1 Colonization and humanitarianism: Histories, geographies and biographies

This book is an attempt to work through a paradox. Just at the time when elite Britons decided to abolish slavery abroad and reform governance at home; just when the first global campaign on behalf of distant and 'less fortunate' indigenous peoples was emerging; and just when colonial officials were first instructed to govern humanely, hundreds of thousands of Britons were encouraged to invade and occupy indigenous peoples' land on an unprecedentedly extensive scale. A British governmental responsibility to protect seems to have emerged at the same time and in the same spaces as that government assumed the right to colonize.

How were governmental dispositions, that we would now call 'humanitarian', reconciled with the violent settler colonization of Australia, New Zealand, southern Africa and North America? We focus on particular governmental figures and spaces, and on the period between 1815 and 1860, but we hope also to develop a more general argument: that this episode of 'humanely' governed British imperial expansion and indigenous devastation established an intriguingly ambivalent foundation for subsequent humanitarian registers of government. Michel Foucault noted that 'the history of various forms of rationality is sometimes more effective in unsettling our certitudes and dogmatism than is abstract criticism', and it is in this spirit that we wish to revisit the colonial genealogies of modern humanitarian governance.[1] We argue that violent colonial conquest was foundational and intrinsic to the shared history of British humanitarianism and governmentality.

Many analysts of contemporary Western humanitarian interventions see the penetration of humanitarian ideals and rhetoric into governance as a recent phenomenon; in the USA stemming from Bill Clinton's

---

[1] M. Foucault, *Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason*, The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered at Stanford University, October 10 and 16, 1979, available online at http://foucault.info/documents/foucault.omnesEtSingulatim.en.html.

1

administration and in Britain's case dating from Tony Blair's doctrine of the international community, and *The Responsibility to Protect*.[2] This is to assume that prior to these recent imbrications, humanitarians constituted a lobby extrinsic to government, capable of influencing policy in some cases and failing to do so in others. What is often overlooked is that humanitarian dispositions and rationalities extended to those exercising governance as well as those seeking to influence them. It is widely recognized that the early nineteenth-century British colonization of southern lands was accompanied by humanitarian lobbying, notably from missionaries 'on the spot', and from the British metropolitan-based Aborigines' Protection Society.[3] But a certain register of humanitarian thought and action, we argue, also constituted the *governance* of these new settler colonial spaces. Governance was framed in a moral vernacular that was central to humanitarianism more broadly.[4] It is this intersection between humanitarianism and colonial governance, in the new British colonies of the southern hemisphere, upon which this book focuses.

In stating that colonial governance could be humanitarian, we do not wish to lend credence to conservative reinterpretations of Britain's

---

[2] International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: IDRC, 2001). For overviews, see M. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (London: Cornell University Press, 2011) and B. Simms and D.J.B. Trim, 'Towards a History of Humanitarian Intervention', in B. Simms and D.J.B. Trim (eds.), *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). For critical analyses of recent 'humanitarian' interventions see N.J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford University Press, 2000) and D. Kennedy, *The Dark Side of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

[3] The literature on missionary humanitarianism is now extensive. See, for example, B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Apollos, 1990); A. Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004); N. Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2005); E. Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840–1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). On the Aborigines' Protection Society, see R. Rainger, 'Philanthropy and Science in the 1830's: The British and Foreign Aborigines' Protection Society', *Man*, 15, 4 (1980), 702–17; Z. Laidlaw, 'Heathens, Slaves and Aborigines: Thomas Hodgkin's Critique of Missions and Anti-slavery', *History Workshop Journal*, 64, 1 (2007), 113–61; J. Heartfield, *The Aborigines' Protection Society: Humanitarian Imperialism in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa, and the Congo, 1836–1909* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). On the relations between missionary enterprise and the networks of humanitarian politicking, see also A. Johnston, *The Paper War: Morality, Print Culture, and Power in Colonial New South Wales* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2011).

