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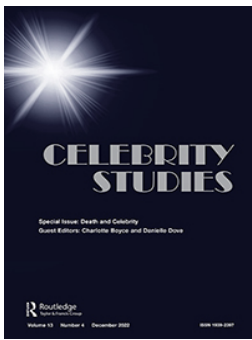
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Posthumous celebrity, persona and memorialisation: French newspaper coverage of the popular music artist Johnny Hallyday

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the popular music artist Johnny Hallyday in the immediate aftermath of his death in 2017, this article shows how his initial posthumous newspaper coverage in France exhibits many of the general features of celebrity news and journalism, draws a broadly positive consensus around his public persona when alive while opening up possible areas for discussion or debate and represents his memorialisation as a particular site of division.



KEYWORDS

Posthumous celebrity;
media; popular music;
France

The death of Johnny Hallyday¹ on the night of 5–6 December 2017 represents a significant moment in the development of popular culture and posthumous celebrity in France, particularly given the music star and actor's enduring and prominent media profile stretching back to the early 1960s. As David Looseley observes,

The idea that Johnny was as nationally iconic as De Gaulle or the Eiffel Tower would become virtually compulsory [...] It was, after all, he who had been chosen to sing the national anthem at the World Cup in France in 1998. And it was to him that Paris had turned in January 2016 to commemorate the recent terrorist attacks with a song on the subject, 'Un Dimanche de Janvier'. (Looseley 2018, p. 379)

In the English-speaking world where his body of work is not widely or extensively known, Hallyday has been labelled as the French Elvis Presley. Media coverage in France – spanning almost six decades – has included emphasis on his strong association with American rock 'n' roll, his musical collaborations with successive generations of artists and his spectacular stage performances, concert tours and large-scale events (such as his 1963 performance as a teen idol at the place de la Nation in Paris to celebrate the first anniversary of the glossy youth magazine *Salut les copains*; a 1996 concert in Las Vegas which saw around 5,000 fans flown in from France to attend; and his 1998 concerts at France's largest stadium La Stade de France). Attention has also focused on his personal life (his financial and legal affairs, for example, around tax, contractual and career management issues; personal and family relationships, particularly with his partners/wives; and his active interest in sports including football and motorsports) and his relationship to the state (his friendships with French political leaders, particularly Presidents Jacques Chirac

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and Nicolas Sarkozy; and his official state recognition as a recipient of the Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in 1997). During the later years of his life, concerns about his health also informed press coverage. Hallyday's prominence within French popular culture was reflected in Laurent Tuel's 2006 film comedy *Jean-Philippe*, which deals with celebrity/stardom, superfandom and the role of fate, representing a parallel universe in which the star Johnny Hallyday never existed. Indeed, Hallyday plays in the film an unknown version of himself, aptly named Jean-Philippe (given Hallyday's real name Jean-Philippe Smet).

Hallyday has been the object of academic/intellectual interest and debate not only in France, as we shall see, but also in the Anglophone world. David Looseley (2005) highlights the change in 'public representations' from the start of Hallyday's career, when 'he scandalised the cultural establishment by appearing as the conduit for US-style rock'n'roll, which seemed to symbolise the Americanisation of French cultural values', to the time of his 60th birthday in 2003, when he was 'portrayed as belonging squarely to the canonical French chanson tradition and even as the incarnation of l'exception culturelle française' [France's cultural exception].² Furthermore, Looseley (2018) views Hallyday's 'cultural status in death' in terms of 'the long-standing polarity in French cultural discourse between universalism and particularism' (p. 386):

Whereas Voltaire or Proust, Piaf or Gainsbourg can easily be depicted as universalising French culture by taking it out into the anglophone world and beyond, Hallyday clearly cannot [...] When Piaf returned from the Americas in the 1940s, her Frenchness in the eyes of the French themselves was intensified by her having conquered the world. Johnny's Frenchness, on the other hand, is intensified by his failure to do so. The Johnny phenomenon is represented as a cosily stay-at-home, national particularism. (Looseley 2018, p. 386)

Moreover, Looseley (2018), argues that Macron and 'other public voices loiter in the liminal territory between universalism and particularism by playing on the legitimate contention that pop and rock, American in origin but skilfully gallicised by Johnny, have become France's shared, mainstream culture' (p. 386); that 'the hyperbolic outpourings of grief' following his death serve to demonstrate that, 'thanks to Johnny and rock "n" roll, the snootily intellectual, high-cultural France is a thing of the past' (p. 386); and that 'the ultimate purpose of insisting that the French all have in them "quelque chose de Johnny" [something of Johnny]³ is to signify that for all their naïve passion for a fictional America [...] they are still themselves, still singularly French' (p. 387).

