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Doe Lang, Ph.D.

THE NEW SECRETS OF
CHARISMA
How to Discover and Unleash Your Hidden Powers

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CONTEMPORARY BOOKS

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Andrea Lang

akal . . . “undying”

TO THE RADIANT, UNDYING SPIRIT
of
ANDREA ILONA LANG

*Adored and adoring big sister
of Brian Lang*

*Incomparable loving heart
her art
her writing
her healing charisma
Lives and inspires others . . .
even who never knew her.
Wherever she was, she created beauty
and humor*

*our brilliant darling
magical grace
dazzling wit,
her luminous beauty,
song,
laughter*

*Lost and perished
in the Painted Cave Fire
Santa Barbara, California, June 27, 1990*

*Dearest Andrea
heart's daughter*

phoenix soul

INTRODUCTION

Why do we need charisma in the new millennium? A good question!

Several years ago, when I was first asked to write a book about charisma, I discovered an interesting paradox: although clients of all ages and levels of achievement were anxious to acquire charisma and improve their lives, most academics and media people either knew nothing about it or disdained the whole subject as frivolous!

Though the first edition of this book drew a great deal of favorable response, the initial reaction of many talk-show hosts and columnists ranged from sceptical to hostile. “You either have charisma or you don’t—you’ve got to be born with it!” was a common remark. I had a feeling that these well-known people felt their own sense of “entitlement through talent” was threatened by the idea that “ordinary” people could learn to harness their inner charisma and be more dynamic, exciting, and successful.

Most people remember the word *charisma* in connection with the Kennedys, but it hadn’t yet penetrated anywhere else in that era. In the sixties, when the brilliant Joyce Engelson sent her just-published first novel to her alma mater for review, she was attacked for using the word *charisma*! “Where did she get that word!” the professor wrote contemptuously. “She certainly never learned it here . . . at Barnard!” (Actually she had—when she studied Max Weber, who wrote about political charisma in the early 1920s.) As late as 1990, when I completed my doctorate in psychology and communication, the Psych Index (database) still had no entry for *charisma*.

So charisma, for much of our lifetime, has either been beneath notice, highly suspect, secretly fascinating—or any combination of the three. Discredited gurus, dictators, and suicidal cult leaders—who exploited their charisma—deepened public distrust.

But as the communications explosion opened up the world and flooded our consciousness with ever more information, *charisma* became a glamorous buzzword, a star emblem for the mysterious instant appeal of new people, products, and ideas. Today, the hype machinery speeds up celebrity on TV, in print, and even on the Internet, rushing to cloak every new candidate with the instant mantle of “charismatic” (deserved or not). In fact, in the last ten years the use of the word *charisma* has increased over 100 percent in the United States alone, according to a media search in some seventy thousand papers and publications. Self-help books and business studies about leadership now include the nature of charisma and general theories on how to develop it; charisma has become a respectable part of the landscape.

Scholarly academic conferences on nonverbal research used to present innumerable clinical and theoretical studies on communication, without giving people any practical, in-depth help to develop their own skills and overcome their fears. Yet nationwide surveys had long found that most people fear public speaking even more than death! Jerry Seinfeld, in a recent Broadway show, claimed he was baffled to learn that death comes in second to the public's number-one terror: public speaking! "I can't believe it! Does that mean that most people who go to a funeral would rather be in the coffin than give the eulogy?!" A client of mine, a fledgling congressman, said thoughtfully, "Yes! That's *exactly* how I used to feel!"

Since I wrote the first edition of this book, attitudes toward charisma have changed appreciably. My declaration that we all have charismatic inner gifts and can use enjoyable tools to develop the expression of our charisma shocked and startled some people at first. Enhanced by an array of mind-body-lifestyle-spiritual skills, each person's individuality emerges as a power for good in their private and public worlds.

In 1984 an earlier version of this book, *The Secrets of Charisma*, appeared in paperback for the first time. People interviewed then were asked whether they thought they had charisma. They replied confidently, "Yes—when I'm at my best." That was great progress. I was invited to give international seminars on charisma. In Japan a front-page article and photo of Tokyo businesspeople at my seminar was headlined "American actress teaches Japanese to be carefree!" Requests for workshops poured in from England, Canada, and Brazil. The Singapore government brought me there to train the entire civil-service sector of the government in communication.

