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Edited by Roy Dilley and Thomas G. Kirsch

REGIMES OF IGNORANCE

Anthropological Perspectives on the Production and Reproduction of Non-Knowledge

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Roy Dilley, D. Phil. (Oxon) 1984, is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of St Andrews. Having completed over thirty years of field research in Senegal, West Africa, he now works in French colonial archives on historical ethnography, biography, and photography. He was a visiting Professorial Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Konstanz, 2011–2012. His books include *Islamic and Casto Knowledge Practices among Haalpuulaaren* (2004), *Nearly Native, Barely Civilized: Henri Gaden's Journey across Colonial French West Africa* (2014) and the edited volumes *Contesting Markets* (1992) and *The Problem of Context* (1999).

Chapter 7

POWER AND IGNORANCE IN BRITISH INDIA

THE NATIVE FETISH OF THE CROWN

Leo Coleman

Each time that ethnocentrism is precipitately and ostentatiously reversed, some effort silently hides behind all the spectacular effects to consolidate an inside and to draw from it some domestic benefit ... Between rationalism and mysticism there is, then, a certain complicity. The writing of the other is each time invested with a domestic outline.

— Jacques Derrida, 'Of Grammatology as a Positive Science'

In 1911 George V, the newly crowned King of Great Britain and Emperor of India, travelled to Delhi to proclaim his coronation and receive the honours and obeisance of his Indian empire. This event, organized by officials of the colonial state, was called a 'Coronation Durbar' or an 'Imperial Durbar', in imitation of the royal rituals of Indian sovereigns – whose courts and receptions were both called, in Persian or Urdu, *darbār* – and it also repeated on grander scale a common, highly ritualized form of governmental reception practised throughout India and indeed the British Empire. 'The colonial durbars of British India were held when the viceroy went on tour or were staged by governors', and they served as a venue for interacting with, and ritually incorporating into a quasi-feudal structure of government, 'regional princes and chiefs' (Apter 2004: 180–81). This ceremonious form of interaction between officials and subjects of the British Crown was borrowed from colonial India for rituals

of suzerainty over African leaders by Lord Lugard, and by the early twentieth century the durbar was the key ritual expression of British imperial rule, in which 'the central symbol of the British state and focus of national loyalty – the Crown – was reworked ... in relation to India and the rest of the empire' (Cohn 1996: 4; see also Haynes 1990).

The Coronation Durbar of 1911, however, was an event of special grandeur and significance for the British Government of India. No monarch had ever personally visited the colony while reigning, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, pointed out as the durbar was being planned, and such an event provided an opportunity to project British sovereignty over India in uniquely imperial terms and to capture the imagination of the whole country with a great, sovereign act (see Frykenberg 1986). Indeed, this was quite a show: George V appeared as King-Emperor before a conclave of thousands of 'his' Indian subjects in an amphitheatre built for the occasion north of Delhi, wearing an imperial crown specially fashioned for the occasion. All of this, meanwhile, was paid for by Indian revenues, not by the Crown and its establishments in Britain.

According to the reigning imperial ideology, developed in the context of earlier such grand colonial durbars in 1877 and 1903, the event had to include a 'boon' in order to touch the 'native mind' and meet the 'special requirements of the Orient' for a dash of ceremony in government (Curzon 1925: 202; see also Trevithick 1990). The problem of finding an act of sovereign grace for the king to perform in person, moreover, granted greater political importance to this particular imperial ceremonial, for India and Britain alike. Six years earlier, an administrative reorganization had split the powerful Indian province of Bengal into two parts, in an overt attempt to sever the centre of Bengali intellectual life, Calcutta, from the rest of its region and thus quell – or perhaps simply punish – nationalist agitation. The expedient of this 'partition' had failed, however, and it had instead spurred more active opposition to the colonial order and fostered the growth of the *swadeshi* or 'our country' movement in Bengal. As the historian David Johnson has recently shown, by 1911 colonial officials very much wanted to reverse the partition, but had to find some way to do so which was palatable to Indian opinion, as they saw it, and did not offend British imperialist pride. 'British colonial policy', he writes, 'could never be seen as stemming from or influenced by nationalist demands. A new colonial policy was needed, one in which the reunification of Bengal was seen as a secondary component of a much larger colonial policy' (Johnson

2010: 96). This was not entirely cynical, however: ultimately, *raison d'état* had to be pursued in a way which would make political expediency conform with an imperial mission and sense of civilizational supremacy, as those latter were symbolized by the beneficence of the King-Emperor.

The much larger plan, as it was ultimately effected, was to transfer the imperial capital from Calcutta to Delhi, making a grand gesture by relocating the British administration to the ancient sovereign city of India. This boon was secretly agreed upon amongst a small circle comprised of the viceroy, the prime minister, select cabinet ministers and the king himself (Eusitis and Zaidi 1964). Secrecy was demanded so that political carping beforehand would not ruin the effect of the boon or diminish the majesty of the king, as well as to benefit from the influence of the king in effecting the unpopular (among colonial officials) reversal of the partition of Bengal. On the day of the durbar, the king and queen 'arrived in the Imperial state in which their loyal subjects love to see them', escorted by 'a great cavalcade' of horsemen and 'clad in their superb coronation robes and [wearing] Imperial diadems', in the breathless description of a *Times of India* journalist named Stanley Reed, who covered the durbar and the whole royal tour (Reed 1912: 150). They took their place in the 'Reception Shamiana' – a sumptuous tent at the centre of the amphitheatre – and received homage from Indian rajyas, nawabs and chiefs, while bands played. They then processed to the Imperial Pavilion, for speeches from the king and the viceroy. When the viceroy had read the full list of official actions to commemorate and celebrate the durbar (including grants for extension of public education and surplus pay for members of the Indian Army), and it appeared that all the ceremonies were concluded, the heralds trumpeted once again and the king stood forth to announce a further boon, 'the secret of which had been well kept' (Reed 1912: 160):

We are pleased to announce to our people [the king read out] that on the advice of our Ministers tendered after consultation with our Governor-General in Council [the viceroy], we have decided upon the transfer of the seat of the Government of India from Calcutta to the ancient Capital of Delhi, and simultaneously, and as a consequence of that transfer, the creation at as early a date as possible of a Governorship for the Presidency of Bengal. (George 1912: 120)

The proclamation continued in this vein, and (according to Reed) it only slowly dawned on the audience what had just been announced. The transfer of the capital was surprise enough, but the reunification of Bengal was a real government action – although, as if to

obscure the significance of it, the king's pronouncement was cloaked in administrative jargon and ended with the feeble flourish, 'It is our earnest desire that these changes may conduce to the better administration of India and the greater prosperity and happiness of our beloved people'. Regardless, the effect was decisive and, as everyone at the durbar knew, the really consequential change was the one announced second.

