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Relational Space and Life Geographies in Imperial History: George Arthur and Humanitarian Governance

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Article abstract

This paper focuses on the personality and agency of George Arthur, situating them within broader discursive assemblages. It begins by examining new approaches to the role of the individual in society that are linked to the relativisation of our ideas of space and place. It then examines three sets of relationships that shaped Arthur and, to varying extents, that he gained the capacity to shape: military networks, discourses of the family and humanitarian governance. Pointing to a specific combination of anti-democratic and humane notions of governance, it argues that Arthur's acquisition of capacity in this sphere helped effect a transition from anti-slavery to humanitarian colonial governance in and across a variety of colonial spaces.

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ALAN LESTER

Abstract

This paper focuses on the personality and agency of George Arthur, situating them within broader discursive assemblages. It begins by examining new approaches to the role of the individual in society that are linked to the relativisation of our ideas of space and place. It then examines three sets of relationships that shaped Arthur and, to varying extents, that he gained the capacity to shape: military networks, discourses of the family and humanitarian governance. Pointing to a specific combination of anti-democratic and humane notions of governance, it argues that Arthur's acquisition of capacity in this sphere helped effect a transition from anti-slavery to humanitarian colonial governance in and across a variety of colonial spaces.

Résumé

Cet article porte sur la personnalité de George Arthur et sa capacité d'action (agency), situant ces deux éléments dans un ensemble discursif plus vaste. Il examine d'abord les nouvelles façons de voir le rôle des personnes dans la société qui sont liées à la relativisation de nos notions d'espace et d'emplacement. Puis, il s'attarde à trois séries de relations qui ont influencé Arthur et, dans une certaine mesure, qu'il a pu influencer : les réseaux militaires, les discours de la famille et la gouvernance humanitaire. Faisant apparaître un amalgame de notions de gouvernance à la fois antidémocratiques et soucieuses de la personne, l'auteur avance qu'en acquérant sa capacité d'action dans cette sphère, Arthur a contribué à susciter une transition entre la gouvernance coloniale anti-esclavagiste et humanitaire dans un certain nombre d'espaces coloniaux.

Introduction

Imperial historians are becoming increasingly aware that the history of any one locality within an empire can be understood only through its connections with other sites, both within and even beyond that empire.[1] In this paper I am

particularly interested in the ways that these broader historical geographies of connection can be accessed through the life geographies of specific individuals.[2] The first half of the paper teases out some of the theoretical justifications for this linkage between the individual and the global (or at least the trans-imperial) and considers the revisions to our ideas of agency that might be associated with that link. The second half introduces a case study of the intersections between Governor George Arthur's career in Jamaica, Honduras, and Van Diemen's Land, and the global historical geography of British humanitarianism.[3]

The choice of Arthur as a subject associated with humanitarianism is apparently paradoxical, since, as Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land, he oversaw what has been widely seen as the clearest case of genocide in British imperial history.[4] However, I will argue that Arthur's individual trajectory through empire, when considered as one among other such trajectories, constituted a key locus of agency in the politically significant shift from anti-slavery to colonial humanitarianism. This shift is often considered from a metropolitan, British-centred perspective, but Arthur's story suggests that it needs to be considered through a more relative, and a more embodied spatiality — one constituted through the assemblage and juxtaposition of entities with varying degrees of motility across contingently interacting sites.

Relational Space and Imperial History

Tracking the life geography of any individual means appreciating the relationships between that individual's continually reconstituted subjectivity, the places in which s/he dwelt, and the spaces through which s/he moved. What is required in order to construct such an intimate geography is a relational approach to space. This approach challenges a long tradition of modern scientific thought premised on the notion of space as absolute, existing independently of the objects and relations that fill it, and providing a grid across which those objects and relations can be mapped.

It is because of a continuing adherence to this absolute view of space that ambivalence remains in imperial and trans-national history writing that situates itself between the global and the local. Many of us resort to an uneasy oscillation between phenomena such as imperialism, capitalism, and humanitarianism, which we describe as global, and specific episodes of political or military conflict, or changes in human-environment relations, which we describe as local. What we really want to do is show how they are imbricated in one another.[5]

Doreen Massey is the most eloquent critic of this language of distinction between global and local scales and communities. She notes how, in most humanities and social science literature, such differentiations limit our ability to analyse historical and contemporary interconnectedness. Its implication is that:

> [f]irst the differences between places exist, and then those different places come into contact. The differences are the consequence of internal characteristics. It is an essentialist, billiard-ball view of place. It is also a tabular conceptualisation of space.[6]

Within branches of philosophy, the social sciences, and human geography in recent years, there has been a shift away from absolute notions of space.[7] Both space and time have come to be seen as relationally constituted by the interactions between objects, while those objects themselves are given meaning and capacity in turn only through their relationships with other objects.[8] The traditional staple of human geography — the recognition of regional differentiation — remains central within relative approaches to space and place, but localities and regions are re-envisioned as "nodes that gather flow and juxtapose diversity … places of overlapping … relational networks … with connections that stretch far back in time and space, … spatial formations of continuously changing composition, character, and reach."[9]

A re-evaluation of agency and historical change is required if we are to re-conceptualize regions and localities in this way.[10] This re-evaluation is one that individualizes agency at the same time that it considers the effect of aggregation. It is one that sees relationships in and through place, rather than impersonal driving forces sweeping across abstract global space, as the agent effecting change. It is within such a broad field of relations that I want to situate Arthur's life geography and its relation to humanitarianism.

