

Law, Violence, Music, and Decolonising the Coronation Ceremony

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1 Why is the Coronation Necessary and what does Law have to do with it?

Rolling Stone magazine on the 1 March 2023 reported that several music artists declined invitations to perform during King Charles III's Coronation ceremony (Ewens 2023). Although most of the artists declined to comment, an anonymous 'Meg' described as 'head of a leading British music PR company' explained that 'These big symbolic associations carry a lot of weight and literally go down in history books in bold and underlined'. In this, at least, Meg and the official coronation website would concur with Sir Antonio Pappano, 'Music Director, Royal Opera House & Conductor of the Coronation Orchestra' saying: 'All Coronation Services are a mixture of deep-rooted tradition and contemporary innovation. As was the case in the four twentieth-century Coronations, the choice of music reflects the cultural breadth of the age in which we live' (The Royal Household 2023).

What about the law? Well, given that '[i]n English common law, the coronation of Richard I still divides time beyond and time within legal memory' (Duxbury 2016) or up to 1189AD (see *R v Joliffe* at 59), then even the law orients itself from coronation. If, it is correct to say that the law in the form of the oath is the only indispensable element

Law, Violence, Music, and Decolonising the Coronation Ceremony

of the coronation, ‘a religious ceremony that has remained largely unchanged for over 1,000 years’ (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2023), albeit with the oath being modified as found necessary ‘to reflect changes to the territorial composition of the UK and the wider Commonwealth’ (Torrance 2023: 5), then the unchanging role of the ceremony versus the changeability of the law merits closer attention. This need is especially keen when it is considered that this most public of ceremonies has its most essential element, the anointing with oil, kept strictly veiled. In an editorial on the coronation ceremony *The Critic* magazine averred that: ‘The Common law, despite the best attempts of legal positivists, is in principle and essence customary, and pre-political. Very far from the Schmittian sovereign who must be the exception to the law he creates, the British monarch is perched upon the solid branches of established law and custom’ (the Critic 2023).

Further, apart from the law, other key elements of the coronation ceremony are music particularly of the choral variety as well as a military parade incorporating massed voices all of which have been associated with coronation ceremonies from long before 1066 and elsewhere other than England. This enduring symbolism of music and coronation, as we shall see below, goes at least as far back as the Roman legions installing the emperor on the throne. Those voices on a parade ground chanting the name of Caesar in order to install him as emperor by affirming him as the leader of the legions link and relate law, music and violence.

Recall that, ‘although the [coronation] ceremony remains an important event early in a new reign’, [n]owadays, a sovereign succeeds, by law, immediately upon the death of another’ (Torrance 2023: 5), which is to say that the pageantry of the coronation ceremony is less about empowering the Monarch than glorifying them. ‘Why’, Agamben inquires along these lines, ‘does power need glory? If it is essentially force and capacity for action and government, why does it assume the rigid, cumbersome, and “glorious” form of ceremonies, acclamations, and protocols?’ (Agamben 2011: xii). This is the broader inquiry into which the present discussion delves as to why a monarch need crowning even though, legally speaking, they already are King

or Queen as the case may be? The preliminary answer to this question is that if power is not enough to rule effectively without glory, then it must mean that violence, not even a preponderance of it, while perhaps necessary, is never sufficient to ground the legitimacy and thus the effectiveness of a political and legal regime. Indeed, Hannah Arendt was of the opinion that ruling by sheer violence only comes into play where power is being lost (Arendt 1969: 53). Max Weber famously defined the State as ‘the rule of men over men based on the means of legitimate, that is allegedly legitimate, violence’, further, ‘[u]ltimately, one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force Weber (1991: 77, 78).

Agamben makes it his core business to peer into the mysteries of government (Agamben 2016: 263). Political arcana are secret modes of the exercise of political power, ordinarily either hidden or obscured – or, at any rate, veiled from full public view (Donaldson 1988: 227). These are ‘aspects of policy that rulers persisted in not making public, and the strategies and tactics by means of which they sought to conceal what both sides agreed to be their key intentions and actions’ (Weber 2015). Wolfgang Weber notes, ‘the technical term used at the time until around 1700 was the Latin *simulatio* or *dissimulatio*; “pretense,”’ (Weber 2015). No wonder then that Ernst Kantorowicz (Kantorowicz 1957: 65) used political theology as virtually synonymous with mysteries of state or *arcana imperii*, associating him not only with his contemporary Carl Schmitt (Schmitt 1996, 2014, 2015) and Agamben (Agamben 2005a) in their wake but, according to Donaldson (Donaldson 1988: viii), to Niccolò Machiavelli (Machiavelli 2003) before all of them.