[4] We borrow the phrase 'moral vernacular' from S. Reid-Henry, 'On the Politics of our Humanitarian Present', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 31 2013, 753–60.

empire as a humane and progressive force in the world.[5] Humanitarian justifications are well known to have supported various forms of dispossession and exploitation. As Ann Laura Stoler remarks, 'appeals to moral uplift, compassionate charity, appreciation of cultural diversity, and protection of "brown women and children" against "brown men", . . . were woven into the very weft of empire – [they were] how control over and seizure of markets, land and labor were justified, worked through and worked out'.[6] Appeals for the protection of indigenous peoples against white and even British men, often but not always articulated through class distinctions among colonizers, were also intrinsic to the legitimation of Britain's governance of newly colonized spaces. We contend that British colonization was humanitarian in some sense, not in order to commend colonization, but rather in what we hope is a constructive critique of humanitarianism and its relationship with colonialism.

Humanitarianism has always been a spatially extensive and ambivalent discourse and practice, exerted through different agencies and expressed in different registers. These agencies include informal networks of individuals such as missionaries sharing evangelical concern, organized lobbying groups, private practitioners and states. Their registers of humane action range from the mobilization of polemics in petitions and the press, through the dispensing of charity, to the drawing up of policies attending to the precariousness of given populations. Humanitarianism places relatively privileged people on one side of the globe in relation to those they perceive as being in need of assistance on the other side and in certain spaces in between.

Our enquiry into the relationship between humanitarianism and the governance of colonization is necessarily spatially extensive too. We identify certain episodes in the elaboration of humanitarian governance across different sites of empire, beginning with the amelioration of slavery in the Caribbean in the 1820s. Amelioration marked the incorporation of humanitarian principles into the apparatus of governance – the elaboration of a new humanitarian art of government. Protectors of Slaves were appointed to effect a new project: improving the status, morals

---

[5] At the more subtle end of the conservative spectrum see N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2004) and at the more clumsy end, K. Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History: Volume One, Van Diemen's Land 1803–1847* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2004).

[6] A.L. Stoler, 'On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty', *Public Culture*, 18, 1 (2006), 134. For elaboration of the argument that sympathy requires a power imbalance between the object and agent of sympathy, and that such an imbalance underpinned colonial governance, see A. Rai, *Rule of Sympathy: Sentiment, Race, and Power, 1750–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

and welfare of the enslaved in the Caribbean and the Cape Colony. It was thus amelioration, rather than just the triumph of the antislavery lobby in abolishing the transatlantic slave trade, that entailed the British state assuming humanitarian responsibility for its colonized subjects. For four decades thereafter, men occupying positions at varying levels within colonial governance conducted experiments not just in the more humane treatment of enslaved and otherwise exploited populations, but also in the 'benevolent' colonization of previously independent peoples.

Amelioration policies were translated into policies for the protection of indigenous peoples in southern Africa, the Australian colonies and New Zealand in the 1830s and 1840s through the mobility of 'humane' officials and ideas, and as a result of the compromises with prior inhabitants necessary to effect the invasion and resettlement of their lands. The outcomes were very different in different places, as we seek to demonstrate here with case studies from Australia, New Zealand and the Cape Colony. Packages of humane governmental measures could be coordinated in London, but such measures were 'mutable mobiles' – capable of importation to various sites only when their nature and form changed as they literally *took place*. The men charged with effecting these policies nevertheless sought consistently to render British emigrant settlers' invasion compatible with both the protection and the salvation of indigenous peoples.

In tracing these humanitarian-governmental trajectories we wish to flesh out an episode that has been relatively neglected, both in histories of British colonialism and in those of modern Western humanitarianism. A recent resurgence of interest in nineteenth-century British colonialism, from a variety of disciplines, has seen significant attention paid to humanitarians and their conflicts, compromises and collusion with projects of settler encroachment on indigenous peoples' lands. However, the focus has mainly been on missionaries seeking to uphold the projects of Christian conversion and the civilization of indigenous peoples *in situ* against more disregarding and destructive planter or settler colonial projects, or on humanitarian lobbyists, external to government, who pursued similar objectives through personal, political and press networks.[7] It is

---

[7] See, for example, C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); A. Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); E. Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Z. Laidlaw, '"Aunt Anna's Report": the Buxton women and the Aborigines Select Committee, 1835–37', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 32, 2 (May 2004), 1–28; Johnston, *The Paper War*.