The Charisma program has since attracted an enthusiastic following in many different cultures. I am not only continually amazed by what clients and students achieve but also touched and impressed by the never-ending flow of grateful, perceptive letters and thought-provoking insights from readers throughout the world.

Foreign-language editions (e.g., Portuguese Brazilian) sometimes use *charisma* in the title, but often the edition's new title reflects national concerns and characteristics. The first Japanese edition, for example, was called *Transforming Weakness into Strength*. There the publishers omitted the chapter on anger altogether, as they considered it a "shameful" subject! I loved the unabashedly metaphysical German title, *The Magnetic Power of Personal Radiance*.

Most provocative was a reader's letter asking plaintively, "How can the Pope and Elvis Presley *both* be charismatic?" When I thought about that I realized this reader was right. Something more was needed to describe different kinds of charisma. That led me to identify thirteen kinds of charisma, which await you in the first chapter.

Let's return to the original question: Why is charisma so vital for the next millennium? Now that charisma has in a sense been democratized, our

fascination with it has if anything increased. It seems within reach, and everybody wants it. But do we really *need* it?

In a world of unprecedented technological complexity, with virtually instant access to people and places everywhere and accelerating rates of change, our ability to cope, connect, and communicate well will be critical for both personal and global survival. Most of us probably talk to more people in a week than our grandparents spoke to in a lifetime! This means that everybody needs to become not just computer-literate, but charisma-literate, not as observers but as owners! The “superlanguage” of charismatic power means the skills of speaking and reading people—particularly the skills to *achieve rapport easily and effectively with all kinds of people in all kinds of situations*. The grammar and vocabulary of this superlanguage include your ability to

- be expressive in a positive way, verbally and nonverbally;
- be aware of what’s really going on within yourself and other people;
- take responsibility for your own emotions as well as actions;
- focus increasingly fine-tuned social skills on any situation;
- speak eloquently, easily, and well in any setting;
- use your body-mind intuition, compassion, and skills to create positive energy, positive scenarios, and positive outcomes; and
- know how to defuse conflict—even instantly when necessary.

In this thoroughly revised and updated edition, I’ve provided new resources and additional advanced power tools to accelerate your access to your own unique expression of charisma as a superlanguage.

Intrinsic charisma is a birthright. Some of it is inborn, some must be developed, and some must be rediscovered.

Try everything and then choose the techniques that challenge and intrigue you the most. Those that are hardest might well be the most rewarding; notice which ones delight you (you may be surprised!), because they might be the most valuable of all. Share them with your children, friends, and loved ones. The more you do, the more satisfying and user-friendly your world will be. No matter what your age, location, or status in life, this adventure is open to you. I wish you expansive joy on this fascinating journey and as much surprise as it continues to give me. Nobody has it “all together.” As long as we’re alive, we are apt to make clumsy mistakes—and I apologize for any I have made here.

Enjoy the trip—and send me a postcard!

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1

The Thirteen Kinds of Charisma

What is charisma? Nobody can tell you *exactly*. In research I conducted with more than two thousand people from all walks of life, I got such answers as these:

“You either have it or you don’t. All I know is that when you have it, everybody wants to do things for you!”

“It’s sex appeal.”

“It’s a mysterious charm that draws people to you!”

“It’s a kind of harmony between the person and his or her audience.”

“It’s vitality.”

“It’s energy.”

“It’s never being boring.”

“It’s a holistic state—when you’re one with the people you’re with and everybody feels inspired, excited, enriched, and enlarged.”

“It’s a quality of believing your own lies . . . general confidence.”

Most people felt charisma is inborn but, paradoxically, could be developed. I asked people when they themselves had felt most charismatic in their lives. The intriguing (and encouraging) response was that nobody, not even the people who regarded themselves as shy and nonassertive, said, “Never!”

So apparently we all enjoy some experience of feeling successful and authoritative—times when we feel effective in expressing our true selves and being understood and appreciated. Both are necessary for a satisfying experience, according to the majority of people I surveyed.

I have always had a secret interest in charisma.