This paper will consequently in their wake peer into the mysteries as it were of the coronation in order to demystify them to enable the self-reflexive use of the trappings of its pageantry as law, music and hospitality instead of the current register of law, music and hostility which is to argue that the current ceremony is based on the enemy half of the Schmittian Friend/Enemy distinction when it could just as well, contrary to Schmitt, be based on the sociability of the friend half

(Schmitt 1996). As Derrida noted Schmitt emphasised the centrality of the enemy in politics '[w]ithout proposing any equivalence or symmetry for the friend' (Derrida 1993: 356). This seems like a chance to, as it were, turn the tables on Schmitt. We even have a good model in the lyrics to 'I am Australian' as written by Woodley of the Seekers and Dobe Newton of the Bushwackers (Woodley 1987):

We are one but we are many
And from all the Lands on Earth we come,
We share a dream,
And sing with one voice,
'I am, you are, we are, Australian.

2 Law and Violence

Law and violence can be logically distinguished and related in the following ways, if we agree, doctrinally, that the law is at bottom a set of enforceable rules then the relation between force and rules is constitutive of the law itself whereas violence is something that occurs outside of the law and at times even contrary to law and sometimes actually against the law, at least by way of legal narrative. Law and violence are consequently distinguishable both in colonial and non-colonial contexts and societies *only* via the law. This is probably why Manderson agrees that '[w]ar, like law, is not merely an exercise in brute force but rather a series of symbolic acts' (Manderson 2000: 98). This is why Manderson then goes on to criticise Derrida's view that to understand 'law as a species of mandated force, of state-sanctioned violence' is too simplistic (Manderson 2000: 145). In turn, Sykes observes a certain ambiguity or ambivalence in that 'music is a cultural force that may contest or enhance political and legal power' (Sykes 2018: 183). Linking Manderson's and Syke's approaches to Kantorowicz's and Agamben's work this section of the present work inquires into whether, and if so how, waging war or urging peace unites law and music in binding and loosening social bonds. This relation, moreover, can be unpacked by examining instances in which they are

deployed, whether jointly or singly, to either abhor or exhort violence.

The opposition between what may be referred to as states of war and peace as distinct and separate realms of both law and fact has been axiomatic, particularly for international law. Increasingly, however, that distinction once taken for granted now seems outmoded, quaint, cast onto the rubbish heap of history. This is because the current international legal system, during both war and peace, constructs its principal actors in the form of an institutionalised State possessing certain attributes (including a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence) as the basis for participation in international politics. Having said that, Charles Garraway has noted that the war on terror ‘has challenged the very framework of international law itself’ (2012: 383). Evidence for this can be found in that luminaries of the international law canon, such as Hugo Grotius and Lassa Oppenheim, who divided international law into the law of war and the law of peace. Contemporary textbooks do not follow the same dichotomy – indeed the latest edition of Oppenheim’s monumental work abandoned a planned volume updating the law of war as the law of armed conflict.

The war/peace dichotomy and the resultant differentiation of applicable legal regime are exemplary of an exception/rule scheme. Peace is the rule and war (or perhaps better, armed conflict) the exception. This is why, for example, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions authorising the use of force do not do so explicitly but instead use the wording ‘by all necessary means’ to achieve their object. Such wording is deemed sufficient to permit the use of force without specifically recommending it. In international law, therefore, armed conflict is the most radical state of affairs (being literally out of the norm where all that is necessary is permissible) in the most inclusive human society (the international community representative of universality). What is at stake is the construction of the *demos* as the public sphere where, by which and though which power is ultimately grounded, not violence. Essentially the violence is a confidence trick that only works when it is focussed on social scapegoats of every type, indigenous peoples, or refugees, those accused of crime, etc.