The representation of posthumous celebrity in the media is now a well-established field of academic enquiry comprising several functions. For Cath Davies (2012), such media coverage 'acts as an effective summation of the construction of [the] star persona when alive, whilst also signalling the development of [a] posthumous media image' (p. 193). Posthumous celebrity also emphasises the production of new meaning. The generation of posthumous meaning is indeed endless: James Bennett and Sean Redmond, following Lisa Bode (2014), describe 'celebrity, and its study' as 'an ongoing, "living" process' (Bennett and Redmond 2014, p. 3). Joli Jensen views the study of posthumous celebrity as a particularly complex, multifaceted process: 'a democratized participation in reading the present and the past, in finding commonality, in exploring anonymity and fame, in connecting across time and space, race, class, and ethnicity, and – all along – recognizing the constructedness of the interpretative process' (Jensen 2005, p. xxii). Certain discourses of posthumous celebrity are stronger than others, which are

neglected, forgotten or repressed. For Landon Palmer (2013, p. 384), drawing on the work of Richard Dyer (1979), 'Posthumous or late-career reflections on star images often involve formal acts of encapsulation, typically through imparting a preferred narrative or discrete career contributions that obscure other potential "meanings and effects"' (Dyer 1979, p. 3) (Palmer 2013, p. 384). Indeed, as Joli Jensen observes: 'Posthumous reputation is clearly a contested process, one that is continually being negotiated with and against mass mediation' (Jensen xviii; See also Jensen 2005, p. ix). Fans, families and journalists²⁰¹² also have distinct roles in the production of posthumous celebrity (Jensen 2005, p. xix).

While coverage of posthumous celebrity in the media fulfils particular roles, it may also exhibit features associated with celebrity news and journalism more generally, as articulated by Annik Dubied (2009a, 2009b). These features include an emphasis on storytelling and entertainment; the distinction between and blurring of private and public spheres/lives and the associated potential for voyeurism; the transgressive disclosure of previously hidden information; the preoccupation with private lives as symptomatic of a democratic deficit, or of society deliberating with itself (Dominique Mehl 2003); an emphasis on domesticity and maternity/paternity; a fascination for or distrust of a certain economic elite; and the location of celebrity news at the heart of social change and its negotiation. Dubied's account also highlights the specific ways in which celebrities are represented in the media: as promoting their latest work; in terms of their distinctive features (including physical and visual appearance, behaviour and lifestyle); their ordinary and/or extraordinary qualities; their personal strengths and weaknesses; their self-control (or lack thereof); the difficulties in various aspects of their social and personal lives and relationships; and the logic behind their actions.

While posthumous reputation is often contested, and conflict represents a well-established news value (Harcup and O'Neill 2017), this article, focusing on initial French newspaper coverage following Hallyday's death in single- and co-authored articles across a wide range of national and regional/local newspaper titles,⁴ will indicate the presence of both competing and more consensual discourses where the significance of Hallyday's persona and the means of memorialising and/or paying tribute to him and his legacy are concerned.

Hallyday's persona

Initial posthumous newspaper coverage generates broad consensus around Hallyday's persona emphasising a strong sense of loss; Hallyday's mythical status; his position as a cohesive French national symbol with local and international, particularly the US, significance; his worthiness as an object of intellectual interest; and his personal qualities and strength of character. However, coverage also includes on occasion more questioning or dissenting voices.

A strong collective sense of loss is expressed as France is said to be in mourning (Fortunato and Lucas 2017, Le Monde 2017b). The verb 'pleurer' ('to cry') figures in headlines expressing the collective French reaction (Dargent 2017, Tellier 2017). The personal loss experienced by individuals is also highlighted. Close family members are referred to by name, particularly Hallyday's wife Laeticia (Cloris 2017, Lutaud 2017). Loss is also expressed by personal friends and professional collaborators (the distinction between the two being somewhat blurred). For instance, the singer Eddy Mitchell, one

of Hallyday's rock 'n' roll contemporaries in France, describes the loss of a 'brother' (Le Parisien 2017f). Similar sentiments are expressed by singer-songwriters Charles Aznavour (Le Figaro 2017l), Michel Sardou (Le Figaro 2017a) and Jacques Dutronc (Le Parisien 2017d); other figures from the world of music and film; and Hallyday's lyricists such as Pierre Delanoë and Michel Mallory (Dubois 2017). The loss experienced by members of the general public, fans and even super-fans is also conveyed (L'Indépendant 2017a, Vosges Matin 2017a). Individuals describe specific memories of attending concerts many years previously as well as the emotional distress and loss that Hallyday's death has caused (see, for example, Paris-Normandie 2017a). On a more critical note, the writer and filmmaker Amanda Sthers is said to have expressed disappointment at those who claimed to know Hallyday better than anyone else (Le Figaro 2017e).