As well as marking a significant political response to Indian nationalist agitation, the personal presence of the king in India and his announcement of his Durbar Boon also raised British constitutional questions. For perhaps the last time in the history of the constitutional monarchy of Great Britain, the king was effectively able to decree legislation and to perform, personally, what were in fact the decisions of elected, responsible representatives and ministers. Because of this, the Durbar Boon presented the problem of a political decision which was unreviewable and unmodifiable: 'This is the King's will, and it is final' (Reed 1912: 166). But, more broadly, the king gained some real personal prestige and increase in his informal influence from this. By imperialists like Reed, George V's apparently personal gesture was hailed as the height of statesmanship and knowledge of the needs of India: 'His Imperial Majesty ... gauged much more correctly than many who have passed the best years of their life in [India] the real feelings of myriad people of India and their sentiments toward the Throne' (Reed 1912: 294). In this, admittedly hyperbolic, paean to royal power, the king's 'judgement' rules over all the expertise – whatever it may have consisted in – of colonial officials, and over all the proprieties of Britain's domestic parliamentary government.

The divided political goals of the durbar, aiming at both ceremonial aggrandizement and practical political manoeuvre, were thus entangled in the royal majesty of the king, his personal presence and his powers of pronouncement – all of which is hard to square with the high claims for the rationality of the colonial mission, both contemporary partisan ones and more recent theoretical ones. Stanley Reed's account of the durbar, once again, distills the tenor of the imperialist argument:

What was signified by the presence here of His Imperial Majesty, the King, Emperor of India? ... Surely none other than this – the bond of Empire is the Crown! ... The monarchy has drawn unto itself those steel threads of sentiment and interest which knit the empire into a whole, one and indivisible. ... To India, in special degree, the Crown is the orifice of unity. (Reed 1912: 157)

Historians and anthropologists have long analysed this special ritualism of colonial states and interrogated how performances such as the durbar, and their motivating ideologies of colonial difference and civilizational supremacy, are connected to the practical, governmental operation of colonial power: its ordering of colonial society and culture (see Cohn 1996, and below). Moreover, the political revival of the British monarchy in the context of colonial expansion has been an important aspect of studies focused on the anti-democratic impact of imperialism, both domestically and overseas (e.g., Ranger 1980; Bayly 1989; Cannadine 2001). There is no doubt that spectacular ceremonies and the more routine dignified receptions that were central to imperial statecraft together staged and motivated racial categories of understanding, fostered a position of civilizational and aristocratic privilege among colonizers and seemed to confirm Orientalist knowledge of colonized cultures and of non-European principles of political order, which were an important part of colonial control.

In this vein, much work on colonial states pursues and advances Michel Foucault's core insight into disciplinary power – that the signs of power and participation in society changed with the growth of rational, governmental institutions, as power itself became productive and intervened directly and micrologically in the scenes of entrainment and discipline rather than standing, splendidly, apart from the management of everyday social life. 'For the marks that once indicated status, privilege, and affiliation', Foucault writes, 'were increasingly replaced – or at least supplemented – by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body'. This does not imply the final triumph of reason, but rather is a new configuration of disciplinary power and rational knowledge of 'norms', that combines 'the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth' in locations throughout the social body, whether colonial or metropolitan (Foucault 1977: 184).

All the pomp and proclamation of the durbar is, however, hard to square with this conception of power-knowledge, particularly because it rested on no secure governmental knowledge, no assessment of the acceptability or particular meaning of such rituals to those whom they were supposed to address, and indeed was more often justified by a tissue of assumptions, assessments and personal prejudices about the effectiveness of ceremony and the appeal of royal power. Moreover, the personal presence of the king made the whole affair of the 1911 durbar a nervous one, marked by regular fears of 'anarchist' threat to the king's body. These fears arose from

worry about the very nationalist movements that demanded the revocation of the partition of Bengal. And this indicates that there was a central paradox in the combination of ritual and political logics in this durbar: the principal Durbar Boon, the revocation of partition, aimed to address the demands of a movement which colonial officers just as often dismissed as not representing 'true' Indians. The boon itself thus aimed to communicate with urban, educated, politically active Indians – the very stratum of the population that the durbar form, in its logic and performance, tried to ignore and circumvent by constituting instead a mass of awed subjects and loyal princes and nobles.

As others have pointed out in different terms, the secrecy, fear, doubt and anxiety that suffused colonial relations can only poorly be accommodated in any account of rational procedure and positive knowledge (see, for example, Cooper 1994; Prakash 2002). As Ann Stoler has said, critically, 'much of colonial studies over the past decade has worked from the shared assumption that the mastery of reason, rationality, and the inflated claims for Enlightenment principles have been at the political foundation of colonial regimes and should be at the center of critical histories of them' (2009: 57). By contrast, for Stoler the mastery of affect and the management of dangerous intimacies should take precedence (2009: 70).

In fact, as Roy Dilley has argued (Dilley 2007, and this volume), the progress of knowledge in colonial governmentality was always paralleled by the production of zones of ignorance, indistinction and obscurity, which allowed the intimacies of everyday colonial life to continue beneath the edifice of colonial difference and distance, while the norms and proprieties of the latter reasserted themselves in violent refusals of recognition and engagement. Likewise, George Steinmetz's (2007) work on German ethnography and Danilyn Rutherford's (2009) considerations of colonial 'sympathy' trace how systematic distortions in knowledge and relationality, characteristic of imperial bureaucracies, were crafted in sumptuary and excessive ritual performances – as distinct from Foucault's routinized 'rituals' of examination and punishment – and through fantasies of both colonial intimacy and imperial status. These studies have shown that individuals and institutions within the colonial state worked to constitute, and reconstitute, absences in the fabric of governmental knowledge, and pursued personal projects of status-exaltation and a symbolics of relation through blood and honour, as much as they pursued rational control over the processes and populations of the colony. This is not to imply that colonial states simply or directly

repeat antique forms of power and privilege; as Steinmetz is careful to explain, the important point is that both colonial and metropolitan ritual forms and symbolic identifications were distorted, reshaped, and made to serve 'imaginary' projects of imperializing distance, status exaltation and control over others (Steinmetz 2007: 45–65). Together, these scholars show how imperial ritual performances shaped daily interactions, allowed both intimacy and disavowal, and produced anxious cross-identifications, indicating that a ritualized regime of ignorance might be as important an aspect of colonialism as its forms of knowledge.²

Sociologically speaking, ignorance is as productive as its better-analysed obverse, and equally integrated into social regimes of power. As Georg Simmel puts a related point in his essay on secrecy, 'reciprocal knowledge, which is the positive condition of social relationships, is not the sole condition. On the contrary, such as those relationships are, they actually presuppose also a certain nescience, a ratio, that is immeasurably variable to be sure, of reciprocal concealment' (Simmel 1906: 448). It may be clichéd, but true, to say that imperial bureaucracies were characterized by routine ignorance, disregard and simple lack of interest in knowing the colonized; it remains to be seen how such systematic ignorance was promoted and produced in rituals of display and excess like the durbar.