Life Geographies

A biographical approach of course places the individual human at the very centre of the analysis. However, in the light of the critique posed by relative conceptions of space, place, and agency, the nature of that individual human subjectivity has to be rethought. Subjectivity becomes a product not only of internal psychological processes and reactions, but also of the human body's continually changing relationship with other people and with the objects, both organic and inorganic, surrounding it, being manipulated, employed, and ingested by it, and circumscribing or channelling its thoughts and activities.[11] This means above all spatializing our biographical accounts — writing life geographies as well as life histories. We must develop a sense of the spatial not simply as the location of, or backdrop to, a life, but as co-constitutive with selfhood and identity.[12] As Massey notes, place "change[s] us," but "not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the *practising* of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us."[13] David Livingstone points out that:

> all of us occupy an immense range of different sites. In these we act differently, adopt different personae, call on different linguistic repertoires, project different "selves". Hence we can plausibly say that someone is a "different person" at home, in the office, on the playing field, and so on. This is because we define ourselves by reference to the positions — the moral and social spaces — from which we speak. The "geography of social statuses and functions" … provides the defining relations within which we construe ourselves. Morally and materially, *where* we are matters a good deal in trying to figure out *who* we are.[14]

The recognition of this spatiality of personhood entails a different kind of biography: "Instead of the remorselessly sequential narrative that typically characterises biographical accounts, greater sensitivity to the *spaces of a life* could open up new and revealing ways of taking the *measure of a life*."[15] Such a decentred approach to the individual is clearly needed for previously untold subaltern stories.[16] But it also allows for a return to biographical subjects that have apparently already been "done to death."[17] Situating well known figures, alongside lesser known people within their contingent networks of association casts new light on them.

George Arthur and Humanitarianism

The sets of relationships that I highlight and examine in this brief study of George Arthur's life geography are those within which he was situated during the first half of his career in the Caribbean and Van Diemen's Land. I try to separate out for analysis four particular sets of overlapping and intertwining relationships, which helped constitute Arthur's personality and which Arthur actively mobilized in the construction of a new British humanitarianism: first, his involvement in military networks; second, his relations with immediate family members framed by prevailing hegemonic discourses of family life; third, his political engagements with British settlers and indigenous peoples through which the ideas and practice of governance were learned and revised; and, finally, the intersection between his own career trajectory and those of significant other individuals, including George Augustus Robinson and Thomas Fowell Buxton. In particular I want to argue that these sets of relationships, within which Arthur was one component with particular capacities among others, were integral to the shift in the British humanitarian imagination from trans-Atlantic anti-slavery to trans-imperial colonial philanthropy.

Military Networks

Arthur's father was a Plymouth brewer who made good, and a mayor of that town. Although there are indications that George Arthur's deeply religious youth leaned him towards a career in the clergy, he veered away from that

course, following his brother into the army in 1804. Having entered the service later in life than most of his peers, he was anxious for rapid promotion and his timing could not have been better as the army expanded to cope with the Napoleonic threat. Like so many of his generation of colonial officials, he first came to the attention of the British governing élite as a result of his distinguished conduct in warfare, fighting bravely in the skirmishes leading up to the Battle of Maida in southern Italy, the attempted occupation of Alexandria, and the disastrous Walcheren campaign.[18]

Lieutenant-General Don, who assumed command of the survivors from Walcheren, offered Arthur a post as aide-de-camp in the military governance of Jersey in 1810. Here Arthur encountered the difficulties of governing conservatively while facing radical critics. In 1779, popular agitation had forced the autocratic government to allow the election of magistrates on a relatively broad franchise. Don complained about the "very great difficulty in carrying out the Executive business" in the face of opposition from some of these magistrates, and Arthur seems to have been struck by the necessity for those who govern to be unimpeded by dangerous democratic notions.[19] Such notions were after all, associated with the kind of Jacobinism against which the army had been fighting in the Revolutionary war, and with "a growing sense of insubordination."[20]