Hallyday's mythical status is represented in quantitative and qualitative terms. *Le Figaro* ran a series on key periods and decades forming a grand biographical narrative, 'Johnny Hallyday, le grand récit'. Other accounts provide statistics emphasising the extent of his creative output and commercial success (Bouniol 2017, Le Figaro 2017f), as well as a stereotypically lavish star lifestyle (Périnel 2017). Hallyday is associated with rock 'n' roll in its early French rebellious or 'dangerous' form (Bigorgne 2017) as well as the maintenance of the genre and the incorporation of US popular music and culture into his output. In particular, his powerful, larger-than-life spectacular stage performances are emphasised: Hallyday is referred to as a giant ('un monstre sacré', Gandillot 2017), a 'showman' ('une bête/un animal de scène') (Brieu 2017, Wachthausen 2017), 'the God of the stadiums' (Sibony 2017), and 'the master of grand entrances' (S.C. 2017). Moreover, Jérôme Lefilliâtre (2017) highlights Hallyday's pro-active approach to dealing with the mass and social media, sharing moments of his private life, fulfilling a perceived expectation of audiences, and viewing this as part of his job. Hallyday is described in iconic terms: a 'God' (La Voix du Nord 2017b), a 'monument' (Paris-Normandie 2017b), a 'French idol' (Le Parisien), and deserving of a place 'in the pantheon of artists' (L'Union – L'Ardennais 2017). While Emmanuèle Peyret (2017) describes a series of serious accidents and near-death experiences, as well as rumours of Hallyday's death during his life and career, elsewhere his immortality beyond his own physical death is emphasised (Ouest-France 2017a, Vosges Matin 2017a).

On occasion, coverage is less hagiographical. Hallyday is described as something of a 'chameleon' in *Libération* (Champenois 2017; Jacques Denis 2017) over the course of his career, particularly where stage clothes are concerned. Also, in *Libération*, Jean-Baptiste Guillot, the director of the independent record label Born Bad, describes in interview how his admiration for Hallyday met with some derision (Lamm 2017), an indication that he could represent a divisive figure where musical and cultural tastes are concerned.

Coverage of Hallyday's mythical status strongly emphasises his French identity: he is referred to as 'a French passion' (Le Télégramme 2017b), a 'French idol' (Nord Éclair 2017), a 'French myth' (Le Figaro 2017i), a 'national treasure' (Le Figaro 2017d), and his work part of the 'national musical heritage' (Le Monde 2017b). Extensive reference is made to a message of tribute, 'Merci Johnny', projected on to the Eiffel Tower, the quintessential symbol of Paris and France. Hallyday's 'Frenchness' is indirectly emphasised in *Le Figaro* via an account of 'the impossible reunion between Johnny Hallyday and his father's Belgium' (Le Figaro 2017g), given that Hallyday's father Léon Smet, who was Belgian, left the family home a few months after the birth of his son. Hallyday's death is, however,

also associated in coverage with a more negative or problematic view of French national identity: his death represents the end of an idea of France as a pale imitation of the USA (Bigot 2017). Memorialising Hallyday is also identified by Edgar Morin as ‘stimulating a sense of French identity’ (Truong 2017). Coverage also includes reports of a media controversy involving the philosopher Alain Finkielkraut with references to ‘discriminatory language’ after he stated in a radio interview that ‘people not of French stock [“non-souchiens”] were conspicuous by their absence’ at Hallyday’s popular/people’s tribute [translation by David Fernbach in (Debomy 2019)] (Libération 2017; see also de Montaigne 2017).

Prominent political figures represent Hallyday as a signifier of national unity with whom individuals can identify. The President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron describes Hallyday in such terms in statements before and during Hallyday’s *hommage populaire* (‘popular/people’s tribute’): a ‘part of France’ (Lacube 2017a, Le Télégramme 2017a); a ‘French destiny’ (Garat 2017); a ‘French hero’ (De Saint Victor 2017); ‘We all have something of Johnny Hallyday within us’; ‘The whole country is mourning’ (Le Monde 2017b; see also Lacube 2017a). The former president Nicolas Sarkozy expresses a similar sentiment describing Hallyday as ‘a whole part of our life that has disappeared’ (La Dépêche du Midi 2017, Le Parisien 2017e).