That is, far from Enlightenment principles and rational government, or micrological discipline and 'ceremonies' of experimentation – far even from the constitutional standards of British democracy – the secrecy surrounding the king's boon and the constant rumours and frights of a nationalist threat, as have been described above, indicate an imperial economy of knowledge and ignorance in which the Crown played a special role as a fetish. That is, both as a legal device of governmental unity and as a social role personally invested in one man, the Crown came to bear a special power: not only to symbolize the unity of the imperial state as a political body, but also to obscure real, positive governmental knowledge about the needs and interests which gathered in the other body of the colonial state, among Indians in their diverse communities and situations.

In this chapter I interpret a 'symptomatic' text of such fetishism, a pamphlet entitled *The Coronation Durbar and after* (Scotus 1911), that was published shortly before the king sailed to India – before the Durbar Boon was even known – and which, in its recapitulation (in almost satiric form) of the most hackneyed tropes of imperialist monarchism, anticipates many of the turns taken by the actual durbar and its staging of power and difference. By interpreting this

anonymous text in light of the Freudian account of fetishism, I aim to understand the dynamics of power-ignorance in imperial contexts and to account for the sovereign meanings and forms of representation which gave the durbar and the other ritual forms of the colonial state their evident efficacy and reach, despite their distance from any rational routine of power. The imperial fetishism I aim to describe and analyse, then, operates a kind of secrecy and concealment which has a real governmental efficacy and relies on a ratio of ignorance that situates other people in proximity to power (see Kirsch, this volume).

More broadly, I am interested in the metaphysics of the British Crown, as they were personified and substantialized in the Coronation Durbar, and as they contributed to the making of an imperial state. At the height of British colonialism, the Crown's imperial titles incorporated difference into the body of the sovereign, and made the Crown the organizing symbol and site of a fetishistic representation of otherness within the state. This aspect of the Crown was realized both ritually and juridically in the durbar, as is reinforced by the argument presented by the pamphlet *The Coronation Durbar and after* (Scotus 1911). This sovereign representative function marks a limit to theories that would dissolve all the reality of state power – colonial or liberal – into micrological, distributed knowledge-practices (see Mitchell 1999). In short, despite what has been learned over the past several decades about the modernity and governmentality of colonial states, and of liberal states more generally, the operation of even the most micrological, disciplinary and governmentalized state power is not entirely captured by tabulated knowledge and bureaucratic routine, but also involves representations and performances on a social scale, shaped and normed in fantasmatic scenes, which distort and obscure just as they attract, incite participation, shape ideas and motivate practices.⁷

By thinking through the highly particular contexts of imperial ritual and the ways in which the British Crown was employed to accommodate and represent colonial difference, this study further aims to contribute to understanding of the current and ongoing operation of sovereign power in those liberal states which share the legal and cultural inheritance of the British Empire. In closing, then, I examine briefly how a fetishistic image of the Crown has been re-animated in the context of First Nations' land-claims in Canada, at once marking and perpetuating an active ignorance of cultural difference within practices of liberal recognition, and buttressing imperial relations of power.

Scotus Indigena and Native Authority

In advance of the king's departure from Britain for the Coronation Durbar, a pseudonymous pamphlet appeared in London with the title *The Coronation Durbar and after*, written by someone calling himself 'Scotus Indigena'.⁴ The most immediate domestic context for Scotus' pamphlet was the British domestic democratic crisis in 1909–1911 spurred by the 'People's Budget'. David Lloyd George, the Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, had introduced a budget, supported by the nascent Labour Party, that introduced extensive welfare provisions and raised taxes on income and land. It met vigorous resistance from the Conservative Party and the hereditary House of Lords (full of wealthy landowners). Though the elected House of Commons easily passed Lloyd George's budget, the struggle to get it passed through the Lords raised questions about the maintenance of the hereditary principle in a democratic country, and spurred not one but two elections on the issue of the 'powers of the Lords' in 1910. Although this crisis was resolved with the Parliament Act, 1911 – which removed the Lords' ability to effectively veto certain bills – it had raised constitutional problems of which Scotus, and no doubt others, were reminded with the prospect of a great festival of monarchical privilege and imperialist propaganda in India (Thornton 1959: 264ff.). Confronted, in the political culture of his day, with a crisis of democratic legitimation, anti-democratic arguments for aristocratic and hereditary privileges and insistent pressure for maintenance of the empire and the Imperial Crown, Scotus offers a comprehensive solution that will at one stroke settle Britain's empire in a permanent political relation to the English Crown (as he calls it), and secure democracy in a Britain rid of monarchy.

In this pamphlet, Scotus first undertakes a brief review of the reign of foreign kings in India, leading to the depredations of the British East India Company, and ending with the 'dethroning' of this mercantile 'John Company' and the 'British Monarch [being] placed in the 'vacant room' of Indian sovereignty (Scotus 1911: 6). As is usual in accounts of this type, Scotus explains away the sparks of Indian anti-colonial animus, which blazed forth in the great Uprising, or Mutiny, of 1857, as the direct results of the misrule of the East India Company. The 'direct sovereignty' of the Crown in India after 1858 is said to herald the advent of a new era of beneficent imperialism. Ultimately, Scotus says, the invention some twenty years later – in 1877 – of the title 'Empress of India' for Queen Victoria by Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli both confirmed the new role that the Queen played in Indian government

through her directly appointed ministers and radically transformed the nature of the Crown itself. For Scotus, Disraeli's fantastic imperial imagination unmoored the Crown from its own proper corporate body – 'England' – and 'linked the Royal House with the great dependency [India] by a new chain which was independent of England' (ibid.: 7–8). Thus, 'When George of England takes his place on the "Peacock Throne" of Delhi it will be (in the eyes of all India) as the successor of Akbar'. Moreover, George V's visit recalls, and even repeats, the triumph of royal legitimacy and grace over the 'reign of the fraudulent merchants ... from which the Emperor has delivered his country' (ibid.: 14, parentheses in original). Scotus' collapse of a century's worth of colonial history into one moment of sovereign grace should be noted (this important passage will be discussed further below).

Immediately, Scotus asks and answers the pertinent question, from the British and democratic point of view: 'And what place is there in all this for the British House of Commons? For alternating Secretaries of State who owe their position to the voters of Peckham or Tony Pandey [sic]? For the army of Civil Servants recruited annually in London? Very little' (Scotus 1911: 14). With the Parliament Act only recently passed, Scotus sees the access of democracy in Britain at hand, to be realized as simple majority rule and a sovereign House of Commons. But something stands in the way of this realization: the Crown – not merely as a juristic fiction for the corporate body of the state, but as a real monarchy occupied by a chain of hereditary succession. The royal prerogative – the Crown in its personal guise – was directly at issue in the two elections held in 1910 (part of the reason that the Liberals had to 'go to the people' twice was because Edward VII died and George V ascended to the throne, and it was thought impossible to commit one monarch to the compromises of his predecessor, whatever the mystical unity and imperishability of the Crown). Indeed, whether a royal power could remain at the heart of a democratic system is, as Scotus frames it, the real issue at hand in the debate over the powers of the Lords. He writes that all the attacks on the Lords were nothing more than veiled attacks on the Crown and the hereditary principle; Keir Hardie, the leader of the Labour Party, 'has told us more than once in the past year that the Crown is in danger' (ibid.: 23).