Arthur's later humanitarianism would always be framed within this anti-democratic politics. Later in Arthur's career, as lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, his anti-democratic disposition would be brought very much to the forefront of his performance of, and rationale for, colonial governance. Deciding to proceed with the executions of the rebels Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews, and having 17 of their American patriot allies, who had raided across the border, hanged after the 1838 revolt, he wrote that the British "Canadas must always be hateful to the view of persons so enthusiastically attached to democratic institutions as are the Americans."[21] He was convinced that it behoved the British government to raise in Canada "a race of Englishmen with the same Government, the same feelings, and the same love of freedom that fills our bosoms; and here we may by their assistance oppose the most effectual barrier to the demon of democracy, which is threatening all civilized Governments."[22] In contrasting English freedom with the uncivilized chaos induced by first French and then American democracy, Arthur articulated an understanding of humane governance that was quite specific to the generation of military officials who governed most of the British Empire in the aftermath of the wars against France: those who were best positioned to govern should be able to do so without interference from subjects who could not possibly comprehend the range of factors influencing any reasoned and well-informed decision.[23]

Arthur's support for Don allowed him to take up a vacant majority in the 7th West India Regiment in 1812. This regiment had been founded as a pre-

dominantly black corps in 1795 in response to the high mortality among British officers in the Antilles. Initially, it recruited "free blacks" and purchased slaves, but all of its soldiers were freed in 1807. In the year that Arthur joined, the regiment became a part of what we might call the incipient "free Black Atlantic," establishing a recruiting depot on Blance Island in Sierra Leone to train West African volunteers.[24] By the time Arthur arrived in Jamaica the regiment had served with distinction against French units similarly recruited among enslaved populations in the Caribbean. During his 18 months as assistant quartermaster-general and acting paymaster-general in Jamaica, he expressed himself "a perfect Wilberforce as to slavery," and objected to planters' restrictions on preaching to slaves. He also resented planters' attacks on his soldiers' freedom to operate outside the plantation economy.[25]

There is a vague reference in later correspondence that it was during this period on the island that Arthur became a more devout and convinced evangelical, understanding, as he put it, "what Gospel really was in truth and power."[26] Rather than his evangelicalism predisposing him to oppose slavery, then, in Arthur's case it was the witnessing of slavery that made him more evangelical. While it may seem paradoxical, it was also perfectly consistent for Arthur to become more autocratic at the same time. His biographer, A.G.L. Shaw is convinced that his exposure to planters made Arthur just as wary of respectable and powerful settlers who opposed humane interference in their affairs, as he was of radical agitators and advocates of democracy.[27] Arthur's early grounding in a military model of autocratic governance, which combined with and was indeed essential to the fulfilment of an evangelical desire to see the benefits of civilization and Christianity available to all British subjects, did not, of course, set an unchanging template for his character. But it did enable the formation of key features of an authoritarian, yet humane personality, translated into a style of governance that was identified consistently by his contemporaries thereafter.[28]

Family Life

If Arthur's militarily experience among free blacks in the Caribbean situated him at the nexus of evangelical humanism, political conservatism, and the art of governmentality, it was also the milieu in which he embarked on the role of family man. In both his military and family dispositions, the still relatively young Arthur was more acted upon by prevailing discourses than he acted to effect change in those discourses. He had not yet accrued a great deal of capacity to alter the nature of those broader social assemblages in which his character was emergent.

In 1814, Arthur married Elizabeth Sigismund Smith, the daughter of the officer commanding the artillery in the colony, and the sister of an acquaintance with whom he had served in the Mediterranean. Immediately, Arthur became

more explicitly engaged in evolving discourses of gendered familial roles, in which he would be expected to provide for children, as well as a domesticated wife. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have emphasized, the family unit was being configured more systematically as the foundation of a civilized society among the emerging commercial and professional middle classes in England at this time.[29] Within a range of literatures, including domestic and legal advice manuals and evangelical writings, "separate spheres" for husbands and wives were advocated as an ideal societal norm.[30] Nonetheless, a man's role in the public world of work did not negate his domestic responsibilities.[31] Civilized masculinity was constituted by a father and husband who acted, as John Angell James put it, as "the prophet, priest and king of the family, to instruct their minds, to lead their devotions, and to govern their tempers."[32]

If he was to fulfil this duty, Arthur's imperative was, as he put it, to make "Promotion … my idol," in order to secure greater status in the world of work and a dependable family income.[33] Unfortunately for Arthur, this imperative came just at the time that the end of the French wars was closing down opportunities for advancement in the army. Within a month of his wedding, Arthur accepted the less than glamorous vacant post of superintendent and commandant (as lieutenant colonel) at Belize, the capital town of a small British commercial settlement on the Bay of Honduras.[34] His expectations of fatherhood were soon fulfilled, with the couple having four surviving children within five years.[35]

However, the discrepancies between the ideal of genteel family life set out in manuals by writers such as John Angell James, and their practical realization, were especially acute in remote frontier environments.[36] Concerned that his two boys' religious upbringing could not be secured in the "remote and ungodly" settlement, Arthur had them sent back to stay with a tutor in Plymouth when they were only four and five years old. As his sons grew up, more often apart from their parents than with them, Arthur's attempts to "instruct their minds" and "govern their tempers" took epistolary form. Reacting to negative reports from a sequence of tutors and headmasters, he would often express himself disappointed in their lack of piety and discipline, asking why his own absolute dedication to work, which saw him work a 16–18 hour day, had not inspired them to a similar selfless pursuit of the public good.[37] Later, he wrote to his middle son, Charles, "You have inflicted upon your mother and myself the most painful anxiety. What a return for all the love and affection you have experienced from us."[38]