3 War, Law and Music

This next stage of the discussion examines and stages encounters between war, law and music, spanning from the *Laudes Regiae* medieval acclamatory hymn and George Frideric Handel's 'The Lord is a Man of War' and 'Zadok the Priest' to Bob Marley's Reggae 'War' and Edwin Starr's 'War' in music's relation to the law on the use of force. The pieces are chosen because they each contain the law and violence motifs. To start with, Starr's 1969 Vietnam era protest song 'War' was along with Boy George's 1984 ironically titled 'War Song' among others, banned from radio playlists in the lead up to Gulf War I (Kirby 2000: 164).

Gary Burns take on Starr's 'War' points out that given how the 'apolitical, assimilationist Motown labels' started producing Vietnam war protest songs it meant that the opposition to the war reached a crucial not just cultural but political threshold: 'If Lyndon Johnson lost his Vietnam War when Walter Cronkite gave up, Richard Nixon lost his when the mostly apolitical, assimilationist Motown labels started to crank out songs like "War."' (Burns 2003: 527). Further, Burns notes that 'you certainly won't hear "War" very often on the corporate airwaves' (Year: 527). Indeed, with lyrics like war is good for 'absolutely nothing', '(War) friend only to the undertaker/Oh, war it's an enemy to all mankind' (and it must be said, 'Say it Again') in the case of Starr—and war 'was stupid and people stupid' for engaging in it in the case of Boy George—these songs were not considered particularly good for morale, either civilian or military, dangerously off message in an era of ever tightening control over messaging in times of war.

Be that as it may, singing the statement 'war is good for absolutely nothing' is perhaps more about expressing dissent (which is important and even necessary) than factually reporting on an existing state of affairs. In a world of rational actors (and surely political leaders belong to this category as well) war engages in a calculated fashion of risks and rewards, characterisations, and consequences.

Joel Baer agrees that the phrase 'enemy of all mankind', encountered as above in Starr's *War*, or *hostis humani generis*, as it is rendered in

international criminal law, is not metaphorical (1982: 10). He adds that in the eighteenth century the pirate was likened to Satan, in that the former was at enmity with humanity while the latter was at war with God, and both were doomed as a result (Baer 1982: 10). Given this politically theological turn, enter then, Schmitt who said at least three things relevant to war, enmity, Satan, piracy and literalness. First, and most famously, Schmitt argued that: 'All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts' (2005: 36). Second, and quite infamously, he wrote that, '[t]he specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy' (Schmitt 2007: 26). Furthermore, these 'concepts are to be understood in the concrete and existential sense, not as metaphors or symbols' Schmitt 2007: 27). This is why Sonja Schillings is then able to argue that the legal fiction of 'enemy of humanity' provides more than ample traction for legitimating violence in the name of the State (2016: 185). Third, but not as famously, Schmitt said that, '[t]o me, the prosecutorial is even more sinister than the inquisitorial. Perhaps in my case this can be traced back to theological roots. For *Diabolus* means "the prosecutor"' (Schmitt 2017: 14).

4 War and Law: The applicability and non-applicability of rules binding over violence

This part of the present discussion consequently looks into how war, so to speak, manipulates the applicability and non-applicability of rules binding over violence in both time and space – or, more poetically, the mortal realm – as if by (and akin to) magic through law. Agamben traces some rhetorical and grammatical aspects of language relevant to law in the present discussion. The first rhetorical aspect is the 'assertion', which grammatically is in the indicative mood while the second is the 'commandment', which grammatically is in the imperative mood. One refers to what 'is' or exists, the other refers to 'be' or shall exist. One belongs to science and philosophy – the other to politics, law, religion and magic (Agamben 2019: 59). Therefore, the imperative mood defines the verbal mode proper to law and religion, both which share

Law, Violence, Music, and Decolonising the Coronation Ceremony

a performative character. This is to say that words and phrases in those discourses do not refer to actual being but to having-to-be (Agamben 2019: 59). What is more, the capture of such trappings of law is more real than is apparent in the case of total war – the state of law and fact that reflects the highest political violence, whether declared or undeclared, both symbolic and real against enemies both symbolic and real. Which is why examining a cultural artefact, like music in times of war, along with law in times of war both of which were and are part of the imperial project, can tell us something about war and the role music plays, so to speak, in its continuation and continuing power. For Agamben, even prose emerges from the space opened up between the traditional link between music and language and logos (Agamben 2007: 40). Reconstructing that link then detracts precisely from cleaving to the literal message of the words sung or chanted. This expansive capacity if you like appears in the confrontations staged between law and violence even in the courtroom.