For Alexandre Devecchio (2017a) Macron’s tributes to Hallyday allowed him to reconcile with ‘ordinary’ people in France (‘la France d’en bas.’). However, Christian Le Bart (2017) describes in a more critical vein how Macron effectively expresses the

remorse of a political class which has turned away from working-class France, and which attempts, in a pathetic and paradoxical tribute, to reconnect with it. [...] Johnny’s pantheonisation is less about the recognition given to that part of France that has been forgotten than the appropriation of a symbol that originally belonged to it in its own right.

Furthermore, an editorial in *Libération* seeks to question Hallyday’s status as a ‘French’ or ‘national’ hero, preferring the term ‘private hero’, aiming for a more balanced and mixed assessment of his life, while recognising the sincere grief of his fans (Joffrin 2017a). For Alain Duhamel (2017), Macron’s approach to Hallyday’s funeral is emblematic of a broader presidential approach based on ‘perpetual theatre’, reminiscent of that adopted by the former president Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, as well as the requirement that, in order to govern from the centre, a ‘strategy of consensus’ and the ‘cult of unity’ (‘rassemblement’) are required. For Laurent Joffrin (2017b), Macron’s public tributes to Hallyday have created a ‘consensual atmosphere’.

Beyond specific concerns of French national identity, coverage identifies Hallyday as a force for social unity and cohesion (Bigot 2017, Vosges Matin 2017b). Fabrice Raffin highlights Hallyday’s ability to achieve appeal beyond a core popular audience (Raffin 2017). Myrtille Serre (2017a) also effectively associates Hallyday with generational cohesion as members of the public of all ages are said to pay their respects outside his home in Marnes-la-Coquette. His former manager Jean-Claude Camus also identifies Hallyday as transcending traditional party political divisions: following his death, he is reported to have received a standing ovation in the National Assembly (Paris-Normandie 2017a). However, Hallyday is also described as ‘political despite himself’ (Sapin 2017) and is more actively identified with the political right: ‘the man who dined with Sarkozy, Chirac and Giscard [d’Estaing]’ (Galiero 2017). A further account identifies Hallyday with

the right but at the same time as not averse to the left (Le Républicain Lorrain 2017b). The extreme right is effectively marginalised in coverage via reports that Hallyday's family requested that Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right party Le Rassemblement national not attend his funeral service (La Croix 2017, Lecoivre *et al.* 2017).

Coverage emphasises Hallyday's personal impact on local French communities and individuals via accounts of particular visits, concerts, performances and events on specific dates, including those that were cancelled (e.g. Catheline and Hallyday 2017, L'Indépendant 2017b). Hallyday's local destinations are highlighted in a series of repetitive, anaphorically titled articles across various newspapers beginning with the word 'Quand' ('When'), e.g. 'When Johnny Hallyday electrified Saint-Brieuc' ('Quand Johnny Hallyday électrisait Saint-Brieuc') (Magi 2017); 'When Johnny Hallyday gave an interview to lycée students in Calais' (La Voix du Nord 2017c).

Beyond France and the French-speaking world, Hallyday's international professional and personal links and affinities with US popular culture are emphasised (Mahé 2017, Nuc 2017) along with his family life in California (Le Parisien 2017c). More generally, Hallyday's international reputation and stature are underlined through the positive evaluations of non-French commentators – for instance, 'Tom Hanks: Johnny Hallyday deserved to be nick-named the French Elvis Presley' (Serre 2017b).