When I was no more than six, I remember trying to figure out just how my older brother had said, “Good-bye, Mom!” in the morning when he left for school. Was there something special in his voice or inflection? My

mother always answered, “Good-bye, dear!” to him, and it seemed she never said “dear” to me. What was the secret of his charisma? I had no way of knowing then that the mere fact of his being male had a great deal to do with it!

I suspected that perhaps I was deficient in some way and that was why she didn’t say “dear” to me. That was too alarming to talk about or even to acknowledge to myself. I was far too proud to *ask*. . . . Of course I wanted to be liked and loved, but I wasn’t sure I had what it took—whatever that was!

Secretly I suspected it had nothing to do with being good, although I was always exhorted to *be* good. Perhaps for girls—although this was never suggested—it had something to do with being pretty? I studied the cool, distant gaze of models in the magazines and the sultry, provocative look of movie stars. I tried to learn how those looks felt from the inside. Somehow, I felt, if I knew *what* to do, I could do it!

In spite of all my efforts, I felt no closer to that mysterious and wonderful confidence some people seemed to have without working on it at all! They could be naughty or outrageous, have a temper tantrum—nobody seemed to mind. On the other hand, I was required to be as perfect as possible. Was it because people thought I wasn’t good unless I was perfect? I couldn’t be sure, but I put on such a good act that some people thought I had *too much* confidence!

Katharine Hepburn once referred to her arrival in Hollywood by saying, “I was bringing myself as though I were a basket of flowers!” How wonderful to feel that way and to be able to say it! In my home that would have been considered boastful and immodest—not qualities that were admired or encouraged. Yet, if Hepburn hadn’t had her confident sense of self she could never have swept through Hollywood as triumphantly as she did. The prevailing ideal of women in her day was cuddly, sexy, pretty (and if possible, blond)—nothing like the independence, aristocratic strength, individuality, and racehorse beauty she projected.

People do walk through the door of your expectations!—especially if the expectations are unquestioning and sure. Katharine Hepburn’s sense of self was so powerful that she not only became a star; as everybody knows, she stayed one.

When I was a little girl, I used to pretend I was a princess. It was reassuring to know that I had a strawberry mark on my thigh, because otherwise my real family—all kings and queens, naturally—would never be able to find me. I didn’t confide this to anyone, but it was a great consolation to know that I was too fine for my own family and my friends—and *they didn’t even know it!*

Meantime, the waiting before the royal talent scouts came to find me wasn’t wholly satisfactory because I didn’t quite know who I was while waiting to *be* a princess. It was fun to pretend to be other people, and I seemed be very good at becoming different characters and doing all kinds of voices and accents. So I became an actress.

The Tinker Bell Syndrome

The only problem about getting your confidence from performing is that if you depend on it, what happens when you go offstage? Even onstage it's never quite enough. Many performers suffer from what I call the Tinker Bell syndrome. Unless an audience is madly applauding and calling out, "I believe! I believe!" they don't feel worthy or valid as human beings. Brilliant British actor-writer Chris Langham told me that on the night of his triumphant London debut in *Crazy for You*, in the middle of a standing ovation, as he was coming up from a bow, the thought crossed his mind, "Is that all????!!!"

Too much is never enough!

There are also negative aspects to being valued for one's talents alone. Other people's jealousy can be very undermining if your personal self-esteem is shaky.

My own experience led to an ambivalence about the business of performing. Growing up, I was admired and praised when I sang, played, or (later) acted. But one little girl, who happened to live next door, was bitterly jealous. Years later I found out her mother had taunted her by saying, "Why can't you sing and play like Doe?" No wonder she hated me! She herself was a pretty, bright little girl, but that apparently was not enough for her competitive and ambitious mother. So we both suffered for it.

And I learned: yes, it's good to have talent, but watch out! You may be hated for it. The same is true for beauty, brains, and other gifts. What I kept searching for was *what made a person OK*—that inalienable confidence in oneself that makes it possible to move through life with unassailable joy and assurance. I used to marvel at people who were neither talented, pretty, nor especially bright, but who had *it*: charisma.

There is a Sufi saying that if you want young people to learn how to deal well with life, tell them to associate with lucky people. People who have positive expectations usually draw positive events to them.

If you think you're lucky, why then you are! Dr. Shelley Taylor, who wrote *Positive Illusions*, found that people who think they are luckier, better-looking, and smarter than they are in actuality are happier and more successful and live longer.