For instance, in the early Australian High Court case of *Farey v Burvett* it was said by Samuel Griffith the first Chief Justice that: ‘the words “naval” and “military” are not words of limitation, but rather of extension’. In a time of world war, such phrasing proved sufficient, per Australian constitutional law of obviously colonial origin to set the price of bread in a way that would be outside the Commonwealth’s power in times of peace. Indeed, as Dixon J observed in *Andrew v Howell*, the nature of the war power as defined in the Australian Constitution is expansive, with ‘its application depend[ing] upon facts, and as those facts change so may its actual operation as a power’. From wage and share price fixing to prohibiting advertising and the curtailment of civil liberties, the historical exercise of section 51(vi) of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution* 1900 (Cth). has afforded the Commonwealth the opportunity to reach into every aspect of Australian society. To put it another way, the powers of government increase exponentially in a time of war to be able to, for instance, set the price of basic foodstuffs in Australia or curtail the playing of popular hits in more recent times in the UK as above, or Kenya as below. According to Isaacs J in a minority judgment for *Farey v Burvett*, when the existence of Australia was

under threat such as would be the case in a total war, then the defence power was virtually unlimited ‘bounded only by the requirements of self-preservation’.

To illustrate this boundless expansion of power when faced by existential threats, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (which was evenly split with seven votes to seven, resolved by the President’s casting vote) *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, Advisory Opinion, 8 July 1996 (hereinafter *Nuclear Weapons Case*), had this to say on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons:

However, in view of the current state of international law, and of the elements of fact at its disposal, the Court cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake (*Nuclear Weapons Case*).

This case is extraordinary in that the court essentially ruled that it was unable to answer a question before it, even after accepting jurisdiction. It reaffirmed the principle ‘necessity knows no law’ in a way that meant according to law, legal constraints do not extend to existential conflicts. That renders definition and decision impossible in the indistinct and uncertain boundary between lawful force and political violence at international law. This *non-liquet* or identification of a gap in the law that the law cannot answer illustrates a ‘state of exception’ contemplated by the law, whereupon the law is paralysed or rendered inapplicable and the sovereign is essentially free and left to their own devices governed only by the exigencies of necessity (Agamben 2005a: 1).

Now *that* is what the present discussion hypothesises *is* what war is good *for*: expanding governmental power through and with the sanction of law. Why the law, though? The argument is that the law is more than merely useful because it is *necessary*. The next section will demonstrate, first, that the law is useful in light of its application of binary distinctions. It will then show that it is necessary because some form of law is always indispensable to governing political communities even of the most authoritarian types.

5 Martial Music

The present section uses what may very loosely be termed ‘martial music’ (music oriented along a spectrum between anti- to pro-war) as a cultural artefact to tell us something about the relationship of law to violence and violence to music and consequently law’s role in setting to music mass violence of the political variety. Colonial violence is an extreme form of political violence given its plain illegitimacy in its choice of both victim and place.

Utilising political violence as a means, though, is a delicate process somewhat akin to attempting the opening up of Pandora’s box one trouble at a time at will. It only takes one slip up to engulf the world in all sort of troubles. For Walter Benjamin, ‘it is clear that the most elementary relationship within any legal system is that of ends to means, and, further, that violence can first be sought only in the realm of means, not of ends’ (Benjamin 1978: 277). Additionally, for him, legality is the criterion of means (Benjamin 1978: 278). This already encountered register of justifying violence as a necessary evil means for at least some legally justifiable ends is quite literally Mephistophelean (Goethe 2001: 36). This is because it links evil and good in a causal relationship where evil is engaged in, and with, to produce something good. More specifically, in Goethe’s *Faust*, Faust asks Mephistopheles, ‘Who are you then?’, and is answered perhaps truthfully but not completely honestly, ‘Part of that force which would do ever evil, and does ever good’ (Goethe 2001: 36). The irony here is inescapable. Derrida bases his “Force of Law” essays on Walter Benjamin’s insights here into the relationship of law to violence (Derrida 1992: 6). Moyn, for one, finds it ‘is certainly worth worrying that the restraint of war has become the companion of forever war rather than the beginning of peace’ (Moyn 2020). What is more, irony is more present at hand for music and musicians than it is for law and lawyers (Levinson and Balkin 1991).