Scotus' satirical imagination projects, then, a pathway to pure democracy for Britain. Over time, 'the democracy has shewn itself the serpent of Moses and has devoured its partners', aristocracy and monarchy (1911: 15). Scotus writes that 'Nothing now can preserve the Monarchy' in England, and yet that there will be no fighting, no upheaval, for the Crown now has a place to go where it is needed and can

retain its imperial titles (ibid.: 27). 'India needs ... strong personal government', he says, trotting out one of the oldest fictions of the Oriental need for despotism: 'It is one of the beneficent coincidences of history that at the very moment when the East is clamouring for the King the West has ceased to desire his presence' (ibid.: 28). Scotus' image of an imperial future for the Crown deserves to be quoted at length:

The loss of his island-home will set the [English] Emperor of India free to devote his whole energies to his vast eastern dominions ... [.] Egypt, the Sudan, Uganda, and British East Africa will naturally throw in their lot with India. The People [of England] have no wish to administer any of them and they are far too feeble to stand alone. Provincial autonomy under the Kaiser-i-Hind will settle the Egyptian question for a century at least. Southern Persia and Arabia will inevitably form part of the Emperor's dominions ... In this way that portion of the world that lies between China and the Sahara, and between the Himalayas and the African Lakes will form a single independent Empire.

What all this means for the world's history can only be guessed at yet. But it is evident that the ancient homes of civilization will have their chance to win back all the glory of their past. No longer under the obsession of cheap western atheistic 'science' they will develop freely on their own lines. From the Irrawaddy [in Burma] to the Nile, art, literature and philosophy will enter a new course, destined in all human probability to eclipse the splendours of antiquity. (Scotus Indigena 1911: 28–30, paragraphing altered)

Scotus magnanimously envisions Britain surrendering the Crown in order to concentrate on democracy and industry. Meanwhile, he suggests, the Crown will work to unify a vast, polytheistic dominion of arts and beauty. What a dream! He asserts that the one thing the East needs to realize its desire for independence – Scotus acknowledges that calls for home rule are already in his time a feature of Indian politics – is an English king, and by granting that wish Britain will secure democracy at home, while retaining the prestige and goodwill built up by its empire abroad.

Ironically, given that this is at least on the surface a republican argument, what is preserved in this solution is the aura of potency and majesty around the Crown. The Crown is in danger, Scotus declares – indeed, the crux of his argument is that the recent constitutional crisis focused on the Lords in fact imperilled the Crown. At first, it is not clear why that should be a problem in an argument that explicitly aims at a non-monarchical constitution for Britain. Indeed, what Scotus Indigena saw as a solution to differential political needs of West and East was plainly impossible: neither imperialists nor Indian nationalists could accept the sundering of the Crown's connection with Britain only to install an English emperor on the throne of Delhi

government, different claims of power. That is, the durbar-form never lapses, in Apter's account, into purely stereotyped and repetitive action, but rather is reproduced under new regimes with all its representational force and cultural and political power intact.

Apter thus demonstrates the incredible productivity of such spectacles and rituals, creating representations of culture and interweaving them with power and meaning in ways which ultimately lie beyond truth or falsity, and certainly have little to do with the inculcation of their representations of culture, as subjective truth, through discipline or entrainment. Apter demonstrates how historical myths and claims of status forcefully operate to bar a more embracing collective consciousness of political interdependency, while at the same time returning as uncanny and artificial doubles of a 'true' shared culture in later performances. His account, like the Comaroffs' recent study of the ongoing commercialization of the 'traditional' forms of rule in South Africa as 'brands' and corporate structures, indicates that in colonial and postcolonial royal rites alike new sites and opportunities for power are created exactly at the point where the obscurity of real, positive knowledge is at its greatest – where cultural meaning is most condensed into representations and symbols of 'custom' (Apter 2004: 187; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). The problem with all the colonial misrecognitions deployed in the durbars he studies is not, for Apter, the fact that they obscure some hidden, true, 'native' culture residing behind all the abusive stereotypes. That is, colonial durbars did not only reflect and ratify stereotypes and alibis of culture, covering over a real power exercised elsewhere; they also promised intimacy with, even incorporation of, difference and a mode of rule which could commensurate between distinct political rationalities and traditions. This imperial logic could be appropriated and reproduced under different regimes, but at the cost of also reproducing the general economy of colonial representations which first structured it: a kind of governmental intimacy and control are both won at the cost a more extensive knowledge of, and relational engagement with, others, in a cycle of repetitions (with a difference) in which representations, and aspects of the imperial subject, are continuously detached, estranged and awkwardly attached to others (Derrida 1976: 80).

To trace the substitutions and reifications that matter to him, Apter uses a Marxian vocabulary, based in the notion of the commodity fetish. My analysis of the durbar-form and its symbolic potency in colonial India and imperial Britain, by contrast, turns on the Freudian account of fetishism, which offers a different way to account for a

(though perhaps a Scot could). But in what he offers up as a solution and what he protects and maintains, Scotus' odd diagnosis of the political ills and prospects of the English Emperor in India reveals a more comprehensive logic structuring the practice of imperial ritual, and more generally characteristic of the operation of imperial power-ignorance. In the fetishistic logic of this argument, moreover, the Crown will continue in India to incite loyalty and secure the benefices of civilization through grace and majesty. What the nineteenth century constitutional thinker Walter Bagehot (1966) called the 'dignified' aspect of the constitution, as opposed to its 'efficient' machinery of parliamentary democracy and Cabinet rule, can be both destroyed and preserved, both disavowed and kept alive, by the simple expedient of displacing this prime symbol and all its ritual onto some other people in India.

Beyond Power-Knowledge

Imperial rituals like the durbar have long been understood to be performances where notions of political and cultural difference were ratified and rationalized and the 'native subject' was recruited into a dramaturgy of colonial knowledge and meaning (Gluckman 1940; Cohn 1983; Haynes 1990). As Caduff (this volume) stresses in a different context, however, it is important neither to overstate the rationality of these processes that link power and interest to an economy of knowledge, nor to assume that these processes contribute to the reproduction of a stable hierarchy of power. In this regard, Andrew Apter's (2004: 121–200) account of the uses of colonial ritual in Nigeria is very useful, for clearing some ground and in the description it offers of a distinctively colonial culture revealed in such rituals. Further, Apter traces the often unexpected uses of ceremonialized tradition within diverse governing programmes in postcolonial Nigeria, from the crafting of a unitary 'national' culture to the extractive programme of the contemporary oil economy.