One can only speculate what the relationship was between Arthur's distant and admonitory relationship with his sons and his involvement in the webs of governmental humanitarianism, but there are certainly traces of a sense of frustration and grievance (perhaps tempered by guilt) at the appreciable gulf between the lessons he taught and the benefits he offered on the one hand, and

the perceived incorrigibility of his sons on the other. If nothing else, Arthur's failure to realize the goal of an ideal family life, with its parental responsibility for offspring, serves as a metaphor for later British humanitarians' disillusionment with the capacity of their indigenous charges to become civilized and properly Christian.[39]

Settlers, Slaves and Aborigines

While Arthur's evangelicalism had become more pronounced in Jamaica, it took a more earnest turn in Honduras. He showed a distinct aversion to the parties and balls with which the small community of settlers attempted to ingratiate themselves, writing to his sister that "Public Dances, Concerts and Cards" could be classed among the "Pomps and vanities of this wicked world which I read of in my Prayer Book."[40] His application of moral earnestness to the problems of governance, however, was most obviously and antagonistically manifested in his opposition to settlers' enslavement of Honduras' indigenous population.

Describing the "aristocratic faction" in the settlement as being "profane, immoral and irreligious," Arthur sought to instruct their slaves in Christianity and to give some "Blacks and Charabs" the vote in the settlement's remarkably democratic constitution. Until 1820, Arthur had believed settlers' representations concerning the relative "mildness" of slaves' conditions in the interior, beyond Belize. A slave revolt in that year, however, saw him travel inland encountering what he described as "very unnecessary harshness," for the first time.[41] Having previously reasoned that there was no need for them, Arthur now became determined to apply the ameliorative measures that Colonial Office policy demanded in the rest of the Caribbean.

"Protectors of Slaves" were progressively appointed to all the Caribbean Crown Colonies, beginning in the formerly Spanish Trinidad. Their role was to enforce the ameliorative codes limiting work hours and punishments, and to investigate enslaved people's complaints against masters who breached them. Significantly, the protectors were also intended to help prepare enslaved people for their freedom by encouraging their Christianization and civilization.[42] This was a project that Arthur pursued vigorously in Honduras. It was located in the conjuncture between his evangelical awakening, his distrust of both privileged and radical settlers "who have ever been unceasingly troublesome and impatient of the most ordinary interference of the Crown,"[43] and his insistence on the primacy of church and state. The most concrete realisation of this project included the application of Jamaican law so that enslaved people had some protection from the arbitrary punishment of masters, and the freeing of descendants of Mosquito Coast Indians who had been enslaved illegally by settler parties.

Arthur's attempted prosecution of the settlers responsible for keeping these Indians in captivity prompted such a struggle that his health was affected, and

he returned to England on leave in 1822.[44] While the settlers sent an agent to orchestrate legal proceedings against him in London and bar his return to the settlement, he had to defend his actions in a voluminous correspondence with the Colonial Office. It was in the settler attacks that we find the beginnings of a portrayal of Arthur as a tyrannical despot that historians have perpetuated and applied to his subsequent governorships in Australia and Canada. In particular, Arthur's enemies responded to the Anti-Slavery Society's publication of materials that he had collected on the abuses of slaves in the settlement, publishing their own *The Groans of Oppression and Defence of the Settlers of Honduras against the Unjust and Unfounded References of Colonel George Arthur, late Superintendent of that Settlement*, a treatise that appeared in 1834 in the *Monitor* in Sydney, as settlers in Australia found common cause with their fellow Britons in Honduras.[45]

With the approval of the Colonial Office, Arthur had burnt his bridges with the settlers of Honduras and so, while still in England in 1823, he was offered the newly vacant post of lieutenant-governor of Van Diemen's Land. Arthur was most relieved to accept the improved pay and enhanced status that came with the new posting. It was through this next phase of his career that Arthur's own trajectory entwined with two significant others in particular, to reformulate his anti-democratic and anti-slavery dispositions into a broader programme of humanitarian colonial governance — one in which he would exercise much greater capacity to affect other governors.

Significant Others

Arthur's posting to Van Diemen's Land was said at the time to have been the result of a connection with William Wilberforce, itself the result of the reputation that Arthur had earned in Honduras as an anti-slavery governor.[46] But it was his repeated, face-to-face meetings with Wilberforce's successor as leader of the parliamentary anti-slavery lobby, Thomas Fowell Buxton, in London, and then with George Augustus Robinson in Van Diemen's Land, which proved most significant for colonial discourse and governance. It was through the relationships that these men forged, and their effects though their various networks of correspondents and interlocutors, that the shift from anti-slavery to humanitarian governance took place in vast terrains of colonization beyond the Caribbean.

