15 (December 2010), 88.

This primordial disunity of the self with itself that allows Rosenzweig to characterize it as the *metaethical* self, a self that, in its very self-division obstinately “sticks to” itself, is characterized by Anna Kornbluh as that “specter of bodily fragmentation produced by the contrastive encounter with a whole image (as in the mirror stage).” If this is right, then it certainly indicates that the child’s ostensibly original lack of coordination and sense of bodily disunity cannot be understood in strictly physiological terms, i.e., cannot be reduced to lack of development of motor skills, but must rather already be linked to the “too much” of pressure that (birth)marks the self at the onset of what Freud characterized as a constitutively perverse infantile sexuality. It is for this reason that I prefer to speak of a body encumbered by a surplus of flesh rather than of a body in pieces, of a body plagued by partial objects rather than one falling apart into fragments. I’m not sure how much is at stake in this distinction, but it does figure in my reading of Rilke’s *Malte Laurids Brigge* in which mirror scenes as well as bodies in excess of themselves play a considerable role.

Kornbluh’s insistence that a psychoanalytic approach to the materials I discuss demands a great demarcation from the other theoretical models I adapt is no doubt a helpful corrective to my tendency to reconcile conflicts and tensions among my “team” of co-thinkers and interlocutors. It is my experience, however, that I often begin to grasp an argument made, say, by Rosenzweig or Agamben, only by introducing a psychoanalytic dimension. It happens just as often that a psychoanalytic account of a phenomenon gains a new kind of actuality by being placed in relation—or if one insists, productive “non-relation”—to more historically and politically oriented modes of analysis. In this spirit I have tried to show that the Lacanian understanding of enjoyment—of *jouissance*—can be productively linked to the way in which Agamben understands the state of exception in which the sovereign essentially functions like a punishing superego issuing the single injunction, “Enjoy (bare) life!”⁷

Finally, I don’t think I have anything new to say that would satisfy Alexander Schulman’s questions and criticisms; they are, for the most part, objections that come down to asking why I wrote this book rather *than* another (or the one he might have written). If my extensive presentation of what I take to be a productive psychoanalytic approach to the topic of biopolitics does not convince Schulman that I offer something beyond what Schmitt, Foucault, and Agamben have written, so be it. As for his remarks questioning the modernity of biopolitics, I would refer him to Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition*. There Arendt makes a very strong case that in antiquity “biopolitics” could only have been a meaningless word since politics really only begins where the household—the sphere for the maintenance and reproduction of life and life processes—ends. Arendt of course ends her book with the claim that we have now come to live in a world in which those very processes constitute the stakes of political life. In a word, she too presents a very strong argument for the modernity of biopolitics

⁷ I would furthermore add that both Lacan and Agamben are in pursuit of a different mode of enjoyment, one enjoined by a different sort of call aimed not at life but at something like the event or eventfulness—Heidegger would say *Ereignis*—of being.

and does so by taking into account all the apparent counter-examples Schulman invokes. My own project was a different one, namely to focus on the biopolitical consequences of the transition from royal to popular sovereignty and to show that this transition can only really be grasped if one makes use of the resources of psychoanalysis and modernist aesthetic practices. The responses to my discussions of those practices form the next group of essays, “Creative Conjunctions.”

II

The overarching theme of the three contributions in this cluster is that my readings of various works of literature and art remain (perhaps like Adorno’s writings on aesthetics) in the thrall of the anxious endgames of sovereignty and fail to truly seize on the resources of more “brazenly performed” (McIver) displays of play and comedic excess, that my readings fail to put the ludic—and thus, perhaps, more everyday, more experience-near, more “popular,” more amusing—dimension of the materials I analyze to work. There are other criticisms as well including the charge of placing too much (Weitzman) or too little (McIver) emphasis on the role of the First World War in the story I tell. (Other criticisms tend to be of the form: why don’t I address the materials of special interest to the critic, materials perhaps even better suited to my argument.)

Kafka stands at the center of Weitzman’s concerns so I would like to begin my remarks there. Against what Weitzman perceives as my tendency to read the surplus of immanence I trace throughout my book as “the negative side the Hegelian method, translated into the language of the diaphragm” (Friedrich Theodor Vischer, cited in Weitzman), she emphasizes the irreducibly uncanny laugh of the creature Odradek in Kafka’s story, “The Worry of the Father of the Family” (“a kind of laughter that can only be produced without lungs” —and presumably without diaphragm).⁸ Weitzman’s criticism, if I understand it correctly, is that I make this peculiar laughter dialectically intelligible and thereby lose touch with “alienation so alien that it is of little use any more to call