If we then turn to Bob Marley’s *War* song, we find him singing: ‘That until the basic human rights/Are equally guaranteed to all/Without regard to race/Dis a war’. Some stanzas we later encounter: ‘And until that day/The African continent/Will not know peace/We

Edwin Bikundo

Africans will fight/ - we find it necessary -/And we know we shall win/As we are confident/In the victory/Of good over evil'. The last phrase is repeated five times until the end. Those lines do not just link the struggle for human rights to war as a justifiable means of attaining them, but they explicitly see any resulting victory as being one of good over evil. Once again, the 'necessary' as already noted above sanctions the use of violence.

Bob Marley was not uniquely of that view. When we turn to the Preamble to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), we find the following paragraphs:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, ...

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.

Clearly, the words of that preamble, explaining recourse to rebellion as being precipitated by non-recognition of human rights, are not only expressed in the basic idiom of, but could well have been the source material for, Bob Marley's *War*. That is hardly surprising because Marley merely set somebody else's (of whose see below) words to music verbatim, but for the artistic licence of interpolating the phrase 'Dis a war'. The rest are taken from what must be the most resounding 'I-told-you-so' speech ever delivered to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). In it Haile Selassie Emperor of Ethiopia opened with:

Twenty-seven years ago, as Emperor of Ethiopia, I mounted the rostrum in Geneva, Switzerland, to address the League of Nations and to appeal for relief from the destruction which had been unleashed against my defenseless nation, by the Fascist invader. I spoke then both to and for the conscience of the world. My words went unheeded, but history testifies to the accuracy of the warning that I gave in 1936.

Law, Violence, Music, and Decolonising the Coronation Ceremony

Marley's take on war is consequently perfectly poised between those who abhor war, like Starr and Boy George above, and those who extoll it (as we shall see below) because it justifies it as a necessary evil - as a tool for justice against oppression for the purposes of advancing human rights. It is also quite precisely identical to the stance of both domestic and international law where political violence can be justified as a necessary if regrettable means for certain ends. This tacit justification for political violence was not lost even on Kenya's a post-colonial governments, including following an abortive military coup in August 1982, when they banned not just this song, or even Marley's entire discography, but the entire genre of reggae from radio playlists (Mutunga 2007). This suspicion and hostility continues to persist to the present day (Kazungu 2023). Even as successive Presidents faithfully promoted the tourist brochure friendly Safari Rally which we are told 'was born as the East African Coronation Rally in 1953 as a motoring event to commemorate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II of England' (Cecil 2023). Hence why, 'Babylon' here broadly represents the West holistically, its satellites, its allies, its instrumentalities, even its legacies and imitators and does not distinguish between but instead stands in for Government, the Police, and the Church (Smith et al 1960: 49).

6 Coronation Music

Recall with regard to the legal superfluity of the coronation, its imperial trappings and echoes of postcolonial violence, Charles the II's predecessor on the throne Elizabeth II became Queen not at Westminster cathedral in London but in faraway Nyeri (Best 2012) smack bang in the middle of a colonial Kenya caught in the middle of a volent anticolonial struggle spearheaded by guerrillas many of whom had fought in her father's name, George VI, under the King's African Rifles Regiment in both World Wars spanning theatres as far afield as Burma, Malaya, and Abyssinia now respectively Myanmar, Malaysia and Ethiopia. If both coronations were nor primarily legal spectacles, bar the oath, not only are they obviously political but they had a liturgy, which liturgy is 'a Christian act of worship that honours

the ancient tradition of anointing and crowning Monarchs' (Church of England 2023: vii). Given then that the coronation service 'is a service of the English Church and State' (Church of England 2023: vii) notwithstanding that 'Faith Leaders and representatives from the Jewish, Sunni and Shia Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Bahá'í and Zoroastrian communities' were 'part of the procession into Westminster Abbey' to represent 'the multi-faith nature of our (sic) society and the importance of inclusion of other faiths whilst respecting the integrities of the different traditions', the ceremony as whole is plainly a rare real life literal illustrative example of Schmitt's political theology. Moreover, recall again that although, 'The Anointing is the most sacred part of the [coronation] service', this part of the ceremony not only was not televised nor streamed online but was veiled even from those physically present in the Abbey, in that preservation of a private moment in a public spectacle, it followed the previous coronation's example (Church of England 2023: 17).