undeniable that many governors and lower-level functionaries also considered themselves inclined towards humanitarian objectives, or to the exercise of 'humanity' as they would have put it, and yet there have been relatively few works examining the ways in which their ideals functioned as an intrinsic aspect of their governmentality.[8]

Histories written more to trace the genealogies of modern Western humanitarianism than to understand colonialism also tend to overlook the incorporation of a distinctly humanitarian register within early nineteenth-century colonial governmentality. They tend to identify the roots of humanitarianism in two separate locales and periods. The first was the transatlantic antislavery movement of the late eighteenth century, culminating in abolition of the slave trade in 1807. This brought about a concern on the part of the British beneficiaries of slavery for those distant strangers whose exploitation was intrinsic to their privilege. Although its priority was to ensure the ending of the suffering associated with the middle passage and the corresponding atonement of the British nation for past sins, it has also been argued that in the broader antislavery movement lay the origins of a 'developmental' strand of humanitarian intervention – one designed to lift the victims of global inequalities out of their disadvantaged social and economic condition and render them more akin to their benefactors.[9] The second locus for the birth of modern humanitarianism was, by most accounts, the Battle of Solferino, fought between the Franco-Sardinian Alliance and the Austrian army in current-day Italy in 1859. It was as a result of his witnessing the aftermath of this battle that Henri Dunant initiated the processes that led to the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross.[10] Herein lay the seeds of the emergency relief wing of the modern humanitarian movement.[11]

This genealogy, one is tempted to say of a transatlantic antislavery 'mother' and a European battlefield 'father' for modern Western humanitarianism, needs reassessing in the light of trans-imperial governmental experiments in violently colonized settler colonial spaces. The colonization of most of the Australian colonies, much of south-eastern

---

[8] For excellent recent exceptions see Z. Laidlaw, 'Investigating Empire: Humanitarians, Reform and the Commission of Eastern Inquiry', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40, 5 (2012), 749–68, and T. Ballantyne, 'Humanitarian Narratives: Knowledge and the Politics of Mission and Empire', *Social Sciences and Missions*, 24 (2011), 233–64.

[9] In Chapter 6, we trace this developmental strand more firmly to the governance of both settler societies and India in the mid nineteenth century.

[10] See J.R. Slaughter, 'Humanitarian Reading', in Wilson and Brown (eds.), *Humanitarianism and Suffering*, pp. 88–107.

[11] For an account of this dominant narrative and a pioneering attempt to reassess it, see Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*.

Africa and New Zealand occurred largely in the period between the antislavery movement and the Battle of Solferino.[12] As post-abolition amelioration transmuted and relocated from a Caribbean context to projects of protection and salvation in antipodean and southern African contexts, and as the antislavery lobby continued to campaign for the emancipation of slaves in the 1820s and early to mid 1830s, a critical episode in the history of governmental humanitarianism was developed. This episode grounded 'humanitarian reason' in the invasion and the regulation of colonization.[13] We develop this argument by seeing the individuals who sought to effect humanitarianism within colonial governance as biographical subjects worthy of attention in their own right, and by understanding the contexts in which they lived, and to which they contributed, as dynamic assemblages within which they had some, albeit limited, capacity to effect change. Each of these underpinning concepts requires some further elaboration before we turn to our case studies.

Humanitarianism

The Oxford Dictionary definition of a humanitarian is 'one who advocates or practices humane [itself defined as benevolent, compassionate] action, philanthropist; one who seeks to promote human welfare'.[14] As Didier Fassin points out, the 'moral landscape' of humanitarianism – consisting today of aid organizations, relief operations and governmental interventions – 'is generally taken for granted as a mere expansion of a supposed natural humaneness that would be innately associated with our being human'.[15] Accordingly, humanitarianism has often been treated as though it were a natural disposition 'without history'.[16] However, partly as a result of critiques of contemporary 'humanitarian' geostrategic interventions and partly because of historians' turn towards critical cultural

---

[12] As did that of large parts of Canada, although this features less prominently in this book, in part, because different maritime circuits tended to generate different (but as we will see in the case of George Arthur, intersecting) networks of 'humane' governors. Mainly though, Canada does not feature here very much simply because of the limits of regional expertise and space. We would be greatly encouraged if scholars with that expertise were to find something in our argument that could be taken further.