Arthur took the notion of "amelioration," with its policies of individual and collective reformation, with him to Van Diemen's Land in 1824. There, he applied the project to both convicts and Aboriginal people. He wrote to Buxton that religious instruction would supply the convicts "with an inward regulator," which was "ten times more effectual in every case … than all the fear and alarm that can be exerted from without," and produced two pamphlets for circulation

in the colony and in Britain elaborating upon proper measures for the rehabilitation of transportees.[47] While he admitted privately that he felt about a quarter of all transportees were "irreclaimable,"[48] he would not allow such of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the island. As Henry Reynolds points out, "Arthur's response to the Aboriginal insurgency" that he was about to encounter, "was more measured and gradual than his ruthless and decisive crushing of the bushranging gangs that roamed the colony during 1825 and 1826."[49] Tracking the emergence of his position on questions of colonial Britons' relationship to governmental authority, as I have attempted to do above, I think, makes this contrast easier to understand.

Within two years of Arthur's arrival in Hobart, the few thousand Aboriginal people of the island were exposed to a surge in the number of British settlers joining their convict counterparts and claiming land, which the government was happy to allocate, in the interior. The central tribes responded by initiating a guerilla war.[50] One of Arthur's first acts in the colony was to issue a proclamation affording Aborigines equal rights to settlers and promising "the same punishment as though committed on the person or property of any settlers" to those who harmed them. However, from the first, this was counterbalanced by his imperative as governor of allowing for settler expansion and meeting Aboriginal resistance to it with force.[51]

Arthur continued to dispose of land to the Van Diemen's Land Company and settlers regardless of Aboriginal occupation and usage, while encouraging a small settlement of Aboriginal people on Bruny Island near Hobart as a humanitarian experiment to see if they could be redeemed and reclaimed for Christianity within a new colonial environment. When he advertised among the settlers for a superintendent of the settlement, the successful applicant was George Augustus Robinson, a former builder from the East End of London. Astutely using the language of anti-slavery policy, Robinson wrote that he was "fully persuaded that the plan which your Excellency has devised is the only one whereby the aborigines of this territory can be ameliorated."[52]

By the late 1820s, settlers outnumbered Aborigines on the island by about 20 to one and there is plenty of evidence that significant numbers of them backed a campaign of extermination in the face of continued, well organized resistance.[53] The settler press presented Arthur with an ultimatum: if the Aborigines were not removed quickly, "THEY WILL BE HUNTED DOWN LIKE WILD BEASTS AND DESTROYED."[54] Arthur was deeply affected, writing to the colonial secretary that the violence "wholly engrosses and fills my mind with painful anxiety."[55] He declared martial law in 1828 in an attempt to take the conflict out of the hands of settlers and into those of a more conciliatory state.[56] But Arthur's attempt to use settler militias and the regular army to round up the remaining tribes of the central island so that they could be held in "benevolent captivity" on reserve land, failed to bring the warfare to a conclusion. His

somewhat naïve calls for settlers to treat Aboriginal resisters with humanity were denounced by the settler press as arising from "false notions of pity."[57]

Robinson, in the meantime, had been able to embark on an alternative plan that he called his conciliatory, or friendly mission. He would employ the Aboriginal people that he had first come to know on Bruny Island to travel with him on various expeditions across parts of Van Diemen's Land where independent tribes were holding out, and embark upon negotiations with them. These negotiations would result in their surrender and removal to a new settlement on Flinders Island.[58] Through Robinson, Arthur found a way to bridge the crucial differences between an established discourse of *amelioration*, based on the protection and reform of captive, enslaved people, and the *conciliation* of a defiant indigenous population. This bridge provided salvation for Arthur's reputation, both as a humanitarian and as a governor.[59] Arthur was sincere when he told his superiors in London that:

> it cannot hereafter be said that [the Aboriginal people] were torn from their kindred and friends … No! their removal has been for their benefit, and in almost every instance with their own free will and consent. They have been removed from danger, and placed in safety in a suitable asylum … where they are brought under moral and religious inculcation.[60]

Robinson himself was not shy about promoting the wider value of his work. He wrote, "I trust the time is not far distant when the same humane policy will be adopted towards the aboriginal inhabitants of every colony throughout the British Empire."[61]

Even while the supposed beneficiaries of Robinson's plan continued to protest about their removal from customary resources, susceptibility to disease, and restricted mobility on Flinders Island, Arthur was able to realize, in part at least, Robinson's vision. In London by 1835, Buxton was formulating a plan for a House of Commons Select Committee to investigate the injustices that settler colonization was occasioning throughout the empire. While Arthur and Robinson had made a practical link between anti-slavery and humanitarian governance in Van Diemen's Land, Buxton now articulated that link as the call to arms for a new programme of humanitarian intervention. He argued:

> Great Britain has, in former times, countenanced evils of great magnitude, — slavery and the Slave Trade; but for these she has made some atonement ... An evil remains very similar in character, and not altogether unfit to be compared with them in the amount of misery it produces. The oppression of the natives of barbarous countries is a practice which pleads no claim to indulgence.[62]