If we then somewhat shift the register from Reggae to the medieval acclamatory hymn *Laudes Regiae* or royal acclamation, we encounter Ernst H Kantorowicz's *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship*, which also incorporates 'A Study of The Music of The *Laudes* and Musical Transcriptions by Manfred F. Bukofzer'. Kantorowicz's *Laudes Regiae*, just like Haile Selassie's speech (Selassie 1963), which Bob Marley's *War* was derived from, was born in the context of anti-fascism. This can be seen straight from the preface to his study, where Kantorowicz stated that: 'The modern revival of the *laudes*, here only touched upon, broaches the problem of acclamations, and their function, in modern dictatorial states in which they appear as an indispensable vehicle of political propaganda, pseudo religious emotionalism, and public reacknowledgment of power' (Kantorowicz 1957: ix-x). For Kantorowicz: 'To "acclaim" meant to "create" a new ruler and to recognize him publicly in his new dignity' regime' (Kantorowicz 1957: 76-77). He adds 'that the acclaiming *vox populi*, represented by one group or another, had a distinctly constitutional effect. It was through the medium of acclamatory election that the *vox populi*, audible through the politically strongest group at the time, elevated the

Law, Violence, Music, and Decolonising the Coronation Ceremony

new monarch or assented to the fact of his elevation' (Kantorowicz 1957: 77). Not even where a throne had been achieved by violence, could a formal acclamation be lacking (Kantorowicz 1957: 77). Originally the inauguration of a ruler had originally nothing whatever to do with the Church in that it was a constitutive and purely "civil" or "military" act' (Kantorowicz 1957: 77). For Kantorowicz though, it was precisely the combined undifferentiated acclamation of the people, the army, and the senate that was legally constitutive while accompanying the physical act of crowning (Kantorowicz 1957: 82). This is why:

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. In this case, the acclamation of the Church, as it intermingled with that of the people, or of "those present," for once had also a legally binding character (Kantorowicz 1957: 84).

Agamben, one of the most acute contemporary readers of Kantorowicz, states that:

Recounting this new and extreme version of the laudes at the end of his book, Kantorowicz observes that acclamations are "indispensable to the emotionalism of a Fascist regime"...And in a footnote on Nazi acclamations he launches a final, ironic attack on [Erik] Peterson, writing that the acclamation *Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Fuhrer*, declared in Vienna in 1938 on the occasion of the annexation of Austria, "leads via Barbarossa [. . .] to the *Heis theos* so brilliantly discussed by Peterson"...The attempt to exclude the very possibility of a Christian "political theology," so as to found in glory the only legitimate political dimension of Christianity, comes dangerously close to the totalitarian liturgy. (Agamben 2011a: 193 citing Kantorowicz 1957: 185).

Kantorowicz did not miss this possibility and legacy: 'And when the *laudes regiae* were sung at a mediaeval coronation or on festival days, both the text and the tune of this chivalrous responsory could remind the audience that it had once been the legions—Roman, Oriental, and Germanic—that raised the elect to the imperial throne.' (Kantorowicz

Edwin Bikundo

1957: 31).

Kantorowicz again:

[However, it was only in the] 'twenties of our century that the *laudes regiae*, revived by learned musicologists and liturgiologists, began to reappear also on the political stage of postwar Europe, and, by the irony of which History is so fond, this chant made its reappearance along with what was believed the new lodestar of political life: totalitarianism and dictatorship....Political acclamations have been resuscitated systematically in the authoritarian countries. They are indispensable to the emotionalism of a Fascist regime(Kantorowicz 1957: 187).

To provisionally summarise the argument so far: the *Laudes* chants up empire (the monarch, elected to the throne by the senate and the army and by God) while *reggae* chants down empire (Babylon represented by the West, the Government, the Police and the Church). Music is indispensable to both and thus does both.