Hallyday's value as an object of interest and enquiry within the intellectual and academic world (De Montety 2017, Landre 2017) is confirmed in press coverage. Indeed, Christophe Guilluy highlights the U-turn of those members of the 'intelligentsia' who previously dismissed or denigrated Hallyday, viewed as a working-class icon, before his death (Devecchio 2017c). Commentaries from various academic, intellectual, cultural and artistic figures are included in coverage with the result of emphasising Hallyday's social and cultural significance, particularly his association in the early-mid 1960s, initially with rock 'n' roll and later with 'yé-yé' pop music (Brieu 2017, Gandillot 2017, Le Monde 2017c) and with the baby boomer generation, who, according to the philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky, enjoyed the frivolity of Hallyday's concerts (frivolity which is lacking today) without any sense of anxiety (Schwartzbrod 2017). Other areas of focus include his popularity and relatability (Brieu 2017, Devecchio 2017b); his strong character and determination; his incomparability (Brieu 2017); his virile image (Giraud 2017); his unifying ability to transcend political, social, cultural categories and differences (Denis 2017, Lacube 2017b); his association with successive eras in French history and his representation of the contradictions within French society (Lacube 2017b). According to Jean-Pierre Le Goff (Tremolet de Villers 2017), Hallyday's 'myth' is situated between *Les Trente Glorieuses*, 'the thirty glorious years' of economic growth in France (1945–75) and the idolisation of the rebel figure'. Etienne De Montety (2017) observes how Hallyday's physicality rather than his cultural capital provided a source of fascination for intellectuals. For Francis Métivier (2017), Hallyday's 'desire to desire' ('l'envie d'avoir envie') corresponds in philosophical terms with Schopenhauer's view: 'The more that pleasure increases, the more the ability to experience it decreases: pleasure that has become a habit causes a painful feeling'. Articles in *Libération* also feature varied, complex and problematic assessments of Hallyday. Mallaval *et al.* (2017) highlight his ordinariness ('a guy like you and me') on the one hand; his mythical status as a 'monument' on the other; his status as an 'illusory', 'comforting' 'symbol of national unity' ('transclass', 'a loud voice for the excluded', and 'transgenerational'). For the sociologist Yves Santamaria (2017), Hallyday

represents a 'synthetic product': 'a popular hero and tax evader, and a pro-American benefitting from the French social security/health service'. Moreover, Hallyday represents 'the mirror of a nation that does not wish to grow old and die' (Santamaria and Allouche in Santamaria 2017) and 'allows contemporary France to remember the Thirty Glorious Years of economic growth' (1945–75) (Mallaval *et al.* 2017). Furthermore, Hallyday 'embodies a France with a working-class Parisian accent' throughout his career (Santamaria 2017); the kind of France represented in French 'nostalgic' or 'sepia cinema' (see, for example, Fevry 2017) of the 2000s (Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain; Les Choristes; Le Petit Nicolas), as well as a more 'extravagant view' of France, associated with technological advancements in transport such as the ocean liner SS France ('Le France') and Concorde (Santamaria 2017).

Hallyday's own personal qualities at times form an area of general consensus. Coverage maintains longstanding traditional masculine representations of Hallyday as a physically active and adventurous male. A strong association between Hallyday and the French sporting world is emphasised (Lefèvre 2017). In men's football the Olympique de Marseille defender Adil Rami is said to be 'very sad' at the news of Hallyday's death and is reported to have sung part of one of his songs ('Toute la musique que j'aime') at a press conference (Le Figaro 2017b). Hallyday's 2002 song for the French men's national football team 'All together' ('Tous ensemble') is also mentioned (R.Bx 2017). Coverage also recalls a 2002 television news interview in which Hallyday accidentally referred to the coach and former player Zinedine Zidane (nicknamed 'Zizou') (Le Figaro 2017m) as 'Zazie'.⁵ Hallyday is also associated with biker culture (the presence of bikers at his funeral cortège is emphasised in coverage) (La Croix 2017) and motor racing (Midi Libre 2017). Consensus is also drawn around the spiritual and religious dimensions of Hallyday's character. On occasion, coverage identifies Hallyday in spiritual terms, rather than French Republican secularism, particularly with the Christian faith and Catholicism more specifically. Mgr Benoist de Sinety, vicaire général of the diocese of Paris, who led the religious section of Hallyday's *hommage populaire* is quoted in his sermon as asserting that he 'identified with Christian culture' (Guénois 2017). Although the service was said not to include the Eucharist, Sinety asserts that Hallyday 'sang this fire of hope, this fire of love, this fire of a life that never goes out'; and had told him 'I was born Catholic and will die Catholic' (Lacube 2017a). While coverage highlights Hallyday's positive personal attributes, less favourable accounts occasionally appear. Qualities highlighted in coverage include 'an immense understanding of others' (Balle 2017b); 'immense simplicity' (Balle 2017a); and his cultivation according to the popular television presenter Jean-Pierre Foucault (Zoltobroda 2017). Other accounts point towards a darker and self-destructive side of his personality (V.G 2017). Occasional less favourable evaluations also include accounts of working relationships (Caenen 2017), and reference is made to what is regarded as a mixed or chequered career as a film actor, 'a career of highs and lows' (Neuhoff 2017, Vavasseur 2017). For Pierre-Yves Gomez (2017), Hallyday effectively represents a debt- and consumption-based economy.

