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Ceremony, Conquest, and Conciliation: An Afterword

Chris Holdridge

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Abstract: British royal tours to the empire's settler dominions of Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand reached their zenith in the early- to mid-twentieth century during a period of wilful amnesia and lack of engagement with the legacies of violence and dispossession brought about by colonial rule. This afterword considers royal tours in the light of the systemic racial inequality inherent within settler colonialism and its narrative of nationhood and British loyalism. The discussion draws on the articles in this special issue, but also on new examples: Mark Twain, the American author and anti-imperialist, demonstrates a different type of touring celebrity to visiting royals and their role as defenders of empire, with Twain critical of empire in his literary works and travels; Sol Plaatje, the black South African journalist, politician and one-time translator to the Duke of Connaught, reveals the ineffectiveness—and reticence to intervene—of touring royals as mediators between settlers and colonial subjects robbed of their land and liberties. The article concludes by noting improvements in the speed of travel and telecommunications as crucial for the increase in royal tours to settler dominions, an increase that proved critical in facilitating the affective power of royal performance for the solidifying of settler nationalisms reliant upon loyalism to the Crown.

Keywords: royal tours; British Empire; settler colonialism; land.

In visits from Toronto to Cape Town, and Sydney to Auckland, the spectacle of royals on tour beguiled colonial spectators as they lined streets and parade grounds festooned with patriotic regalia. When visiting members of the British royal family arrived to a sea of cheering crowds waving Union Jacks, or witnessed a procession of children or the army who demonstrated loyalty to the empire, colonial performances enacted perceived and desired relations between the monarchy and its settler dominions. The articles in this special issue consider the paradoxes inherent in the ceremonies that accompanied these royal visits. The distance of travel, with settler worlds oceans apart, bridged the familial closeness of loyalism reliant on notions of global 'Britishness.' But so, too, the narratives of civilisation, progress and pioneering settlers upon which such notions rested jarred with and silenced the legacies of violence against indigenous peoples, and territorial dispossession of their land, that formed the foundation of settler colonial nations. Royal tours and their attendant ceremonies sought conciliation, to unify rather than divide. Yet this was a process of public relations that rarely acknowledged, until more recent decades, the past history of colonial conquest and its impact on present politics.

Perhaps we should commence with a different sort of tourist, not a British royal but the celebrated American novelist and anti-imperialist Mark Twain, who considered monarchy on display as a system of government to be neither charming nor convincing. Twain was one of the earliest and most famous 'world touring' celebrities at the turn of the twentieth century, and he dedicated much of his writing to the critique of global empires and hereditary rule. "A monarchy is perpetuated piracy," he wrote in his private notebooks circa 1890, for "there

never was a throne which did not represent a crime."[1] Twain embodied this sharp criticism most famously in the characters the Duke and King in his classic 1885 novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, confidence tricksters whose swindling crimes as they travelled up and down the Mississippi River relied on the fiction that they were aristocratic heirs, the respective sons of the English Duke of Bridgewater and the deposed French King Louis XVI. In his novels and pamphlets—especially in *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905), his anti-slavery tract on atrocities in the Belgian Congo—Twain presented dire assessments of monarchy, where theft, deception and murder are the preserve of both criminal savants *and* sovereigns. In his assessment, the mask of legitimacy and title, the spell of power and grandeur, protects royalty from overt critiques of the violence perpetrated by the states and empires that they oversee. This sardonic view of monarchy is perhaps uncharitable—the British monarch holds mainly ceremonial power that precludes him or her from direct rule and culpability. Twain's dystopian diagnosis of royalty took form as he ventured abroad, his travels giving shape to his persona as the 'American Vandal,'[2] the literary gadfly and endearing rogue who exemplified modern American values as he travelled. Such anti-establishment principles contrasted with the fading splendour and corruption of Old World society and its near–worship of aristocracy. In Twain, we witness a prescient counterpoint to royals on tour and their future prominence, a sly wink that all politics is performance, and a mischievous recognition that tours play to audience expectations in ways that can unite but also deceive. The rise of celebrities and their global name recognition, enabled first by newspapers and later radio and television, created a world not just of royal role models, but also actresses, opera singers or anti–imperialists who undertook their own global travels. Royals thus did not inhabit a public sphere on their own, but competed with figures like Twain who could challenge the narrative forged through the media or the immediacy of events planned through world tours.