Although I, on the contrary, usually disparaged my own talents, they brought me a series of professional and academic scholarships, and after graduating from Bennington College, I embarked on a career in theater, cabaret, and TV to support my studies as a concert pianist. I knew I was lucky not to have to be a waitress like so many other young hopefuls. I could always earn money acting, singing, or even playing cocktail piano in elegant hotels and clubs. At the same time, I really didn't think I was worthy of notice. In fact, once when the great Duke Ellington himself, who had heard me (when I didn't know he was there) and liked my playing, invited a music critic to come hear me at a club in New York, I cravenly pleaded sudden illness and fled. In view of all this, it seems a minor miracle

that I won a Fulbright fellowship to study opera in Italy and professional recognition as an actress, singer, and pianist here and abroad. Of course, in spite of my occasional stage fright, I loved what I was doing—it was wonderful playing Maria in *West Side Story* and the lead in *Mame*, singing *Carmen* and musical comedy on TV with Leonard Bernstein, and playing long-suffering Nurse Karen Adams on *As the World Turns*. How lucky that other people believed in me (especially since I hardly believed in myself). I also knew how lucky I was to have the joy of playing and singing great music with its infinite resources—the language that speaks to us more than all others across cultures and time.

So perhaps it's not surprising that I've always been an optimist after all—even if a sometimes despairing one. I'm the product of a mixed marriage: my father (who sang like an angel) was a pessimist and my mother, bless her, was an optimist.

Anyway, the secret unrelenting search went on quietly deep inside me—for what? I knew only that I was searching for something, that it was both terribly important to me and very elusive.

I began to realize that I wasn't the only performer plagued with occasional but troublesome stage fright (or, as it is now known, "performance anxiety"). Other people confessed their own misery about this and fear of the fear they lived with. What a difference it could have made if someone had helped us when we needed it! So I found myself beginning, without conscious awareness of why, to research and put together information and exercises that would help people perform at their best. Remembering that Einstein once said, "I want to be as simple as possible—but no simpler!" I looked for the fastest possible results without being superficial or simplistic.

I wanted so much to help people overcome their fears that I soon had collected and invented a huge arsenal of resources with some near-magic keys to give people. Word got around. Soon I was asked to teach aspiring actors, singers, and instrumentalists at the Columbia University Graduate School of the Arts and the Manhattan School of Music. I discovered that I loved teaching! Serendipitously, when an injury put an end to my performing career, the New School in New York invited me to teach several courses. The first, called "Acting for TV," was a natural since I'd been a regular on *As the World Turns*, *Edge of Night*, and other soaps for several years, but the other course, "Public Speaking for Private People," I agreed to only reluctantly since I had never taught or even taken a course like that.

It soon became clear that communication problems evoke people's deepest fears. Practically everybody is frightened of public speaking. At first I worried—how could I deal with so many people of so many different backgrounds, ages, interests, and educational levels? The assortment was wildly diversified, with ages ranging from sixteen to eighty years. I saw how much people suffered from low self-esteem, their inability to speak up, and panic that they couldn't measure up to their own and others' expectations.

Everything I had been collecting and amassing suddenly became relevant. Realizing I needed "different strokes for different folks," I threw

myself into intensive studies of everything from gestalt, transactional analysis, psychodrama, and transpersonal and ego psychology to Ericksonian and clinical hypnosis, neurolinguistics, psychomotor therapy, psychoneuroimmunology, quantum physics, stress management, yoga, Zen, Kung Fu, and several schools of Buddhism and other Eastern disciplines. I discovered that if you go deeply enough into psychology, you hit not China (like the child digging through the sand) but spirituality. I wanted to be able to give people, in all their diversity, whatever keys they needed to become more richly themselves.

People told me their haunting personal stories; I saw how each person developed over the course of a semester, how rapport grew in the group, and the reserves of genius everyone seemed able to draw on. We all realized that deep down we all have much in common and a great deal to give each other. I found it fascinating to help people become what they dreamed of and began to have a deep respect for the inner gifts so-called ordinary people have. I had always been a closet optimist about people. Now I was coming out of the closet.