[13] That phrase borrowed from D. Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

[14] B. Sykes (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 6th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 523–4.

[15] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, p. ix.

[16] B. Simms and D.J.B. Trim, 'Towards a History of Humanitarian Intervention', in B. Simms and D.J.B. Trim (eds.), *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 2.

history, the specificities of Western humanitarianism – its 'passion of compassion', as Hannah Arendt put it – have been interrogated more closely of late.[17] Humanitarianism's temporal specificities are one of three elements that we wish to draw out here; its specific and dynamic geographies, and its different registers, including interpenetration with projects of governmentality, are the others.

Temporality

Nietzsche's nineteenth-century complaint that the 'overestimation of and predilection for pity ... is something new: hitherto philosophers have been at one as to the *worthlessness* of pity', has been taken more seriously by recent scholars, as a comment on humanitarianism's historical novelty.[18] Over the past two decades, prominent and controversial Western foreign policies, supposedly motivated by humanitarian ideals, have sparked unprecedented interest in humanitarian intervention, past and present. The shock of the Rwandan genocide, blamed in part on non-intervention, has been succeeded first by a growing confidence in the alliance between humanitarian principles and Western military intervention in the Balkans and Sierra Leone, and then by increasing concern about what that alliance is doing for humanitarianism's legitimacy as a result of the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.[19]

But it is not just critical analyses of contemporary events that have prompted a search for the genealogy of humanitarian interventions. With the beginnings of a 'cultural turn' in history writing during the 1980s, the relatively recent origins of humanitarian sensibilities and discourses have

---

[17] H. Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 90. Non-Western forms of humane concern for distant strangers have received less attention, although, as Bornstein and Redfield emphasize, they are no less worthy of historical analysis: E. Bornstein and P. Redhill, 'An Introduction to the Anthropology of Humanitarianism', in E. Bornstein and P. Redhill (eds.), *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics* (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2011), pp. 3–21. Jonathan Benthall points out that Islam has generated similar claims to humanitarian universalism to those of Christianity, and has been similarly proselytizing and expansionist: J. Benthall, 'Islamic Humanitarianism in Adversarial Context', in Bornstein and Redhill, *Forces of Compassion*, pp. 99–122.

[18] F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 19, quoted in S. Moyn, 'Empathy in History: Empathizing With Humanity', *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), 399.

[19] C. Douzinas, *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (Abingdon: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007); Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*; J. Bricmont, *Humanitarian Imperialism* (London: Monthly Review Press, 2006) and S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

been noted more explicitly.[20] Thomas Laqueur, for instance, drew attention to the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century invention of those narrative forms that encapsulate and convey humanitarian sensibilities. New narrative structures like the novel, the medical report, even the autopsy, all spoke during this period 'in extraordinarily detailed fashion about the pains and deaths of ordinary people in such a way as to make apparent the causal chains that might connect the actions of … readers with the sufferings of … subjects'.[21] As Laqueur elaborates, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 'stories and sentiments spread their influence to encompass distant as well as nearby people and to compel action and not just tears. Narratives that expanded the "circle of the we" – of those to whom one owes humane behaviour, "humanity" – worked in ways much like beauty works in art: they came to have the power to command "slow looking", "attentive looking", an insistent regard not of a work of art but of a person and a condition in its particularity'.[22]

There are various ways of interpreting the rise of such concern for, and also action on behalf of, distant strangers in the late eighteenth century, including functionalist accounts of its role in easing the class tensions of the industrial revolution, cultural explanations founded on a Christian sense of obligation and the need for redemption for new forms of economic exploitation, and evolutionary biological ones based on the advantages of reciprocity in a more interconnected and complex world. Transcending these is Michael Barnett's claim 'that a conjunction of material and ideational forces have formed a particular meaning of humanity' in the last three centuries.[23] For Barnett, it is faith, both secular and religious, that underpins the association between humanitarianism

---

[20] Terminology relating to the histories of humanitarianism has become a contentious issue of late, with scholars such as Claire McLisky pointing out that use of the term 'humanitarian' is anachronistic in the early nineteenth century and preferring to use the term 'philanthropist'. Here, we use 'humanitarianism' to refer to the assemblage comprised of 'donors', 'recipients' and the people representing humanitarian discourse who actively engage with those recipients, whom we refer to as 'practitioners'. We will also use the term 'humanitarians' to refer to both 'donors' and 'practitioners': C. McLisky, '"Due Observance of Justice, and the Protection of their Rights": Philanthropy, Humanitarianism and Moral Purpose in the Aborigines' Protection Society circa 1837 and its portrayal in Australian Historiography, 1883–2003', *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, 11 (2005), 57–66.