⁸ As I’ve learned from a brilliant dissertation on the mutations of the sublime in nineteenth-century German Realism, in his hugely popular novel, *Auch Einer. Eine Reisebekanntschaft*, Vischer himself named the often comedic volatility of the world of objects “*die Tücke des Objects*.” What Hegel called the cunning of reason, *die List der Vernunft*, becomes here the mischievous (and perhaps malignant) impishness of the object. See Leigh Ann Smith-Gary, *Extreme Measures: Domesticating the Sublime in German Realist Literature*, Diss., University of Chicago, 2012, Print. Odradek could be said to be the very embodiment of such *Tücken*. I don’t think it would an exaggeration to say that Slavoj Žižek’s philosophical project is in large major dedicated to demonstrating that *die Tücke des Objekts* is ultimately the reverse side of what he calls the “ticklish subject” (translated into German as *die Tücke des Subjekts*), one first fully elaborated in Hegel’s work. *The Royal Remains* tries to track this nexus of *Tücken* in the tics and quivering — the *Zucken*—of the flesh.

it by such a name" (Weitzman). I'd like to say a bit more about the nature of such "surds" in Kafka's work.⁹

In a short posthumously published fragment—one I cite in my book—Kafka links the shift from kingship to the sort of household administration that, as Weitzman nicely emphasizes, is explicitly marked in Kafka's "Odradek" text, to a new sort of soundscape. The shift is one that generates the white noise of bureaucratic activity, the babel of a sort of secular *laudes* without kingship (still perhaps valid but no longer meaningful):

They were given the choice to become kings or messengers. Just like children they all chose to be messengers. For this reason there are only messengers; they race through the world and, because there are no kings, they call out to one another proclamations that have become meaningless. They would happily put an end to their miserable life but because of their oath of office they don't dare.¹⁰

In *The Castle*, this uncanny sonority of seemingly anarchic administration is first registered across the telephone line. After having established, at least provisionally, that he had indeed been called to serve as a land surveyor by the castle authorities, K. tries to make contact with those authorities—or at least their representatives—using the telephone at the Bridge Inn where he has spent his first night. What he hears is something like the distant echo of that "single tumultuous outburst of voices" that, according to Kantorowicz, accompanied the coronation ceremony of Charlemagne in Rome:

From the mouthpiece came a humming, the likes of which K. had never heard on the telephone before. It was as though the humming of countless childlike voices—but it wasn't humming either, it was singing, the singing of the most distant, of the most utterly distant, voices—as though a single, high-pitched yet strong voice had emerged out of this humming in some quite impossible way and now drummed against one's ear as if demanding to penetrate more deeply into something other than one's wretched hearing. K. listened without telephoning, with his left hand propped on the telephone stand he listened thus.¹¹

And in one of his last stories, *The Burrow* (*Der Bau*), this humming undergoes a further mutation, resounding now as a vague *Zischen* or hissing that here seems bent on penetrating the underground fortress so meticulously constructed by the creature—one imagines a badger—who narrates this perhaps strangest of

⁹ My thinking about Kafka's sonorous universe is deeply indebted to Mladen Dolar's *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), as well as unpublished texts that the author has graciously shared with me.

¹⁰ Franz Kafka, *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer und andere Schriften aus dem Nachlaß* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1992), 235-36.

¹¹ Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. Mark Harman (New York: Schocken, 1998), 20.

Kafka's animal stories (Kafka's final animal story, *Josefine, oder das Volk der Mäuse*, also, of course, revolves around a specific sound characterized as a quasi-musical *Piepsen*). The difficulty of localizing this sound, of being able to attribute it to a source and thereby convert it into a determinate vocalization even if it is that of a terrifying beast—a sort of underground Leviathan—leaves the badger confused as to whether the sound is coming from inside or outside his system of tunnels (or, at one point, even his own body). Indeed, the badger himself suggests that the sound only really emerges for one who has established and manages a household; the *unheimlich* sonority in question seems only to emerge in the context of some form of *household administration*, some form of *economy*: "I had to feel completely at home again in order to hear it; it is, so to speak, only audible to the ear of the homeowner who is truly exercising his authority."¹² At some level the argument of my book is that to truly grasp the nature of this economic metabolism, one has to imagine this *Zischen* as the soundtrack of a David Lynch film in which the camera slowly but surely zooms in on the wound on the side of the young boy in Kafka's story, *Ein Landarzt*; we are hearing, in other words, the murmuring of the royal remains, the sublime flesh that has been dispersed into the life of the people and is now managed in various forms of economic and biopolitical administration.¹³

I do not think that any one form or style of aesthetic production is singularly qualified to render this dimension, give form to this uncannily resounding flesh. Nor do I think that the engagement with it is destined to be despondent (thus my efforts to highlight the comedic aspect of the fleshly surplus of immanence tracked in the book). If others are able to discover the resonances of this dimension in other aesthetic guises—in alternative modernisms—that open up new configurations of affect, thought, and sense of possibility, so much the better.

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¹² Stanley Corngold, trans. and ed., *Kafka's Selected Stories* (New York: Norton, 2007), 177.

¹³ "On his right side, near the hip, there is an open wound the size of a palm print. Many shades of pink, dark in its depths and growing lighter at the edges, tender and grainy, with unevenly pooling blood, open at the surface like a mine. Thus from a distance. Close up, further complications are apparent. Who can look at that without giving a low whistle? Worms, as thick and as long as my little finger, rose-pink themselves and also blood-spattered, firmly attached to the inside of the wound, with little white heads, with many little legs, writhe up toward the light." *Kafka's Selected Stories*, 64.