Then a journalist who had heard about my classes at the New School wrote a detailed and admiring full-page article for *Women's Wear Daily*, called "Doe Lang's Class in Charisma." My first reaction was horror! How presumptuous! Had I claimed to teach charisma? No. The reporter had come and watched, and that's what *she* said I was doing!

I rushed to the dictionary and found to my relief that *charisma* (which comes from *Charis*, one of the Three Graces in Greek mythology) used to mean the divine gifts or attributes we each have within.

That was exactly what I believed. I saw that my role was to help people trust themselves and, through dealing with their fears about public and private speaking, reach deep places where we share our humanness. I had learned to have great admiration for the creativity, inner gifts, and capacity for charisma every person has, no matter how unlikely that may at first seem. Yes, there are great differences in vitality, education, and expressiveness, but at the deepest level, nobody is boring! What most people present at the surface bears little relation to their real quality and gifts.

Charisma—the Superlanguage

More and more people came to me with urgent communication needs. I began to see that the explosion of technology and the rapid changes we have all been experiencing have made understanding each other more important than ever before. I began to see charisma not as an ego trip, as many brilliant narcissists had used it (often with devastating results), but as a superlanguage that can create rapport and a respectful human relation with others while at the same time helping us realize our own best potential.

This is a powerful message. And every time an article about my work appeared or I was on TV or radio, people from all over the world would write

me, asking how to achieve charisma. Most people had been brought up to believe it was either something you had or didn't have, and that there was nothing much you could do to change that. How wasteful and how wrong!

Through my work with thousands of people, I have seen that everybody has great riches within, if only they could accept that. As Liv Ullmann said to me not long ago, "We all have the same deep thoughts and feelings. Opening up to them makes a bridge between people."

I had found some profoundly satisfying bridges to help people experience themselves in a more loving, accepting way and deal with others with the same kind of loving concern they now could give themselves.

Political figures wanted my advice on charisma. Producers from TV shows and publications asked me to analyze body language. Business leaders, actors, professors, computer geniuses, scientists, professionals of all kinds, celebrities, women in transition—people with enormously varying backgrounds—all seemed to need affirmation and techniques to learn increasingly complex and important communication skills. Some wanted a way to restructure their family relationships and create peace and harmony in their lives.

I found that this work is a nonthreatening way for people to reach deep areas of themselves and profoundly affect society as well. Now I've discovered everything I've learned is truly useful. It is my great joy and privilege to be able to help people. That's why I decided to write this book. I wanted to share the work I have done on myself and with others because at last I know what my gifts—what everybody's gifts—are for.

Charisma—intrinsic charisma—is within all of us everywhere. And it's meant to be shared.

As I promised in the introduction, here is a new way of looking at the varied faces of charisma. First, here in a stream of consciousness, is what people in my classes have whispered, shouted, or thrust forward as their associations with charisma: *allure, appeal, attraction, charm, dynamism, presence, magnetism, personality, confidence, vitality, power, persuasive, unforgettable, irresistible, adorable, heart-melting, you forgive them everything, you want to do things for them, you want to be with them, you want to be like them, you want them to like you, you feel more important and charismatic in their presence, empowering, inspiring, uplifting, funny, eloquent, magical, surprising, creative, innovative, larger than life, original, instantly familiar yet mysterious. . . .*

The Thirteen Kinds of Charisma

Add your own candidates—these lists are only a start, and by no means exhaustive. Many of the first twelve categories are based on talent, achievement, or being born in the right time, place, and family.