Mark Twain spent a dozen years abroad between 1867 and his death in 1910, often on book tours in Europe, America, and the British empire, and in search of new inspiration for his writings. As such, he was a different sort of celebrity from touring royals in that Twain was not a figurehead of state or a politician constrained by an official role, but rather a critic free to voice his personal views on the world in which he lived. Arriving in Sydney Harbour in late 1895, six years before the 1901 tour of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York to Australia, Twain—more so than his royal counterparts—considered his rapturous reception with ready wit. When interviewed by the journalist Herbert Low of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, who had sidled alongside Twain's ship, about what his thoughts were of Australia, the American author—who had not yet gone ashore—bellowed over the railing that "you know so much more of a country when you haven't seen it than when you have."[3] In Twain's comment, the world imagined was more informative than the sometimes drearier reality revealed through travel. And this may well be so: the fantasy of empire often holds strongest in the minds of armchair travellers. Words, however, cannot stand proxy for real life, for celebrities like Mark Twain or royals like Queen Elizabeth II exercise their most electrifying power when seen.

Through being seen by their subjects, as David Cannadine has argued, the royal family has performed rituals of state that have gained increased prominence as "an antidote to, or

[1] Mark Twain, "Notebook 28 (July 1888-May 1889)," in *Mark Twain's Notebooks and Journals*, *Volume III, 1883-1891*, eds. Robert Pack Browning, Michael B. Frank, and Lin Salamo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 401; Edward Wagenknecht, *Mark Twain: The Man and His Work* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 228-229.
[2] Roy Morris Jr., *American Vandal: Mark Twain Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.
[3] Morris, *American Vandal*, 159-160.

legitimation of, social change."[4] Armed with mainly ceremonial rather than direct power over the governance of their subjects, British monarchs have embraced what Cannadine terms the "the secular magic of monarchy,"[5] where public appearances by the royal family comfort conservatives through signalling the continued stability of the monarchy in the face of social upheaval, while also sparking belief on the left of the political spectrum for the possibility of an evolving and modernizing Crown at the vanguard of progressive political change. The descendants of Queen Victoria, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II, may not have stepped ashore in the dominions as conjurers-in-state, but they did implant the magic of possibility in the minds of those who witnessed the ceremony of their tours.

Host governments in the dominions arranged royal itineraries, with brief stopovers at rail stations or attendance at lengthier concerts and dinners choreographed to fit the aspirant image of these colonial nations on the make, eager as they were for the royal touch to legitimate their strengthening place within a wider British world. These itineraries usually matched the unfolding narrative of the nation. New Zealand authorities, as Christopher McDonald has shown in his article, eagerly paraded before the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York in 1901 the so-called 'rough riders' who had fought in the South African War, while 'digger' troops and military cadets in the years following the Great War marched with 'rugged physicality' on horseback as they embodied the confident coming of age for a settler nation which had proved its stripes on the battlefields of Europe. This martial narrative, in common with the emergent ANZAC legend in Australia that commemorates the Gallipoli landing in 1915 during the Great War, placed military virtue at the centre of developing notions of national character. By parading royals before colonial troops, the message was that the settler societies of Australasia had not simply been handed self-government—they had earned it on the battlefield. Buried by this vision of battle-wrought settler nations were the uncomfortable origin stories of penal colonies and frontier conflict, and of dubious treaties (or no treaties at all) with the indigenous peoples of the land. Looking back in 1937 on the Great War, Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes commented that before Australians fought in the theatre of that cataclysmic conflict, their nation was "a land without a history and without a tradition of its own, living sheltered under the wing of the mother country and only vaguely conscious of its own existence."[6] The entry of royals on tour amidst such wilful amnesia from settler nations could serve to bolster these myths of nationhood rather than unsettle them, since the British monarch rarely ventures into the taking of sides over controversial political questions, such is his or her customary role to unify subjects.

But not all dominions sought royal approval for establishing their myths of national origin. Just as the ANZAC legend was born and paraded before visiting royals, eager as they were to thank dominion troops for their loyal service, myths of Afrikaner nationhood began to supplant British loyalism at the centre of national imaginings in South Africa. The Great Trek of the 1830s took a central place within Afrikaner nationalism—in re-enactments of the centenary, in monuments and in new history textbooks—as an event which marked the casting off of British authority when Dutch farmers ventured north to invade the territories of the Tswana, Basotho, and other African peoples and establish new republics free from the rule

[4] David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', *c.* 1820-1977," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 156.