Apter starts from the well-known abstractions and ethnocentrism of colonial knowledge and the reification of culture in the form of governmentalized tradition, processes which he locates in the ritual machinery of indirect rule. But Apter goes on to demonstrate that just because the durbar-form – which was deployed in Africa, Fiji and throughout the British Empire – offered objectified performances of cultural difference, this does not mitigate the alternative uses to which such durbars could be put, even now, in service of different forms of

general economy of representations that is centred on a symbol of power – the Crown – that ‘itself’ actively distributes rights and obligations and situates subjects in relation to its ritualized force. Though the Freudian and the Marxian accounts of fetishism are thoroughly entangled in most modern thought, and both offer insights into the production of meaning and difference (see Apter and Peitz 1993), the Freudian model offers a more fruitful analytic contrast to the notion of ‘power-knowledge’ which might otherwise be employed in the task of understanding imperial rituals and their orchestration of wider relations of authority, intimacy and control.

Fetishism and the Maintenance of Ignorance

One standard avenue of critique of Orientalist schemas like those offered by Scotus, with their attribution of a feminine lack or need to the colonized and a masculine potency and presence – of democracy, of reason – to the colonizer, aims to show that the ‘native subject’ is ‘fetishized’ in a quite particular, and erroneous, sense: abstract knowledge is reified or fixed at the site where difference and relationality *really* are. The sexual fetishist cannot see what ‘the woman’ is, which is simply *different* (Bernheimer 1993: 81), and that difference is obscured by the powerful invention of the fetish. The fetish, then, is pure representation – ‘not an atom of matter’ makes its way into the completed and mystifying commodity fetish in Marx’s much quoted, and often misunderstood, terms from *Capital*, Volume I.⁶ The analyst’s task is purely investigative: to get behind these misrepresentations to the true person or relation covered over by them. The key assumption in such deployments of fetishism in service of critique is that new positive knowledge can then act against unreal and occluding fantasies.

However, in any close reading of fetishism, the relations of occlusion and mutual dependence between (abstract, misrecognized) knowledge and material symbol or body are more intimate and complex than such a critique, with its faith in knowledge, can encompass – the fetish is productive and it gains a power over those who fetishize it, in part precisely because of the way it materially stands in the place of disavowed relations and obscures a real aporia, a permanent doubt and worry, about the source of power (Tausig 1993). In Freud’s account, specifically, the fetish is constructed to displace an initially disavowed (and false) knowledge of difference, and fetishism thus produces a real presence to maintain the occlusion of an erroneous, but persecutory, knowledge of power and difference.

Most importantly for a Freudian critique of colonial knowledge relations, the fetish and what it preserves and disavows are all bound by their prior formation in an experience of power – not only by desire or symbolic processes of displacement. Briefly, the Freudian account – complete with a one-sided focus on the male child – goes thus: the male child has a sexual theory, in which all people have a penis just like his (see Freud 1959 [1908]: 215); his theory – since it is erroneous – is threatened when he catches a glimpse of female genitals; finally, his interpretation of what he thinks he sees (an absence), and his consequent panicked anxiety about his own genitals, forces him to construct a fictive replacement for this apparent absence – the maternal phallus results. In a secondary step, this maternal phallus – the thought of the sight of which is equally terrifying and enticing – provides the energy for investing incredible sexual power in the most mundane of objects, which stand as replacements and imitations of it (I leave aside Freud’s own unconvincing narrative of how this second step happens) (Freud 1961).

It is essential for the logical coherence of this account that the child has already entered the castration complex, which only flowers fully in this moment of anatomical curiosity. His innocent pleasure in his own penis must already have been threatened by the sanction of paternal power: ‘He will have been detected in [autoerotic play] by his parents or nurse and terrorized by the threat of having his penis cut off’, Freud writes (1959: 215, emphasis mine). It is the (male) child’s narcissistic attachment to his own penis that motivates the formation and projection of the maternal phallus as a terrifying, ghostly image of what he thinks he saw. When he discerns what, from his point of view, is the absence of a penis, he seeks some cause for this lack in the real world that he, so far, knows; the cause he finds is a political one, having to do with paternal power. The mother, the boy thinks, must have had her penis removed at some point, and the only person in his social world with the power to do this is the father. The boy hypothesizes a social power as physical violence – and according to Freud, he develops a ‘sadistic view of coition’ to go along with the fully fledged castration complex (1959: 220). It could be said that Freud begs the question of paternal power – he assumes it as a sociological reality. Or rather, it might be said (more in the spirit of the hypothetical narrative as Freud offers it) that the child is already possessed of a political theory against which he tests his erroneous theory of sexual difference, and in which he finds the latter’s confirmation.

In short, the Freudian fetish helps the subject remain in a state of ignorance or infantile refusal to see difference. For Freud, the

'unwelcome fact' (as he calls it) of the mother's castration is what must be obscured, and no amount of insistence that the mother is simply different will challenge that need, for the subject's allegiance to the truth of his theory – his positive ignorance – is sustained by a wider economy of substitutions, displacements and representations, satisfying his insatiable emotional demands. On this account, what matters is not what lies behind the fetish (since there is nothing there) but what it productively obscures about the subject's own, more fundamental relation to power.

Further, the fetishist operates a powerful network of things that stand for what he thinks he knows and obscure what he has only glimpsed, and this economy of meaningful things affects not only himself but also all those who are in relation to him. Thus, read in a certain way, the Freudian account of sexual fetishization offers another avenue of critique of imperial and colonial forms of knowledge and the state power which they buttress. Read through Freud, imperial fetishism is not only a matter of misplaced concreteness – reifying that which was originally flexible and relational (see, for example, Dirks 2001). Rather, a fetishized state power, invested in a material symbol which is itself a displacement of political relations (the Crown, the King), fills a space carved out by the refusal to recognize any difference.

A theory of power, an imagined threat and a fantasised presence result in the displacement of positive knowledge of (sexual) difference and through this, the symbolization of (paternal) power in the phallus. The phallus, moreover, which is the kernel of the achieved fetish, is a construct that is fully detachable and mobile, and condenses an understanding of power, an experience of difference and an anxious assumption of threat. This phallic complex, of which the fetish is only one particularly powerful condensation, filters all later positive knowledge, giving especially but not exclusively sexual knowledge its particular affective colouring and, in the extreme, maintaining a positive ignorance in the face of all contrary evidence.

In all Freud's examples, the fetish withstands the test of reality, and the fetishist's fixation on a substitute for the (non-existent) maternal phallus is only reinforced by later, actual knowledge about anatomy. Freud goes so far as to say – and the point is a good one – that when the young fetishist learns at school that the clitoris and the penis derive from the same fundamental embryonic structure, his notion of the maternal phallus is confirmed by that scientific, positive knowledge (Freud 1959: 217). Fetishism remains as a screen and an interpretive guide, even to later, positive knowledge, which, however detailed

it may be, can only reaffirm the fantasied power relations that have taken up residence in this special symbol.

As Freud later puts it, the 'horror of castration sets up a sort of permanent memorial to itself' by creating this substitute'. The fetish 'remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it' (Freud 1961: 154). And he also points out here the political power of this complex quite exactly: 'In later life a grown man may perhaps experience a similar panic when the cry goes up that Throne and Altar are in danger, and similar illogical consequences will ensue' (ibid.: 153).