[21] Thomas W. Laqueur, 'Bodies, details, and humanitarian narrative', in L. Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 177.

[22] Thomas W. Laqueur, 'Mourning, pity, and the work of narrative', in R.A. Wilson and R.D. Brown (eds.), *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 31–57.

[23] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 26.

and modernity. He cites the former Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) director Rony Braumon's assertion that 'I am not sure if progress exists, but it is good to act as if I believe it exists'.[24] While Nicolas Guilhot believes that it is the *return* of faith that characterizes contemporary humanitarianism, a faith that 'comes to the surface when the structures of the modern, secular nation-state fail to alleviate the tragic condition of modernity', and Samuel Moyn dates a new humanitarian faith to the failure of secular utopianism from the 1970s, the association between humanitarian governance and evangelical Christianity was an obvious one in the early nineteenth century.[25] Fassin 'privileges an essentially Christian interpretation of humanitarianism. Associated with suffering as redemption, with a language of salvation, with notions of absolute good and evil, with the assertion of the sacred character of life, and with an idea of universal equality, [Western] humanitarianism is inscribed within a specifically Christian history'.[26] According to Fassin, the fascination with suffering that characterizes the current culture and its particular manifestation in the politics of compassion can be traced to the Passion of Christ.[27]

It was no coincidence that the late eighteenth-century evangelical revival in Britain coincided with the assumption of an imperial role in the world.[28] The greater inclusivity of the category of 'humanity' that had begun to emerge by the 1800s was fundamental to the extension of religious obligation and assistance beyond the boundaries of the familiar and proximate, to embrace contact with unfamiliar cultures.[29] The thrust of much of the recent literature, however, from both international relations- and historically-minded scholars, is that there is nothing universal about the actual relationships that humanitarianism has fostered. Western humanitarianism is a manifestation not only of relatively recent

[24] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 238.
[25] N. Guilhot, 'The Anthropologist as Witness: Humanitarianism between Ethnography and Critique', *Humanity*, 3, 1 (2012), 81–100; S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010). See also Reid-Henry, 'On the Politics of our Humanitarian Present'.
[26] Guilhot, 'The Anthropologist as Witness', p. 97.   [27] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*.
[28] B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1795–1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); S. Sivasundaram, *Nature and the Godly Empire: Science and Evangelical Mission in the Pacific, 1795–1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[29] See K. Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture', *The American Historical Review*, 100, 2 (1995), 303–34; E. Bornstein, 'The Impulse of Philanthropy', *Cultural Anthropology*, 24, 4 (2009), 622–51; Wilson and Brown (eds.), *Humanitarianism and Suffering*; Bass, *Freedom's Battle*; M. Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain: Slavery, Cruelty, and the Rise of Humanitarianism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

and religiously circumscribed, but also of quite geographically specific material interconnections, and of the ideas that emerged in association with them in the modern West.

In this book we attempt to trace the different forms that humanitarian governmentality took as it dealt with diverse social assemblages in varying colonial times and places. Broadly, the victory of the abolitionist campaign in the early 1800s gave rise to amelioration policies to deal with the governance of subjects considered equally human and yet still enslaved in the Caribbean during the 1820s; amelioration morphed into policies of Protection once independent indigenous peoples' land was invaded by emigrant Britons on an unprecedented scale in the southern hemisphere during the 1830s and early 1840s; and finally, as our concluding chapter suggests, Protection split into projects of ethnographic salvage for 'dying races' and humane governance of colonized subjects through utilitarian notions of forceful Development from the 1840s.