Finally, press coverage highlights Hallyday's strength of character and stoicism given a challenging, dignified struggle with cancer (Latil 2017). Hallyday's illness is at times recounted in his own words: his initial decision to keep his illness private; his later decision to go public, while de-dramatising and universalising his experience; and his expressed

desire to live and work as long as possible, continuing to record and perform, completing most of his 51st studio album.

Initial posthumous newspaper coverage of Hallyday generates broad consensus around his public star persona while opening up possible areas for discussion or debate concerning his creative contribution and originality, his popularity among audiences, and his national, (party) political and intellectual significance. Consensual discourses around Hallyday's persona are on occasion challenged via articles that consider the intellectual/academic interest that Hallyday has generated. Coverage in *Libération*, a newspaper described generally by Raymond Kuhn as 'socially liberal, economically centre-left and supportive of postmaterial values such as environmentalism and minority rights' (Kuhn 2011, p. 76), also makes a notable contribution towards the problematisation of Hallyday's persona. Where the question of memorialising and paying tribute to Hallyday is concerned following his death, newspaper coverage generates a particularly marked sense of division.

Memorialisation

Initial posthumous press coverage includes reference to tributes taking various tangible and intangible forms: music concerts; performances by local tribute acts or *sosies* such as Johnny Guitare (Haubry 2017, Ouest-France 2017c), Johnny Junior (Recoquillé 2017), Johnny Smet (Nord Littoral 2017); an album of cover versions: 'On a tous quelque chose de Johnny' ('We all have something of Johnny within us') (Bruel, Calogero, Garou, etc.); karaoke parties in various municipalities (Le Courrier Picard 2017b, Vosges Matin 2017c) and art works, for example, a collage assembled by *lycée professionnel* students in Monistrol, Haute-Loire (Leleu 2017). In addition, coverage includes discussion and debate concerning particular forms of memorialisation and tribute: Hallyday's public funeral service on 9 December and subsequent burial on 11 December 2017; the use of Hallyday as an eponym; the media coverage of his death and beyond; and the commercialisation of his persona and body of work.

Conflicting views focus on the scale of the *hommage populaire* ('popular/people's tribute') that Hallyday received. The *hommage populaire*, which is said to have involved more than 500,000 people and been watched by a fifth of the French population, generated swathes of media coverage focusing on various categories of attendees and participants – from Hallyday's family, to his musicians, politicians and various media personalities. The huge scale of the event is emphasised in terms of the size of the crowds, pressure on the transport network in and around Paris, travel advice for those planning to attend and the huge police presence (around 1,500) (e.g. Le Parisien 2017b, Le Figaro 2017j). The event is also compared with the funeral cortège of Victor Hugo in 1885, where around 2 million mourners lined the cortège (Guerrin 2017). On occasion, the scale is questioned – one headline in *Le Figaro* refers to the 'ambiguity of ceremonies that are too spectacular' (De Saint Victor 2017). Another article in *La Voix du Nord* observes that it is better for those in power to have done too much than too little where such tributes are concerned (La Voix du Nord 2017a). Another (Le Républicain Lorrain 2017a) features a mix of readers' opinions on whether Hallyday merits such a large event. Arguments in favour note that Hallyday has no natural successor in the music field and that he touched audiences and reflects their suffering in his songs, while criticism and irritation is

expressed at levels of the cost and waste, at excessive praise of Hallyday and his status as a role model for young people, and at his tax affairs, given his residency abroad.

Initial posthumous press coverage of Hallyday also generates competing discourses concerning the form of any anticipated collective tribute and associated event (Lenoir 2017). A headline in *La Voix du Nord* (2017a) asks, 'How should we say our final farewells' ('Comment lui dire adieu?'). Romain Baheux describes the main features of the well-established format of the *hommage national* ('state tribute'), as well as terms like 'obsèques nationales' ('state funeral') and 'deuil national' ('national mourning'), placed in a historical context:

Held at the Invalides or the Pantheon, [the national tribute] must be announced in the Journal Officiel [official bulletin of the French Republic providing details of laws and official announcements]. The President pays tribute to the deceased, whose coffin is decorated with the red, white and blue flag, in a speech. (Baheux 2017)

In the event, Hallyday received an *hommage populaire* ('popular/people's tribute'), while the novelist Jean d'Ormesson, who died the night before, was the subject of an *hommage national* (state tribute). We are also informed that recent recipients of a *hommage national* include the victims of terrorism (2016) and the politician Simone Veil (2017), and that 'the Hallyday clan didn't wish for such Republican solemnity' (Baheux 2017).