Freud's account of fetishism, then, provides one answer to the question of how power and non-knowledge are put together, as ignorance. He links the occlusion of knowledge of difference to the subject's dawning understanding of paternal power, and proposes one pathway by which a positively maintained ignorance and power together take form and circulate in a persecutory symbol of difference. If this account is taken as the germ of a theory of the formation of representations of social differences – such as were staged and reinforced in the performance of the Coronation Durbar – then the way out of this fetishistic ignorance is not education or information, more and better knowledge of difference, but rather analysis of the distorted representations and material symbols in which difference and power are put together in the first place. Moreover, the central importance for critique of the colonial fetish no longer rests on its reification and misrepresentation of 'native' society, but lies within a theory of sovereignty which structures relations with the colonized society in the first place. The idea that the Crown and its powers can most immediately and best be employed overseas, then, represents the symptom of a more comprehensive imperial fetishism, around which is organized a whole structure of relations of displacement and representation, displayed and strengthened in rituals like the Durbar.

The Crown in India

Scotus' solution to the problem of democracy at home and empire abroad, in which the Hanoverian king will take his place on the throne of Delhi and British democracy can continue on its productive path, is probably more than half-satiric, although there are some very interestingly argued passages. But precisely because of this note of satire, of withholding of real investment – I would venture – it reveals an

anxious desire to ignore the more deeply rooted violence and inequity of empire. This pamphlet thus offers the possibility of interpreting, in new ways, the more vivid, and perhaps more successful, fixed and fetishistic disavowals and displacements in the Coronation Durbar, and in imperial rule more generally. For Scotus helps to define how these rituals licensed a deep incuriosity and ignorance about the real political processes of India, while buttressing imperial relations of authority and evading the complexities of representation 'at home'.

In her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Gayatri Spivak points out that the Foucauldian account of micrological power operating in knowledge-institutions and in disciplinary relations, for all of its theoretical and political strengths, is inadequate for understanding imperialism and its incorporation of bodies and territories into a 'monstrous and misshapen' state (Spivak 1999: 279). She argues that the anatomist of power in miniature is so focused on schools, workhouses, prisons and asylums that he misses the colonial 'theaters' (her word) where sovereignty operated on the gross anatomy of the world as a whole through the medium of spectacular (mis)representations. According to Spivak, the Foucauldian account of power-knowledge, in its focus on positive knowledge-claims and the silent elicitation of mimetic obedience, only perpetuates 'the sanctioned ignorance that every critic of imperialism must chart' (ibid.: 279), and she recommends instead that we examine again the 'double session' of political representation in colonial contexts – the mutual implication in any act of representation, aesthetic or political, of both 'portrait', or imitation, and 'proxy', or substitution. Spivak's analysis of the aporetic relation between proxy and portrait in colonial representations further supports the usefulness of the Freudian fetish, with its own structure of anxiety, mimesis and displacement, for interpreting the power of imperial rituals.

In his account of domestic struggles over the Parliament Act and the power of the House of Lords, Scotus Indigena indicates that the British attachment to their own king was, indeed, threatened in this period. Scotus saw a republic in the offing; he wrote, 'Democracy has shewn itself the serpent of Moses', a magical beast that devoured its partners, 'aristocracy and monarchy' (Scotus Indigena 1911: 15). Later he says that 'Keir Hardie', the Labour leader, 'is the Marat of the Liberals ... Keir Hardie has told us more than once in the past year that the Crown is in danger' (ibid.: 23). Finally, he says, 'Nothing can now preserve the Monarchy' (ibid.: 27) – except, he finally insists, that the king leave England with his imperial crown and form a new and even broader empire, away from Britain. And yet, reciprocally, if the

British people now want only to represent themselves democratically, and to invest in industry and progress (as Scotus defines the goal), they still need the imperial crown elsewhere, disavowed and banished but retaining its full sovereign potency, to contain and control difference – to sequester arts and civilization on the banks of the Indus, as it were. This phallic fantasy thus composes a global political order without lack, absence, exclusion or any trace of violence.

Meanwhile, in the history of Indian rulers that Scotus sketches, though 'Hindu and Musselman' were 'welded into a single constitution' at a very early date, this too is the heroic achievement of kings and emperors (Scotus 1911: 4–5). He credits Akbar with a signal act of unification, which was simply repeated by the British Crown when it assumed the imperial title over India in 1877. As has been discussed above, Scotus marks the adoption by Queen Victoria of the royal style 'Empress of India' as the real moment of importance in the 'chain' of events linking the British Crown to India, rather than either the arrival of commercial adventurers more than a century earlier or the 'dethroning' of John Company after the disruptive and violent political events of 1857–1858. Further, Scotus' displacement of the beginning of the relation between Crown and India to 1877 – although royal charters and noble titles were part of the colonial government of India from the start – establishes that, perhaps unsurprisingly, the problems of colonial legitimacy – not least as they were posed by company rule and then by the Indian Mutiny – stand as the disavowed content of the imperial fetish. Indeed, Scotus introduces his whole discussion of what ties Britain to India with the revealing comment, 'over the doings of the East India Company ... the patriotic Englishman would gladly draw a veil' (ibid.: 6) – the Crown, precisely, is the veil which hides the imperial history of violence, and the ongoing maintenance of this fiction requires that this very part of the 'English' political structure be imaginarily surrendered to the colonial Other.

As was discussed at the start of this chapter, the whole ceremony of the Durbar was orchestrated to aggrandize imperial power and place it serenely above the scene of nationalist politics in India, while at the same time serving the policy needs of the colonial government. Following the accepted protocols of constitutional monarchy, the king's proclamation was carefully drafted to include acknowledgment of these complexities: 'We are pleased to announce to our people that on the advice of our Ministers ... we have decided upon the transfer of the seat of the Government of India', the proclamation began (George 1912: 120, emphasis mine). But a crucial problem was thus dissimulated – in order to secure the political effect desired from his

proclamation, the king himself had to assume in his own person the constituted power of democratic British government, to personally decide on and proclaim his Durbar Boon, and in so doing to summarize and represent the interests of his colonial subjects, thus collapsing the proxy and the portrait in the double session of representation and obscuring any real difference between India's interests and those of a British constitutional monarch.

Scotus solves simultaneously both of the problems of knowledge and responsibility implicated in this double session of colonial representation: both political representation, or 'proxy', and the arduous procedures of compiling intimate and detailed knowledge of the colonial political body, or 'portrait', are – in his account – routed through a theory of the power of the Crown, supplemented by his imagination of what the personal presence of the king will achieve, once he finds his proper home in India. The problem of how to secure democracy at home and empire abroad is resolved in a fetishistic disavowal and displacement – and not only the primal violence of conquest, but also the threat of revolution and violence at home are thus warded off. 'There will be no fighting', Scotus says, as he imagines the Crown travelling, with the king, away to India (Scotus 1911: 27–28). Most centrally, this solution – whether in the durbar's resolution of a sticky problem of 'Indian statesmanship', or in Scotus' answer to the future of the empire – involves no knowledge, curiosity or inquiry into what Indians may, historically and collectively, desire, what future they may shape for themselves. When it comes to positive knowledge and governmental efficacy, all one needs to know is that the Crown is the problem at home (too present) and the solution abroad – covering over a problematic lack of sovereign self-representation – and hence it need only be removed from one site and affixed to another to make all complexities disappear.