1. **Performance charisma:** Whether Barbra Streisand, Jerry Seinfeld, Leonardo DiCaprio, or enduring icons like Luciano Pavarotti, Frank Sinatra, Cary Grant, Fred Astaire, John Wayne, Katharine Hepburn, Audrey Hepburn, Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, Marilyn Monroe, Humphrey Bogart, Jimmy Stewart, Spencer Tracy, Bette Davis, Jeanne Moreau, Monty Python, Bob Dylan, or the Beatles, performance defines the cultural landscape and forms a permanent backdrop for our collective unconscious.
2. **Sports charisma:** Simply think of Michael Jordan, Babe Ruth, Sonja Henie, Tiger Woods, Bobby Jones, Mark Spitz, Tara Lipinski, Martina Navratilova, Michelle Kwan, Sammy Sosa, or Mark McGwire.
3. **Money or business charisma** (may be achievement or family-related): Included are the Rockefellers, Du Ponts, Kennedys, George Soros, Bill Gates, and Warren Buffett, who have more money than some entire countries. Even if they are personally unprepossessing, once it is known that they have enormous wealth, their charisma is immediate.
4. **Spiritual charisma:** With or without temporal power and human or legendary-divine, some people have it—the Pope (any Pope has situational charisma, and some, such as John XXIII, have actual spiritual charisma), the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, the Maharishi, Thich Nat Hanh, Buddha, Moses, Christ, the Virgin Mary, St. Francis, St. George, St. Anthony, and all the lesser saints.
5. **Political and leadership charisma:** As Max Weber wrote, political charisma is an up-and-down affair: it may be God-given, but it has to be validated by the crowd. A successful candidate has political charisma when elected, but it probably is temporary! Tony Blair and Bill Clinton certainly have charisma but, by definition, in defeat they lose a good deal of it. Eloquence, sexual magnetism, persuasiveness, personal attractiveness, outrageousness, and a minor flaw are all components of personal charisma. History, however, confers more or less permanent charisma on those whose reputation survives their tenure—Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and even the evil geniuses of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Joseph Stalin.
 Resurrectional charisma is a specifically American subset of the political and media charisma: for example, Richard Nixon left office in disgrace and still managed to wind up as a respected elder statesman. If the career is big enough, career death is only temporary! Having power does not guarantee charisma, however; for instance, Ken Starr, Newt Gingrich, and Trent Lott at the height of their power still did not have charisma.
6. **Media, fashion, and style charisma:** The household tv gods exemplify this type—Larry King, Mike Wallace, Barbara Walters, Rosie O'Donnell,

Oprah Winfrey (whose plug can make any book a bestseller), Howard Stern, Bill Moyers, Ted Koppel. Creative movie and media moguls such as Steven Spielberg, Woody Allen, and Ted Turner also have immense power, influence, visibility (i.e., celebrity), and wealth. A strong indicator of Woody Allen's charisma is that he can get the biggest stars to appear in his movies without letting them know in advance what they will be doing. Sometimes their parts even wind up not showing them at their best. The Soon-Yi-Mia Farrow scandal had little negative impact on Woody's charisma in the United States and none at all in Europe, where sexual scandal is ho-hum for most people. Fashion moguls Giorgio Armani, Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, or Donna Karan and supermodels Cindy Crawford and Christie Brinkley parlayed their charisma into great wealth and influence through cross-over charisma (see #7). Tina Brown, British-born editor of the *New Yorker*, merged magazine, film, and other media in a new charisma "synergy." Buzz is not enough, and media exposure and celebrity are not enough—but they certainly help, for charisma must be sustained to last. Fifteen minutes of fame is only a start.

7. **Cross-over charisma:** Occasionally people, like Ronald Reagan, achieve fame first in one field and then cross over—in his case, from movies to politics. Andy Warhol began as an artist and became famous as an influential cultural icon. Lucille Ball graduated from being a TV comedienne to powerful head of her own studio, as Mary Pickford had done in the early days of Hollywood. In another time and place, Ignacy Paderewski, the great Polish pianist, became president of his country. Václav Havel went from literature to politics, becoming president of Czechoslovakia and then of the Czech Republic.
8. **Cumulative charisma:** Some people have been famous so long that they seem always to have been part of our lives. Elizabeth Taylor and the Kennedys come to mind. A subset is the necrologic cult fame of Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland, and Frank Sinatra.
9. **Situational (including family) charisma:** This type includes royal families. Princess Diana first earned situational (fairy-tale princess) and then media charisma (scorned wife who appealed to the public for sympathy, broke down the royal reserve, and showed sympathy for children and the disabled). Dying young and tragically, she occasioned the most spectacular, technologically awesome, TV-assisted worldwide communal grieving and achieved legendary status. A subset of her situational charisma is the generational legacy: Prince William's charisma is particularly potent because, since his mother's poignant death, his potential as future king and his personal charm have been compounded by journalistic efforts at reparations, so that glimpses of him become more precious because they are rare. Any king or president (and his family) has situational charisma, as do unofficial dynasties in showbiz, like the