[5] Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual," 102.

[6] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 April 1937, quoted in Mark McKenna, "The History Anxiety," in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, eds. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 2:565.

of a British monarch. This was until their reincorporation under the British Crown following the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. By 1961, following a closely fought referendum the previous year, the Union of South Africa left the Commonwealth and became a republic. Queen Elizabeth II was head of state no more, and she would not visit South Africa until 1995, following the country's readmission to the Commonwealth after the end of apartheid. Canada, too, adopted varying postures towards royal tours, at times embracing the royal touch this bestowed upon state power, at other times shying away from the potential division this might cause with the French-speaking Québécois, less amenable to a British monarch as head of state than other Canadians. The reception of British royals in the dominions was never uniform, but always contingent, and constantly subject to the shifting national conversation around the relationship of these young nations with the monarchy.

We cannot assume in even the earliest ceremonies declaring royal power, performed before or during initial settlement, the full extent or nature of their meanings. To indigenous Australians, as Mark McKenna reminds us in his contribution to this issue, James Cook's declarations of British sovereignty performed in 1770 were likely "nothing less than a form of sorcery—the hoisting of the colours, the reading of an incantation, the firing of a few volleys in the air." These were rituals of possession where the vast territory of the continent's eastern seaboard became, in the British mind, the property of the Crown through ceremonial performance as legal procedure. As ceremonies and performances developed over the following centuries, it should never be assumed that there were always shared understandings between the original inhabitants and settler authority. Royal encounters with chiefly authority was initially rare in the twentieth century, too often stage-managed by settler governments in such a way that meaningful dialogue was rarely if ever achieved between the British monarch and M□ ori, Native American, black African, or indigenous Australian representatives. Where visiting royals once took centre-stage in performing whitewashed ceremonies of nationhood, new forms of 'affective performance' emerged among anti-colonial activists who sought to wrest control from the theatre of settler colonial politics onto new platforms for performing and negotiating claims to indigenous sovereignty. The search for constitutional settlements, and for apologies from settler states for frontier violence and land dispossession, have inspired campaigns for meaningful reconciliation with the settler colonial past and its enduring and painful legacy. The Queen is largely absent from these debates.[7]

Despite earlier efforts from indigenous peoples and black Africans for recognition of sovereignty and redress for past and ongoing oppression, in their appearance on royal tours in the first half of the twentieth century they had often served merely as curiosities, as markers of the cultural distinctiveness of each settler colony or dominion. Hence, the dancing of the *haka* and singing of *waiata* by M□ ori at Rotorua in New Zealand, with little regard for any real mediation or diplomatic overtures, as discussed by Jock Phillips.

In South Africa, with its black African majority in contrast to the demographic dominance of white settlers in the other dominions, royals paid more attention in earlier years to chiefly authority and *ama*Respectables—educated Africans, often politically active, with church backgrounds—by making time to schedule meetings with them while on tour, a practice forged by Prince Alfred on his 1860 tour and again during the 1901 tour of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. But here, too, British royal interest and that of the press perked up mostly at the sight of a Zulu war dance or more mundane expression of African

[7] For an excellent discussion of affective performance and its use in activism for the recognition of indigenous sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples in Australia and Māori in New Zealand, see Penelope Edmonds, *Settler Colonialism and (Re)Conciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances, and Imaginative Refoundings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

loyalism such as the breaking into song, jubilant clapping and ululation at the royal party's passing. As Hilary Sapire shows in her article, attempts at black African diplomacy with royal mediation were often perfunctory, gestural, and lacking any real push for change in the face of what Britain saw as the most vital 'race relations' problem, that between the Afrikaner and the English. The mending of these relations was of paramount importance during the 1925 tour of South Africa by the Prince of Wales who, although not universally well received by Afrikaners, included some reconciliatory actions in his visit. The Prince visited the graves of the final heads of state of the two Boer Republics, Presidents Paul Kruger and Martinus Steyn, thus acknowledging in part the violence of the Anglo-Boer War that ended in 1902. When the Prince of Wales spoke of 'a brotherhood of free nations' in a speech to both houses of Parliament in Cape Town, he referred implicitly to the freedoms enjoyed by whites in the dominions, a message underlined by his concluding greeting in the Afrikaans language.