President Macron is said to have opted for an *hommage populaire* (organised jointly by the French presidency, Hallyday's family, and his close friends), rather than an *hommage national*, reserved for 'state dignitaries', partly as a means of avoiding problems associated with earlier tributes to popular music artists in France: Edith Piaf, who, as a divorcee, was denied a religious service in 1963 on moral grounds, and Claude François, an immensely popular performer whose funeral in 1978 was not attended by the then President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (Djamshidi 2017). In a radio interview, Hallyday's friend and composer Pierre Billon views an *hommage populaire* as a logical solution given that 'For 50 years he has paid a popular tribute to his audience' (Baheux 2017). However, writing in *Le Figaro*, Jacques De Saint Victor (2017) recognises both the rare distinction afforded to Hallyday in his funeral cortège along the Champs-Élysées and the 'ambiguity' of the more novel 'popular' tribute that he received instead of the more established and orthodox 'state' tribute.

More constructively, Macron is said to seek via an *hommage populaire* Hallyday's recognition as a 'héros positif' ('positive hero') (Djamshidi 2017). However, for *Le Figaro*, the collective tribute to Hallyday 'illustrates perfectly how difficult it is for the Republic to determine the criteria for hero status' (De Saint Victor 2017). More critical, Régis Debray observes that, in the light of Hallyday's *hommage populaire*, 'As fighting/struggling is now viewed as shameful, heroes are no longer those who sacrifice themselves for their country or a cause, but who makes themselves seen and heard by all, while becoming multi-millionaires at the same time' (Le Monde 2017a). The view that an *hommage populaire* is more fitting than an *hommage national* is expressed in *Libération* via a voxpop interview with one of the fans gathered outside Hallyday's home in Marnes-la-Coquette (Hauts-de-Seine): 'A national tribute would have been too much, and he didn't fight in a war either, but a popular tribute is good, it's him' (Equy 2017).

Conflicting discourses in press coverage also concern Hallyday's site of burial and final resting place on the island of St-Barthélémy (Antilles). In what is referred to as

a 'controversy', coverage includes views from various media and music personalities and fans debating Hallyday's own decision to be buried at the Lorient cemetery on the island (Le Figaro 2018). The burial site is said to have become a place of pilgrimage for the few fans of Hallyday able to cross the Atlantic. In the words of one fan, 'We understand he wants to be buried there (...) but for us, his audience, it's a shame' (Paris-Normandie 2017d). For the singer Michel Polnareff, it is 'strange to take Johnny's physical body away from his audience' (Paris-Normandie 2017c), while Sylvie Vartan, Hallyday's first wife, regrets that Hallyday's burial is 'so far away from all of us who loved him so much' (Le Figaro 2017n, 2018), which is said to have personally offended Jean-Claude Darmon, one of Hallyday's close friends (Le Figaro 2018). To add to the discussion, the Mayor of Ramatuelle reveals that in 2005 Hallyday had asked to be buried in the commune in the Var department in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region (Le Figaro 2018).

Coverage includes several references to as well as discussion and debate around the naming of places, buildings and monuments in France after Hallyday. A fan in Viviers (Ardèche) is reported to have mounted a project to build a 3-m statue (Le Parisien 2017a). In Paris, the metro station Duroc was renamed 'Durock Johnny', reflecting Hallyday's association with rock music (Le Parisien 2017g), while we are also informed that the capital will name a street, square or garden after Hallyday (Le Parisien 2017h). While a proposed Notre-Dame-des-Landes Airport has divided opinion, Didier Gourin comments that there would be unanimity over naming it after Hallyday (Gourin 2017). In other areas of France, there is less certainty. In Brittany, while naming a main road after Hallyday is reportedly a possibility in Quimper (Ouest-France 2017d), it is confirmed that Vannes does not plan to name a street (Ouest-France 2017b).

Hallyday's posthumous commodification and commercialisation and the development of a lucrative business in Hallyday memorabilia are also the subject of discussion. Where a street named after Hallyday already exists in Charvieu-Chavagneux, Isère (Pueyo 2017), the town is selling replicas of the street sign at cost price (95 euros) after several were stolen following his death. Sales of Hallyday's singles and albums are said to have rocketed. However, there is a particular focus on independent record shop owners and their desire not to profit from his death (Paris-Normandie 2017a). The sale of some of the items is viewed as tasteless and opportunistic, given, for example, reports mentioning cigarette ends, funeral service programmes, and a photo of his corpse (comparisons are made to a similar episode in 1996 involving a stolen photograph of President François Mitterrand on his death bed) (Talabot 2017).