The Aborigines Committee has been much discussed in recent trans-imperial histories, so I will not go into it in any detail here.[63] It was in regard

to Australia and New Zealand that Arthur's involvement was critical. In the light of fierce resistance to Arthur, mounted by some of the more influential settlers in Van Diemen's Land who resented his autocracy, his lenience towards apparently reformed convicts, and his opposition to a campaign of extermination against Aborigines, Arthur was recalled while the committee was meeting.[64] He returned to Plymouth in March 1837 and, having recuperated from his second bout of severe "mental affliction," between then and December, he was able to talk directly with both Buxton and Glenelg about the measures needed to translate anti-slavery discourse into policies for the protection of indigenous peoples.[65]

Arthur insisted on the need for a branch of colonial government whose function was specifically to protect indigenous peoples from the kind of near annihilation that Van Diemen's Land's Aborigines had experienced. The idea was written into the committee's recommendations and Colonial Secretary Lord Glenelg was happy to hand over the process of determining principles and personnel for the New South Wales Protectorate to Arthur himself. By July 1837, he was proposing that Robinson be appointed chief protector, and by December he had chosen his four assistants.[66] There is no space here to enter into the histories of the Protectorates that were established not only in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, but also in New Zealand as a core feature of the Treaty of Waitangi, nor to pursue Arthur's subsequent trajectory in Upper Canada and India. It will suffice to say that the Protectorates, although they tend either to be derided in the national historiographies of Australasia, or neglected in the more general imperial histories, were significant features of the institutionalization of humanitarianism within the British Empire.[67] Despite their multiple failures, they gave at least some resource through which indigenous peoples in Australia and New Zealand could articulate survival strategies during the immediate onslaught of the "settler revolution," while their records provide not only some of the most important ethnographic accounts of pre-conquest indigenous societies, but also a resource for contemporary claims for restitution and recompense.[68]

For the purposes of this paper, I want to conclude by highlighting the link between the broader historical geographies of colonial humanitarianism and the career trajectory and individual agency of George Arthur.

Conclusion

The trajectory that took Arthur, during the first half of his gubernatorial career, from the slave-holding Caribbean colonies of Jamaica and Honduras to a site of rapid British settler colonization in Van Diemen's Land also enabled him to help translate support for the anti-slavery movement into a trans-imperial, humanitarian campaign against British settlers' dispossession, exploitation, and attempted extermination of indigenous peoples. In this paper, though,

rather than portraying Arthur as the self-contained, knowing director of this history of discursive and political change, I have sought to steer a middle path between recognizing and decentring his agency. I have attempted this by seeing Arthur himself as the product of, as well as active participant in, multiple relationships and combinations with other entities defining each place in which he dwelt.

These other entities included other people whose trajectories became juxtaposed with, and mutually affected by, Arthur's — most notably Robinson in Van Diemen's Land and Buxton in London. But they also included seemingly more ethereal and pervasive networks and discourses. Of greatest significance here were the networks of military association that guided Arthur's spatial trajectory and governmental ideas; the gendered discourses and relationships of family life, which made status and income of especial significance in propelling that trajectory; and the discourse of British anti-slavery that shaped Arthur, and which he ultimately reshaped in turn, as he gained capacity within governmental networks.

However, I would argue that these discourses should not be seen as some kind of external context or global framework within which particular people like Arthur lived their lives. Rather, they themselves consisted of networked assemblages fashioned contingently through the mobility of people and texts such as Arthur and his writings. Arthur's contribution to humanitarian discourse, and particularly to the shift from anti-slavery to a programme of protection for indigenous peoples encountering settler colonization, has to be seen through his active position within such assemblages. By the same token, his own identity, stable at times, destabilized by mental affliction at other times, has to be seen as being continually revised through participation in these assemblages.

If British humanitarian discourse and practice was the product of multiple encounters in different sites, it bears marks of the individual characters that shaped it in those sites. Arthur's authoritarian, anti-democratic conservatism, expectations of discipline, self-restraint and perseverance, and dedication to the relief of suffering were an apparently paradoxical mix that did more than just periodically plague his growing sons in epistolary form; they also characterized the ambivalent kind of humanist doctrine that indigenous peoples in certain parts of the British Empire encountered under humanitarian governance.

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Endnotes:

1 For instance, there have been recent studies linking the histories of settler-humanitarian contests in the Cape Colony and Britain: Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); of racial thought in India and New Zealand: Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); of gossip and scandal in Cape Town and Sydney: Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820–1850* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004); of colonial governance in Australia, South Africa, and London: Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815–1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); of sex and regulation in Britain, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, and elsewhere: Richard Phillips, *Sex, Politics and Empire: A Postcolonial Geography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) and Philip Howell, *Geographies of Regulation: Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); of forced labour in South Africa and Indonesia: Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); of economic activity in Britain and the settler colonies: Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World c. 1850–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and of white supremacist discourse in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and Britain: Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

2 For an introduction to the concept of life geography as opposed to biography, see Stephen Daniels and Catherine Nash, "Life Paths: Geography and Biography," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004): 449–58. Both Miles Ogborn's Global lives: Britain and the world, 1550–1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and my own and David Lambert's *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) try to render stories of particular mobile lives across empire in such a way that they yield insight into more extensive sets of connections that were both shaping and being shaped by other "colonial" lives contemporaneously.