Such messaging of a settler 'brotherhood' rather than universal rights disappointed black activists, who initially contrasted settler aggression against the rights of Africans with the protective authority of the British monarchy to prevent further encroachment on the land and liberty of African peoples. One figure who initially upheld this view was the Tswana journalist Sol Plaatje—a notable *amaRespectable* and co-founder of the African National Congress in 1912—who served as interpreter during the 1906 visit to southern Africa of the Duke of Connaught, the brother of King Edward VII. When the Duke visited Mafeking, neighbouring the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Plaatje reminisced that the Duke reassured Chief Lekoko and "the assembled natives" that the "death of their beloved Queen [Victoria] 'would not alter their status in any manner whatsoever as His Majesty [the King] took the same deep interest in the welfare of the native population as the late Queen did.'"[8] These "statesmanly speeches," as Plaatje called them, by the Duke of Connaught before Basotho chiefs in Bloemfontein and Tswana chiefs in Mafeking would not be enough to allay African fears of settler politics.[9] Three years later, Plaatje would travel to London to lobby against the exclusion of Africans from citizenship rights in the 1910 Constitution for the Union of South Africa.[10] His fears were well founded, as in 1913 the South African government passed a Land Act that threw Africans off of their smallholdings and ancestral land and set aside only small reserves where communal land tenure could be exercised. Britain had little say over discriminatory legislation for racial segregation passed by the South African parliament, and even less say following the 1931 Statute of Westminster.

Although Plaatje and early African nationalists still upheld approaches to the King as a means of redress, such an avenue for justice was met with increasing scepticism. As Plaatje stressed in a 1919 letter concerning a petition from the Basotho nation to King George V, "we have to demonstrate to England that we are also people and our leaders (chiefs) should also be given full royal respect."[11] The tactics of early African nationalists to 'shoot with the pen' with newspapers and petitions (often addressed to the British monarch) did not exclude recognition of other vital layers of leadership, particularly the importance of chiefly authority as totemic of the dignity and respect due to all Africans whose rights to land and protection from settler aggression might be achieved through appeals to the 'Great Queen' or 'Great

[8] Sol T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa, Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1916), 252.
[9] Sol T. Plaatje, *Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings*, ed. Brian Willan (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996), 137.
[10] Charles V. Reed, *Royal Tourists, Colonial Subjects and the Making of a British World, 1860–1911* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 175.
[11] S. Plaatje to Bra [Silas Molema], 14 March 1919 [translated from the original Tswana], item Da55, A979, Silas T. Molema and Solomon T. Plaatje Papers, Cullen Library, University of the Witswatersrand.

King' in Britain.[12] But petitions and deputations to Britain from non-white subjects of the empire met mostly mild interest or indifference in Britain, and encounters with the M□ ori, First Nations, indigenous Australians, or black Africans during royal tours to the colonies were mostly sideshows rather than concerted efforts at solving any racial oppression. The real attention rested on scripts of loyalism, on displays of unified subjects of the Crown, predominantly white, and rarely expressing any open dissent or grievance.

There is a further consideration that explains the sea change in imperial politics and the place of royal tours within the evolving relations between Britain and its settler colonies and later dominions. The technological revolution in transportation and communication has meant that royal tours are mostly a fairly recent phenomenon. Apart from visits to Canada, where the transatlantic crossing by sail lasted two weeks, British royals did not venture to colonies or dominions further afield until the late Victorian era because of the onerous demands of travel, with tours pioneered from the 1860s onwards by Queen Victoria's second-eldest son Prince Alfred, then an officer in the royal navy. But other royals undertook the reverse journey—from colony to metropole—before Prince Alfred's pioneering tours. To the amaXhosa chief Dyani Tshatshu, who travelled from the Cape Colony to London in 1836 to testify before a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the inhumane violence perpetrated against his people in the recent frontier war, Westminster lay at the heart of an interconnected and modernising world. His was a hopeful view of technological progress and organised statecraft and what this might bode for the future justice that his people—the amaXhosa—sought. "I may forget the railroads, I may forget the steam engines," Tshatshu enthused, "but I shall not forget what I have seen tonight. I have seen a little company of men—not taller than I am here—touch the spring that moves the world."[13] Only a decade or so later, this world in motion would become less hinged to the axis of the metropole as Britain granted greater self-government to its settler colonies, decentralising power through constitutional reforms facilitated by the new technologies of increased mobility and improved communication.