Finally, initial press coverage features mixed views on Hallyday's posthumous media coverage. Hallyday's death is also said to have generated a great deal of internet traffic, searches and social media activity (Mehadji 2017). Press coverage is self-consciously aware of its own preoccupation – the dailies and news magazines are said to have produced several special issues (Woitier 2017). Newspaper websites also invite readers to submit tributes ('déposez votre hommage') (Vavasseur 2017). The press also provides coverage of other media forms including a raft of book releases on Hallyday, particularly biographies. Where television is concerned, Johnny Hallyday's specials are said to have been of benefit to France's leading commercial free-to-air channels TF1 and France 2 (Le Figaro 2017k). Coverage also focuses on the announcement of his death on television (e.g. Latil 2017). Certain examples of coverage question or reject the media hype ('matraquage') (Le Courrier Picard 2017a, L'Aisne Nouvelle 2017b). The potential impact of Hallyday's

televised tribute on the annual French televised charity event *Téléthon*, organised by the French Muscular Dystrophy Association (AFM), and taking place during the same weekend, is broached (e.g. *L'Aisne Nouvelle* 2017a, *Le Figaro* 2017c), but the two televised events are also later identified as mutually productive (Paris-Normandie 2018).

Certain examples of coverage question the public media tributes on the part of politicians. One article highlights not only the general eagerness of politicians to pay tribute to Hallyday but also the unconventional response of Jean-Luc Mélenchon (leader of the left-wing movement *La France Insoumise/France Unbowed*), who said he had 'nothing to say' following Hallyday's death (*Le Figaro* 2017h). A tweet by his spokesperson Alexis Corbière – arguing that 'the sad death of #JohnnyHalliday must not make us forget the trouble that they [the government] have in store for us (next target - the minimum wage)' – also caused offence and was condemned by other internet users (*Centre Presse* 2017). Indeed, Michel Guerrin (2017) underlines the continuing general social convention that, irrespective of personal opinions (individuals might like, dislike or be indifferent to Hallyday), 'national mourning should be respected in the same way armies respect a truce'.

In sum, initial posthumous newspaper coverage of Hallyday exhibits several features of celebrity news, identified by Dubied (2009a, 2009b), including an emphasis on the distinctive behaviour and lifestyle of the celebrity, their ordinary and extraordinary personal qualities, strengths and weaknesses. While the Latin aphorism 'de mortuis nil nisi bonum' (of the dead, (say) nothing but good) does not always necessarily apply to contemporary media coverage of celebrity deaths, the case of Hallyday's posthumous press coverage illustrates how French newspaper journalism draws a broadly positive consensus around Hallyday's living star persona, while on occasion problematising his creative contribution, popularity, as well as his national, political and intellectual significance in France. Coverage of his memorialisation represents a notable site of debate and conflict, which is based on a range of impulses – personal, social, political, national and local, commercial and media agenda-setting. Differentiated approaches towards conflict as a news value are thus developed in posthumous celebrity media coverage. Moreover, future research may further determine the level of correspondence between the editorial stance of specific newspaper titles and their willingness or otherwise to represent departed celebrities in conflictual terms.

Notes

1. Hallyday's real name is Jean-Philippe Léo Smet (1943–2017). The stage name Hallyday derives from Lee Halliday, the American husband of Smet's cousin Desta. Lee Halliday also referred to Smet as 'Johnny'. The change of spelling from 'Halliday' to 'Hallyday' originates from a printing error by his record company at the start of his career.
2. See also (Singer 2013) and (Tinker 2007).
3. The phrase 'quelque chose de Johnny' ('something of/from Johnny'), used by the French President Emmanuel Macron in a tweet following Hallyday's death, is an allusion to one of his most popular and emblematic songs, 'Quelque chose de Tennessee' (1985). See (Looseley 2018), pp. 378–379, p. 382. As Looseley comments, 'The motif that "we" each have "quelque chose de Johnny", that he is us and we are him, implies that he unites the French nation in a community of feeling' (Looseley 2018, p. 383).

4. The study focuses primarily on newspaper coverage (articles with 'Johnny' or 'Hallyday' in the title) during the two weeks following Hallyday's death (6 December 2017–20 December 2017), drawing on a search of the Nexis newspaper database (c.1,400 articles) and web versions of the national daily *Libération* and the regional daily *Le Parisien* (including its national edition *Aujourd'hui en France*). Online readers' comments are beyond the scope of this study (for further discussion, see Looseley 2018, pp. 379–380).
5. The name Zazie is more commonly associated with the well-known singer-songwriter in contemporary France, and with the protagonist of Raymond Queneau's novel *Zazie dans le métro* (1959) and Louis Malle's 1960 film adaptation.

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