This path of ignorance comports, as a political solution to a vexed problem of knowledge and representation, with the prevarications of liberal discourse about the imperial mission. Many eminent liberal theorists – notably John Stuart Mill and Henry Maine – had addressed themselves to what Scotus likewise saw as the contradiction between the (increasingly) liberal constitution of England, grounded in theories of natural rights to political self-representation, and the maintenance of monarchical power in Britain's colonial possessions. The character-istic theoretical resolution was developed by Mill, for whom political rights were the gift of civilization, not of nature, and India's political freedoms therefore were to be deferred until India was trained up, had become a mature political community capable of self-government, a

process of which colonialism was in fact the handmaiden. According to Uday Singh Mehta, this liberal tradition – in its relation to India, and before the later imperialist theorization of 'indirect rule' as a basis of colonial legitimacy – 'is virtually unified in its view regarding the absence of political community in India and, more generally, in the colonies. This absence and the redress that the empire purportedly supplies for it is the mainstay of the liberal justification of the empire: India is in a condition of tutelage' (Mehta 1999: 162). While few political theorists followed the path of Scotus, recommending the ultimate disjuncture of liberal constitutionalism from the Crown, and Empire, in order to preserve both, his pamphlet nevertheless represents the fullest working out of a logic of an imperial fetishism that is implicit in the liberal theorization of empire. As Mehta puts it, the will to power that liberals ... express[ed] for the empire [was] always as a beneficent compensation for someone else's powerlessness relative to a more elevated order' (Mehta 1999: 191). The Crown came to represent the fetishistic resolution to the problems of the putative political difference of the colonized, and the vexed issues of similitude and difference that the liberal theory raised were thus resolved – not solely by pedagogical deferral, but also by entrusting all colonial beneficence to the Crown itself.

The reading that is offered here of the Freudian account of fetishism and of Scotus Indigena helps us understand this last claim about the relation of liberal power to knowledge of someone else's powerlessness. For Scotus, the fantastic political theory which links the Crown to India absolves Britain of its own remaining (undemocratic) tie to monarchy, at the same moment as it situates India in permanent subservience to a British king. It is not the abusive account of India's lack of autonomous history that matters here, but the insertion of a fictive 'chain ... independent of England' which links the British Crown with India, for it allows Scotus to acknowledge both India's powerlessness in the imperial structure and the ways in which this was produced, while absolving British democracy of all responsibility, past or future – even, indeed, situating direct, imperial control over India as the salvation of India's own powers. This disregard of the ethical problems presented by any imperial power, in favour of a narcissistic pursuit of democracy at home, underscores the fetishistic structure of colonial rule. As Freud (1961) makes clear, the medical and ethical problem of fetishism is not to be found in the devious route by which the fetishist's satisfaction is achieved; rather, the need for treatment comes from the fact that such satisfaction comes at the expense of the conscious participation of others, who are reduced to mere possessors, or

wearers, of displaced sexual attributes over the use of which they have no control. The fetishist denies the subjects of his sexual fantasies any of their own autonomy or personhood.

However, the fetish itself retains immense and persecutory power over the fetishist, if actual women (and men) are left as mute objects. It need only be noted that Queen Victoria was styled 'Empress of India' – not 'British Empress', a conjunction of democratic Britishness and imperial titles that Scotus admits was 'unthinkable' (1911: 12) – to see the fetishistic reversals in play in actual British imperialism. Materially speaking, the imperial crown – the physical object – is as much India's possession as is, imaginarily, the legal and notional 'Imperial Crown' (it should be recalled that Indian revenues paid to fabricate the bejewelled Imperial Crown worn by George V in Delhi). This accords precisely with the fetishistic reversal in which the boy's own threatened phallus is attributed to the newly punishing and super-powerful Mother to cover the absence he thinks he sees – the fearsome and repulsive power invested in this fantasised 'phallus-out-of-place' is contained and domesticated in the fetish, which then the boy holds onto and cherishes (George V's Indian crown was returned to Britain, for safekeeping, after the Coronation Durbar).

Was domestic democracy actually threatened in Georgian Britain? Perhaps. Was imperial power less secure than it seemed? Certainly. What is Scotus' solution? Grant the Crown to India and avert your gaze from the consequences! In place of knowledge of the colonial other and of the colonized society's relation of subordination to Britain's domestic democracy, a debased self-image, a distorted reflection of the British subject's own anxious relation to monarchical power, is put in its place. Thus, just as the sexual fetish is not primarily the result of any engagement with difference, but rather the contentless material sign of disavowal and displacement, so too is the imperial fetish empty. There is no proper body behind the maternal phallus, just as there is no political body behind Scotus' notion of the Imperial Crown. Because it is rooted in the castration complex, fetishism is first a result of power and a displacement of the fetishist's own panicked response to the threat of violence. What satisfies the fetishist is the way in which the fetish allows him both to maintain the theory that the violence which threatens him has already been expended elsewhere and to deny the consequences of that theory; ultimately, he is enabled by his fetishistic disavowal to order relations in such a way that paternal authority and his own emergent social power are both preserved, while knowledge of difference, and of a differently constituted world of social power, are each set beyond reach, endlessly obscured by the

false positivity of the maternal phallus and its persecutory powers of attraction.

Coda: The Afterlife of the Crown in Postcolonial Sovereignty

The fetishistic structure of ceremonies like the Coronation Durbar not only projected the incompleteness of the Indian body-politic which was the prime liberal justification for empire, but also licensed the exercise of personal power and decision, as seen in the king's pronouncement at the durbar. Finally, as later political theorists such as Harold Laski (1938) would point out, the modes of imperial administration rooted in such fetishistic love of power would rebound negatively on domestic politics. For Laski, witnessing the development of the administrative state in the 1930s and its suppression of political difference in the name of order, the 'habits of imperialism' threatened to overwrite the 'habits of democracy' in everyday governance (see Morefield 2009). In this, Laski's assessment of the consequences of the imperial monarchy was less happy, but perhaps more truthful, than Scotus Indigena's enthusiastic embrace of the imperial adventures of the Crown. Laski's diagnosis of the domestic perils of the Imperial Crown leads to a final analytic point of some relevance to the afterlife of the Crown in contemporary states: governmental administration is most powerfully productive, and most culpably ignorant of variety and difference within the political body, when it is joined, ritually and customarily, to a sovereign claim of total representation.