Travelling across the globe became faster and easier in the age of steam as railways and steamships covered vast distances. What were once intractably far-off domains visited by adventurers, seafarers, colonists, transported convicts, or merchants became colonial worlds appealing enough for a new type of traveller. The perilous eighteenth-century sail journeys of James Cook in the age of discovery gave way to tourists aboard steamships, berthed in more comfortable cabins and destined for port cities worlds away from the starker realities of their violent inception through conflict with indigenous peoples.

As migration to the New Worlds of North America or Australasia increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century, so too did itinerant travellers who toured the globe, among them celebrities and royalty. These steam-bound tourists could reach far-flung destinations in weeks rather than months, all the while communicating when in port through the telegraph, allowing for a new form of travelogue or news item notable for regularity rather than delay. With the advent of the telephone, radio, television, and—most recently—the Internet, events overseas have gained an immediacy and greater importance over the ways we

[12] André Odendaal, "'Native Lives' Behind *Native Life*: Intellectual and Political Influences on the ANC and Democratic South Africa," in *Sol Plaatje's "Native Life in South Africa": Past and Present*, eds. Janet Remmington, Brian Willan, and Bhekizizwe Peterson (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2016), 128-129.
[13] Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815-45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 1.

view the world and our place within it.[14] And with the rise of air travel from the mid-twentieth century shrinking journey times from weeks to hours, royal tours no longer resemble the lengthy interludes experienced by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York aboard the *Ophir* in 1901, discussed in the article by Cindy McCreery. Where once the governance of Britain's empire relied on governors and other administrators, whose contact with London was beset by months-long delays as letters to and from the Colonial Office crossed the Atlantic or rounded the Cape of Good Hope aboard rickety sail ships, members of the royal family could now venture out and perform the royal touch of imperial rule by greeting their loyal subjects, by overseeing ceremonies and dinners in their honour, and even by signing new laws into force.

Nevertheless, the heyday of royal tours has passed and their significance lay at its greatest in the period of high imperialism and transition, as new constitutional arrangements arose for the dominions and as settler nations and the British monarchy sought out new meanings for their national identities in a world where many Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders, and South Africans insisted vociferously that they were British subjects. It is unthinkable today—even laughable—to consider such a view as dominant in the minds of inhabitants of Sydney or Toronto. As Charles Reed has observed of Queen Elizabeth II, in his recent study of royal tours in the British Empire, her "people may adore her, but largely because she has no power over them and because they are not her subjects but citizens."[15] It is no wonder then that British royals, once more instrumental as powerbrokers in settler nations through the mesmerizing power of their office, now fulfil a less prominent role in national discourse.

Where once touring British royals saw their symbolic power "reaffirmed" as "political power was devolved" through constitutional developments in the empire in the first half of the twentieth century, now their visits are met mostly with curiosity, even pride, in the heritage embodied in their person and the role models they have become to their admirers.[16] It is not to be scoffed at, as Carolyn Harris shows in her article, that royal women have done more than serve as idols for passing fashions, for they often laid groundwork for the greater involvement of woman in public life. Support for the monarchy in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia continues apace in an age of mass media where monarchs continue to fulfil a function as unifiers above party politics, but they are no longer so central to national imaginings and their position within national conversations is much more open to challenge. Yet, as we stream Netflix episodes of *The Crown*, or tune in to a live broadcast of a royal wedding, we need to be reminded of the past importance of royals on tours not only in making the monarchy more visible in far-off regions of the empire, but also in serving as interlocutors in the shifting terrains of imperial power from high imperialism to decolonisation and its aftermath. As the articles in this special issue of the *Royal Studies Journal* demonstrate, studying royal tours allows us to consider not only the material development of settler nations but also their *affective* relationship with Britain through the ceremonies of statecraft. In turn, we can lay bare many of the contradictions within the settler colonial past, a history of colonial conquest often erased or sidelined in national narratives of origin and one in which the British monarchy has attempted at least some conciliation.

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[14] Simon J. Potter, "Webs, Networks, and Systems: Globalization and the Mass Media in the Nineteenth– and Twentieth–Century British Empire," *The Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 621–646.
[15] Reed, *Royal Tourists*, 195.
[16] Duncan Bell, "The Idea of a Patriot Queen? The Monarchy, the Constitution, and the Iconographic Order of Greater Britain, 1860-1900," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34, no. 1 (2006): 11.