Spatiality

As this brief résumé of humanitarian governance suggests, the spatiality of humanitarianism is as deserving of critical enquiry as its temporality. As Simon Reid-Henry points out, 'humanitarian reason and action are obviously shot through with an uneven imaginative geography: globally we speak of suffering populations, locally, in rich countries, we speak of individuals in need'.[30] Humanitarian projects, regardless of the register in which they are articulated, are assembled between three kinds of agents: 'donors', 'practitioners' and 'recipients'. Donors are those who supply the resources and political backing to enable practitioners to intervene in distant space; practitioners are these active intermediaries, the people who try to effect donors' intentions in those spaces; and 'recipients', or more recently, 'partners', are the intended beneficiaries of humanitarian interventions. Through networks between these individual and institutional components, humanitarianism 'mobilizes sympathy and technology, physicians and logisticians'.[31] Humanitarianism is thus an assemblage of disparate agents reproducing flexible and dynamic registers of ideas and practice with the ultimate welfare of others in mind, but always through a particular global geography.[32]

---

[30] Reid-Henry, 'On the Politics of Our Humanitarian Present', citing Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, p. 253.
[31] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, p. x.
[32] D. Lambert and A. Lester, 'Geographies of Colonial Philanthropy', *Progress in Human Geography*, 28, 3 (2004), 320–41.

Humanitarianism's donor–philanthropist–recipient chains span the Earth, transcending scale and connecting people with very different capacities and dispositions. Power imbalances are integral. As Reid-Henry notes of Fassin's analysis, 'it is precisely ... tensions, between inequality and solidarity, and between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance, that [are] constitutive of the form of power that ... humanitarian reason [is] capable of producing'.[33] Different motivations and understandings along humanitarian's chains of connection and between differently empowered participants are not just an unfortunate by-product of humanitarian intervention; they are intrinsic to it. Donors are persuaded to back humanitarian projects by representations of recipients that active practitioners know are reductionist and patronizing, for instance, while recipients often have different intentions and motivations for utilizing the resources provided by active practitioners from those which the latter imagine.[34] At each of its connective points, actors within humanitarian networks perform roles for the benefit of those next along the chain, with practitioners – be they missionaries, Protectors or aid workers – 'on the ground' having always to perform dual roles for the benefit of both donors 'above' them and recipients 'below' them in the chain. The networks formed by these multiple humanitarian chains bypass some places and peoples as they link others. As Laqueur puts it, 'sympathy and fellow feeling for the suffering of others produced a strange moral geography'.[35]

It is not just the specific geography of connections along humanitarian global chains that matter. In our telling of humanitarian histories, it is also the very partial geographies of evidence that allow us to analyse humanitarian action. Overwhelmingly, the sources available to historians of humanitarianism are concentrated on those segments of the global chains that connect donors with practitioners. Although the records of imperial officials, mission societies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) might enable us to construct a postcolonial critique of donors' paternalistic and ethnocentric assumptions and of practitioners' need to pander to them, they tell us little about the engagements between practitioners who deliver humanitarian resources 'on the ground' and those 'recipients' who make use of them. The problem of accounting for the agency of 'recipients' – how they may resist, utilize or ignore humanitarian

---

[33] Reid-Henry, 'On the Politics of Our Humanitarian Present'.

[34] See R. Skinner and A. Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire: Introduction', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40, 5 (2012), 729–47.

[35] Laqueur, 'Mourning, pity and the work of narrative', in Wilson and Brown (eds.), *Humanitarianism and Suffering*, p. 33.

interventions – still plagues the humanitarian sector and tracing the effect of such interventions in the past is all the more difficult.

Barnett's recent attempt to narrate the history of modern Western humanitarianism is motivated by a desire to pin down the temporal and spatial specificities of humanitarianism in an unprecedentedly comprehensive way.[36] He begins by noting that modern humanitarianism can be distinguished by three features: 'it is organized and [significantly for the argument here] part of governance, connects the immanent to the transcendent, and is directed at those in other lands'. Humanitarianism is, for Barnett, 'a concept in motion that has several enduring tensions', including 'an ethics that are simultaneously universal and circumstantial; a commitment to emancipation that can justify forms of domination . . . and ministration to the needs of both the giver and the recipient'.[37] Barnett's history is a milestone in the questioning of both Eurocentric and presentist understandings of humanitarian intervention. It foregrounds the relationship between the extension of Western concern for distant strangers and the expansion of Western empires, and it challenges the conventional narrative of the non-political origins of emergency relief. As such it lays a welcome foundation on which to build.