There is some evidence that the specific fetishistic and representative function of the British crown that has been examined here is now being revived in the internal colonial politics of settler societies like Canada and Australia. Or, at least, a similarly fetishistic fixation on the Crown as a political solution to problems of knowledge and difference can be discerned in recent Canadian jurisprudence of indigenous land claims, in which a medieval principle of the 'inherent honour of the Crown' has been revived so courts may more easily recognize the customary or traditional forms of belief and title which underlie First Nations' claims of rights.

The systematic misunderstanding and misinterpretation of indigenous notions of the sacred, of possession, and of rights in land in liberal law and political theory have been major topics of recent anthropological studies (see Kuppe 2009). Anthropologists are now well equipped, theoretically, to critique the positivism and powerful

productivity of legal knowledge (Povinelli 2002). In Canadian courts, this anthropological critique has been incorporated into ongoing legal reforms and creative jurisprudence around indigenous land claims. The kinds of documents and positive, expert knowledge previously demanded to support a land claim are now increasingly seen as perpetuating a form of legal violence, since such evidentiary procedures actually rest on the very treaties and legal forms of expropriation which sundered indigenous people from their land in the first place.

Marianna Valverde (2012) has explored some of the paradoxes of this 'appropriation' of anthropological critique into Canadian jurisprudence. She emphasizes that the critique has perhaps gone too far, and while courts have stopped requiring certain forms of evidentiary procedure in order to take a less time-consuming legal route to recognition and redress, they have had recourse to legal technicalities that may not have the desired effects. Resting their decisions on the doctrine of the 'honour of the Crown', judges can now impose duties on the state to administer land claims in the interests of indigenous people (however these interests may be defined) and can empower officials to exclude certain kinds of alternative uses of protected land, while avoiding the epistemic work of adjudicating between plural, different claims over land and finding points of comparison between radically different systems of tenure and rights. The Crown in this legal theory is at once necessarily higher and more authoritative than any actually existing government, and it is 'self-acting' – in the name of the Crown's honour, judges can impel and reconfigure relations between the state and its subjects, and evade the problems of commensuration internal to liberalism.

However appealing the use of this old legal doctrine for benevolent inclusion may be, the thrust of Valverde's critique is that such recourse to vague legal theories of metaphysical honour actually abrogates the very principles by which any limitation to power could be secured. When a jurist uses the 'inherent honour of the Crown' – the mystical and ever-present power of the Crown to fulfil its duties and act always rightly – in ordering consultation, recompense or other legal action, consequential constitutional divisions of powers, real histories of expropriation and violence and concrete claims for redress are all equally made impossible to cognize within the ambit of the law. In place of a careful acknowledgement of historical relations of unequal power and violence – with whatever, necessarily insufficient, evidence could be brought to bear to support this new form of recognition – there is instead an imaginary and self-acting duty to do right not only symbolized by but inherent to the sovereign. Thus, in new but very

familiar ways, juridical and democratic procedure and epistemological rigour are subsumed under a 'royal' fiat. Of course, in this case, it is not Queen Elizabeth or any of her successors who will have the power to invoke the Crown in this way; but who, personally, exercises the Crown's power is less important than the Crown's continued presence as a legal site for unaccountable, unquestionable actions.

As in the Durbar Boon, which reversed a colonial policy, the Crown has been invoked in these Canadian cases in order to cover over real arguments, differences and political struggles, and to make colonial Others reachable by a state power not bound by the niceties of liberal constitutionalism. This legal manoeuvre perpetuates an imaginary dream of total knowledge of the Other at the same moment as it obscures the workings of power. And whatever are the ethnocentric fantasies or abusive fictions on which this recourse to the Crown is based, it is an effective move in the maintenance of a larger economy of imperial political relations. Just at the point where liberalism expands its jurisdiction to others through such grants of super-ordinary recognition, at this same moment they are reconstituted as subjects of a direct and administrative power, awaiting incorporation into the privileges of procedure only once they reach their full majority. The honour of the Crown puts claimants in a position of quasi-filial dependence, rather than granting them the status of fully fledged subjects of law.

This is what makes the recourse to the 'honour of the Crown' an instance of imperial fetishism: it resolves the problems of knowledge and commensuration raised by liberalism, but only by situating others in the same subordinate position to power that the liberal subject fears and seeks to escape through procedure; furthermore, it licenses a real ignorance of, and disregard for, the fate of others at the hands of this sovereign power. The only way to escape this imperial consequence is by struggling with the truth of other claims on power and in so doing claiming our own maturity, as political subjects, on terms of equality – which is neither pure identity nor difference – with other subjects. As Borneman points out (in this volume), the passage to knowledge of self and other does not pass solely through the gate of information, but involves a relational process of becoming knowledgeable. This is certainly harder than it might at first sound, given the durable political effects of fetishistic and imperial ignorance. This, at least, is the monitory lesson of Scotus' imaginary and decadent empire, from the Irrawaddy to the Nile, in which the inscription of the Other was invested with a domestic political benefit.

Notes

1. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an oriflamme is 'an object, principle, or ideal that serves as a rallying point in a struggle'. As will become clear, this imputed, attractive power of the Crown is a decisive part of its meaning in these contexts.
2. See Kerr (2003), who has similarly discussed the literary tropes of ignorance and obscurity as an essential component of the imperial claim to legitimate power over others.
3. It should be added that the insufficiency of rational, materialist accounts of state power, as residing in concrete relations between actors differently situated in relation to rights and resources, was long ago argued – with similar intent, if in different terms – by Clifford Geertz (1980).
4. As far as I can ascertain, there is only one copy of this pamphlet extant, in the Ames Library of South Asia at the University of Minnesota. All the publisher's records from before 1940 were destroyed during World War II (personal communication from A.H. Stockwell, publishers), and without further analysis of the pamphlet and related works it is not possible to ascertain who the author was. Scotus Indigena could be translated 'A Native Scot'; the phrase is most likely to be simply a clever play on the name of the medieval Irish monk Scotus Eriugena, and there is no explicit reference to any non-English British identity in the text at hand. However, it is probably not accidental that Scotus Indigena is alert to the cross-national representative function of the Crown in British life, and on that basis embraces a pluri-national constitution for a future British Empire beyond the Atlantic archipelago (see Pocock 2005).
5. The choice of these constituencies to represent the democratic genius of Britain is not accidental: Peckham was a working-class district of London; Tonypanydy (in Wales) was the site of important riots by striking mineworkers in 1909–1910, and was an area associated with Lloyd George himself.
6. See Peitz (1993) for an account of how Marx draws upon, transforms and exceeds binaries between matter and ideas, and theories of primitive religion as simple mystification and error, in his elaboration of commodity-fetishism.

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Leo Coleman is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Hunter College, City University of New York. He is the editor of *Food: Ethnographic Encounters* (2011) and has published several articles on ethnographic method and on urbanism, infrastructure and legal knowledge in India and the British Empire. He is working on an historical ethnography of electrification, ritual and state power in twentieth-century Delhi.