3 Arthur also served in Canada and India, but there is no space in this paper to track his trajectory beyond Tasmania. I intend to do so elsewhere.

4 See Henry Reynolds, "Genocide in Tasmania," in *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York: Berghahn, 2004), 127–9.

5 Even in recent narratives that seek to challenge conventional nation-state-centred history, the hold that notions of space as absolute have on the imagination is often manifested in rigid distinctions between metropole" and "colony," or between "particular" and "universal." To give an example, Christopher Bayly, in his impressive *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 2, draws on Arjun Appadurai to describe the "paradox that global forces and local forces 'cannibalized' or fed off each other, long before the 'present age'." "So," he writes: "in the nineteenth century, nation-states and contending territorial empires took on sharper lineaments and became more antagonistic to each other at the very same time as the similarities, connections and linkages between them proliferated. Broad forces of global

change strengthened the appearance of difference between human communities. But those differences were increasingly expressed in similar ways."

6 Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 68.

7 Martin Jones, "Phase Space: Geography, Relational Thinking, and Beyond," *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (2009): 487–506.

8 For some of the key theoretical influences here, see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006).

9 Ash Amin, "Regions Unbound: Towards a New Politics of Place," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B* 86 (2004): 34.

10 A start has certainly been made with recent transnational/biographical approaches by, for instance, Adele Perry, "The Autocracy of Love and the Legitimacy of Empire: Intimacy, Power and Scandal in Nineteenth-Century Metlakahtlah," *Gender & History* 16, no. 2 (August 2004): 261–88; Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Kirsten McKenzie, *A Swindler's Progress: Nobles and Convicts in the Age of Liberty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Elizabeth Elbourne's current project on transnational family histories also promises to flesh out this agenda.

11 For an excellent collection on the embodiment of various imperial relations, see Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne, eds., *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

12 The relationship between mobile subjectivity and networked space — and the use of biographical forms of writing to explore this relationship — resonates strongly with work in the field of migration research, where there have been calls for the use of auto/biographical approaches to allow researchers to understand the motivations that underpin migration decisions and thus to recognize human beings as "pro-active, socially embedded, intentional agents who influence and are influenced by the social worlds in which they are located." See A.M. Findlay and F.L.N. Li, "An Auto-biographical Approach to Understanding Migration: The case of Hong Kong Emigrants," *Area* 29 (1997): 53. See also K.H. Halfacree and P.J. Boyle, "The Challenge Facing Migration Research: The Case for a Biographical Approach," *Progress in Human Geography* 17 (1993): 333–48; A.M. Findlay and F.L.N. Li, "Methodological issues in researching migration," *Professional Geographer* 51 (1997): 50–9.

13 Massey, *For Space*, 154.

14 David Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 183.

15 Ibid. Similarly, James Clifford's way of challenging the "myth of personal coherence" in traditional biography is to bring the "background" of a life as close to the surface as possible, by developing a "narrative of transindividual occasions." In such a narrative, "[i]ndividuals become meeting points for influences, no longer static but mobile, effusive, decentred, a process not a thing." James Clifford, "'Hanging up looking glasses at odd corners': Ethnobiographical prospects," in *Studies in Biography*, ed. D. Aaron (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 44, 52. The conceptual dispersal, or "decentring," of the autonomous individual and unified life has, if anything, then, emphasised the intersection of the geographical and biographical, in overlapping domains of self and place, personality and identity, spatiality and subjectivity.

16 Miles Ogborn's recent *Global Lives* is an attempt to interweave such stories with those of better known lives.

17 As Christopher Brown argues when vindicating his fresh study of the anti-slavery campaign, "It may seem that the last thing needed is additional work on the first abolitionists. But the

problem, I have come to realize, is less that they have received too much attention than that they have received too much of the wrong kind of attention." Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 245.

18 For the significance of this war in forging networks among colonial administrators, see Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*.

19 A.G.L. Shaw, *Sir George Arthur, Bart, 1784–1854* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Press, 1980), 15–16.

20 Ibid., 15.

21 Quoted in ibid., 188.

22 Ibid., 229.

23 M.C.I. Levy, *Governor George Arthur: A Colonial Benevolent Despot* (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1953); C.R. Sanderson, ed., *The Arthur Papers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957).

24 See Roger Norman Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795–1815* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979); and Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The Story of the West India Regiments of the British Army* (Hertford: Hansib Caribbean, 1997).

25 The National Archives, UK (hereafter TNA), CO 123/25, Arthur to Bathurst, 7 November 1816.

26 Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 22.

27 Ibid., 17.

28 Levy, *Governor George Arthur*.

29 Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 1987).

30 For example, see Sarah Stickney Ellis, *Women of England, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* (London: Dodo Press, 1839).