If we again shift the register and period to Baroque Music, we find George Frideric Handel's oratorio *Israel in Egypt* (HW 54) providing the rather uncommon Duet for Bass 'The Lord is a Man of War'. Its libretto is straightforwardly drawn from the Bible - Exodus xv: 3, 4: 'The Lord is a man of war: Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea; his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.' In setting it to music, however, Handel created an effect through tone painting whereby the 'drowned' above has its 'ow' lengthened so as to mimic derisive laughter - ha-ha-ha-ha - in a way that mocks the dead in a famous victory for a martial God.

The following excerpted review of a past performance of the oratorio should illustrate this point:

The choir, meticulously prepared as always by John Scott, the organist and music director at the church, seemed unusually energized. The boys especially, looking typically angelic in their red cassocks, sang with animated, almost bloodthirsty commitment.

As well they might, responding to Handel's cheerleading

Law, Violence, Music, and Decolonising the Coronation Ceremony

and his incomparably vivid tone-painting. His music playfully taunts the suddenly hapless Egyptians even as the biblical text describes their mounting agonies: “There came all manner of flies and lice in all their quarters”; “He gave them hailstones for rain” “He smote all the firstborn of Egypt.”

In many encounters with the work, I’ve never heard the final words – “the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” – sound so savage, so definitive and so satisfying (Oestreich 2015).

Surely, ‘bloodthirsty’ and ‘savage’ being deemed ‘satisfying’ is rather unexpected with reference to a sacred Baroque Oratorio. However, it is not necessarily inaccurate, nor inappropriate; nor is it a figment of the reviewer’s imagination. It is to do with a certain justification of violent means where the ends are sanctified or sanctioned by a god or, in more secular times, by the people as the voice of God.

It is, however, Handel’s coronation anthem *Zadok the Priest* (*HWW* 258) that bears testimony to the endurance of the *Laudes* formula. Its libretto flows as follows:

Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon king.
And all the people rejoiced and said:
God save the King! Long live the King! God save the King!
May the King live for ever. Amen. Hallelujah

The key refrain ‘God save the King! Long live the King! God save the King!’ which is less sung than it is chanted had as its witting companion in the *Laudes*: ‘*Christus vincit! Christus regnat! Christus imperat!*’ (Hughes 1952: 83). Kantorowicz struck a note of caution about history setting traps, noting how despite its ‘revival began, in the most unpolitical way, on the part of learned musicologists’, in Italy, ‘the *laudes* became an integral part of Fascist devotion’ and that ‘Political acclamations have been resuscitated systematically in the authoritarian countries. They are indispensable to the emotionalism of a Fascist regime’ (Kantorowicz 1957: 185). Agamben adds with regard to the

Edwin Bikundo

fascis lictoriae ‘elm or birch rods about 130 centimeters in length, bound together with a red strap into which an axe was inserted laterally’, from whence etymologically we get ‘fascism’ were, ‘like the *laudes regiae*’, ‘provisionally resurrected in the twentieth century’ (Agamben 2011: 182). This, should give us pause regarding the double-edged ‘dual-use’ power of law, music and violence each. Not to mention its universal reach, a Kenyan version of *Christus Vincit* was even recorded to commemorate Pope John Paul II’s visit to the country in 1980 (Catholic Liturgical Songs 2012).

7 Conclusion

Although, each of the musical examples set out above transcend time, place, and genre, all orient themselves somehow to violence in either condemning it or justifying it or extolling it or its virtuous use. The responses to the musicians extend from reverentially staging their works, to banning them from playlists. A very wide range of responses indeed mirroring the range of attitudes to war or violence as such therein. This ambiguity or response is both a problem and the beginnings of a solution in that we can use music to extol what brings us together in amity and friendship instead of strife and discord. How far can music on its own go to prevent war though? Or even at least ameliorate its worst excess? Can it decolonise coronation without the law? Unlikely so, given that the stated reason for the law itself is the prevention of or at least amelioration of violence. This might be the basis for a future harmonious relation. Perhaps next time fewer musicians will decline an invitation to the coronation. Just a thought.

Endnotes

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