Barnett reinforces a recognition that we need to go well beyond the European mainsprings of Enlightenment thought to comprehend modern Western humanitarianism. Colonial encounters were clearly intrinsic to a globalized sense of concern and responsibility. The new combinations of human–material components that both facilitated and resulted from transoceanic exploration and conquest, the new ways in which assemblages of these components were fashioned, and the new technologies of communication that enabled distanced representations, all helped engender modern Western European dispositions towards other humans. Colonial relationships were the means by which the distance and difference that lie at the heart of humanitarianism came into Europeans' view; the means by which the obligations of community could be selectively telescoped across space and transformed in the process.

From the late eighteenth century, Britons in particular were brought into relation – were made aware of being a part of, and of *feeling* a part

---

[36] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*. See also L. Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007) and Moyn, *The Last Utopia*. Note that the distinction between human rights – a discourse of rights – and humanitarianism – a discourse of needs – is blurred to greater or lesser extents in each of these works. On this distinction, see R.A. Wilson and R.D. Brown, 'Introduction', in Wilson and Brown (eds.), *Humanitarianism and Suffering*, pp. 4–9.

[37] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp. 21, 30.

of – a new global assemblage of empire.[38] New patterns of responsibility and new objects of compassion were potential consequences of these novel relations. The geographical and temporal specificity of humanitarian intervention reflects the fact that specific components have to be brought into alignment in specific ways across space at a planetary scale for humanitarian feelings to *take place*. 'Ethics', observed Emmanuel Levinas, is 'first and foremost an event. Something must happen to me in order for me to stop being "a force that continues on its way" and wake up instead to pangs of conscience', and for that 'something' to happen, a specific and affective relationship across space has to be formed.[39]

Thomas Haskell points out that such a relationship was first developed between Britons and Africans who had been transported to the Caribbean, as a result of the abolitionist campaign. Antislavery activists ensured that 'the conventional limits of moral responsibility observed by an influential minority in society expanded to encompass evils that previously had fallen outside anyone's sphere of responsibility'.[40] A humane imperative for intervention to alleviate the plight of the enslaved was rendered sufficiently ordinary and familiar through antislavery narratives that failure to act 'would constitute a suspension of routine' and, thus, in itself be construed as a contributory cause of suffering.[41] As Christopher Leslie Brown emphasizes, antislavery activities were conducted with an eye to national atonement for British activities in the Caribbean that were successfully orchestrated and represented in the new media of antislavery and missionary press as sinful, especially in the light of the apparently punitive loss of the American colonies.[42] The success of the campaign – a networked lobby which transcended the public and the private, the non-governmental and the governmental – also ensured that a specifically humanitarian way of *governing* was brought to Britain's colonial possessions, as amelioration policies were effected until such time as enslaved peoples were considered ready for their freedom, some thirty years later.

But it was not just across the spaces of the Caribbean (and, as a by-product, the Cape Colony) and Britain, and within the discourse of

---

[38] H.V. Bowen, 'British conceptions of global empire, 1756–83', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 26, 3 (1998), 1–27.

[39] Finkielkraut, *In The Name of Humanity*, quoted in Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 26.

[40] T.L. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', *The American Historical Review*, 90, 2 (1985), 359. See also T.L. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2', *The American Historical Review*, 90, 3 (1985), 547.

[41] Haskell, 'Capitalism, Part 1', p. 358.