31 John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

32 John Angell James, *The Family Monitor, or a Help to Domestic Happiness* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster), 21.

33 Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 19.

34 Honduras was not, technically, a British colony, but rather a settlement of some 150 British settlers, mostly mahogany cutters and merchants, 900 free blacks and 3,000 enslaved people tolerated on Spanish colonial territory.

35 They would go on to have six more children in subsequent postings.

36 See Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, "Masculinity 'Race', and Family in the Colonies: Protecting Aborigines in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Gender, Place and Culture* 16, no.1 (2009): 65–76.

37 Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 215.

38 Quoted in Levy, *Governor George Arthur*, 12–13.

39 See Catherine Hall, Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867 (Cambridge: Verso, 2002).

40 Quoted in Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 23.

41 O.N. Bolland, *The Formation of a Colonial Society: Belize, From Conquest to Crown Colony* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 70; Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 40; Levy, *Governor George Arthur*, 16–36.

42 Linda Newson, *Aboriginal and Spanish Colonial Trinidad: A Study in Cultural Contact* (New York: Academic Press, 1976); Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad 1783–1962* (London: Heinemann, 1981).

43 TNA, CO 123/31, Arthur to Bathurst, 15 June 1820.

44 In the lengthier study that I am currently preparing, I would like to examine in more detail the ways in which Arthur's individual agency was destabilized, redirected, or rendered ineffective during the frequent bouts of unbearable stress that he endured. Arthur suffered tremendously as a result of settlers' antagonism and their ability and determination to mobilize allies against him in parliament. His period of leave between Honduras and Van Diemen's Land was occasioned by this stress and, before he could advise on the Protectorates in London during 1837, he had to spend weeks recuperating from an "afflicted mind" at home in Plymouth. Dwelling more on these episodes would have meant taking more seriously the way in which the intersecting relationships that define subjectivity are inevitably embodied, and in a far from stable state. See Esme Cleall, "Thinking With Missionaries: Discourses of Difference in India and Southern Africa c1840–1895," (Ph.D. diss., University College London, 2009), for illness among missionaries and its political effects.
45 Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 57.
46 *Blackwood's Magazine*, xxvii, 1830. During his period on leave, he also cultivated connections with other evangelical reformers, including James Stephen and Zachary Macaulay.
47 George Arthur, *Observations Upon Secondary Punishment* (Hobart, 1833) and *Defence of Transportation in Reply to the Remarks of the Archbishop of Durham* (London: George Cowie, 1835).
48 Quoted in Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 83.
49 Reynolds, "Genocide in Tasmania?," 143.
50 See Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People* (London: Penguin, 1995) and James Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2009).
51 Reynolds, "Genocide in Tasmania?," 130.
52 N.J.B. Plomley, *Friendly Mission. The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829–1834* (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966), 51.
53 Ibid., 576, fn 2. See Reynolds, "Genocide in Tasmania?," 141–3.
54 *Colonial Times* (8 December 1826).
55 Quoted in Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 60; Reynolds, "Geoncide in Tasmania?," 146.
56 See Reynolds, "Genocide in Tasmania?," 135–6.
57 Shaw*, Sir George Arthur*, 125; Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*.
58 Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*; Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*; Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 2nd ed. (Allen and Unwin: Crows Nest NSW, 1996).
59 Arthur informed the Colonial Secretary, Viscount Goderich, in 1831, that Robinson had rendered "a most important service to the whole community," one "worth ten times the amount" he was paid. Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, 132.
60 Ibid., 132.
61 Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 2.
62 British Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements) with Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index (1836–7)* VII (Reprinted, Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 75.
63 See Lester, *Imperial Networks*; Elizabeth Elbourne, "The Sin of the Settler: The 1835–36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates Over Virtue and Conquest in the Early Nineteenth-century British White Settler Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4 (Winter 2003): 1–33; and Zoë Laidlaw, "Aunt Anna's Report: The Buxton Women and the Aborigines Select Committee," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 32 (2004): 1–28.
64 Reynolds, "Genocide in Tasmania?," 142; Levy, *Governor George Arthur*, 301–46.
65 Levy, *Governor George Arthur*, 347–50. In December of that year, Arthur received his posting to Upper Canada.
66 Michael Cannon, *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vols. 2A and 2B (Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1983), 365–91; Roger Millis, *Waterloo Creek: The Australia Day Massacre of 1838* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1992), 379.

67 See Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, "Protecting Aborigines in Early Nineteenth Century Australia and New Zealand," *The New Zealand Geographer* 64 (2008): 205–20.

68 James Belich, Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Richard Broome, Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800 (Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2005); M. Lousberg, "Dr Edward Shortland and the Politics of Ethnography," (Ph.D. diss., University of Otago, 2007); Jessica Mitchell, "'Country Belonging to Me': Land and Labour on Aboriginal Missions and Protectorate Stations, 1830–1850," *Eras* 6 (2004), <http://www.arts.monash. edu.au/eras/edition_6/mitchellarticle.htm>, (viewed 12 January 2010).