[42] C.L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

antislavery, that new, spatially extensive humanitarian relations were effected. The settler colonies became sites for humanitarian governance in ways that have yet to be fully recognized. Although Joanna Bourke has noted that 'the roles played by subjugated colonies in the creation of the West and the Western "human" cannot be overestimated', *settler* colonial places, where 'ordinary' Britons did the work of violent indigenous dispossession, feature much less prominently in conventional histories of humanitarianism than the slave-holding colonies of the Caribbean.[43] These spaces differed from the Caribbean by virtue of the resilient and sovereign peoples that British invaders had to fight for the land, and by virtue of the fact that they were being colonized in conjunction with the definition, elaboration and application of humanitarian ideals as part of the art of governance. It was in these spaces that the injunction to govern colonial space humanely was most severely tested during the first half of the nineteenth century; in which, as Colonial Secretary William Gladstone put it in 1846, 'the Crown should stand in all matters between the colonists and the natives'.[44]

The settler colonies differed also from that other site of concentrated historiographical attention, British India, where the violence of conquest was effected by a professional soldiery and elite East India Company officer corps.[45] With hundreds of thousands of Britons emigrating to them, and with friends and family being distributed between them and Britain, the new settler colonial frontiers of the 1820s–40s, including their rapidly growing cities, were more intimate, more 'democratic', and more tightly interwoven with the fabric of the British imperial polity politic.[46] The settler colonies were the sites where the violence of colonialism was most integral to British life. British emigrants in these spaces were interlocutors in the projects of conquest and dispossession, and in

---

[43] J. Bourke, *What it Means to be Human: Reflections From 1791 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2011), p. 94.

[44] Quoted in D.I. Salesa, *Racial Crossings: Race, Intermarriage, and the Victorian British Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 98.

[45] Although it is true that Warren Hastings' trial and Edmund Burke's persuasive argument for a more morally-informed governmental sway in India contributed to late-eighteenth-century Britons' doubts over the humanity and the ethics of their imperial activities at large, and helped generate the foundations of a colonial philanthropy before most metropolitan moral reform movements had gained momentum. See N. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006); M.J. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787–1886* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[46] On the ways in which settler cities were also frontiers, see P. Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

the humanitarian responses to them, to a greater degree than either the planters of the West Indies or the company servants of India in the post-abolition period.[47] As Florence Nightingale noted at the end of our period, 'This question of the fate of Aboriginal populations' at the hands of Britain's emigrants 'is one closely concerning our national honour, and every day enhances its importance'.[48]

Beyond the 'trans-national spaces' comprising humanitarianism, we also seek to engage in this book with the more micro-spaces of humanitarians' interactions with their intended beneficiaries. This means, in our case, moving away from a view in which geographically extensive networks are associated only with colonizers, and in which indigenous societies are seen as exclusively 'local'. In the midst of rapid and violent dispossession in the settler colonies, humanitarian interventions literally provided *ground* on which indigenous projects of individual and family survival, adaptation and resilience could be built, as well as networks across which such projects could be articulated. The concept of 'humanitarian space', in which such ground is developed, has become an explicit focus of discussion among humanitarian agencies today. Claire Magone *et al.* describe humanitarian space as 'the freedom of action and of speech of humanitarians' and during the Kosovo crisis, MSF, for instance, was concerned about losing its 'humanitarian space' as a result of the increasing state embroilment in humanitarian intervention.[49] Humanitarian space is thus now defined as both an actual physical space where humanitarian agencies carry out their activities in sites affected by natural disaster and/or conflict – zones on the ground in which practitioners are able to deliver aid neutrally, impartially and independently – and also a conceptual, abstract space where they can speak and make decisions

---

[47] As Eric Stokes and Uday Mehta have shown, company governance in India was intrinsic to the elaboration of liberal and especially utilitarian philosophies in late eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Britain, but such philosophies were more of an elite affair than the emotive groundswell sustaining humanitarian movements: E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford University Press, 1989); U. Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth Century British Liberal Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 1999). On the ways in which planter associations in the Caribbean were reconfigured after emancipation, see C. Hall, 'The Slave-owner and the Settler: Emancipation and the Re-thinking of Race in the Mid-nineteenth Century', in J. Carey and J. Lydon (eds.), *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections, and Exchange* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

[48] F. Nightingale, 'Note on the Aboriginal races in Australia', *Transactions of the National Association for Promotion of Social Sciences*, (1864), 553, quoted in T. Shellam, '"A mystery to the medical world": Florence Nightingale, Rosendo Salvado and the risk of civilization', *History Australia*, 9, 1 (2012), 109–34. We will return to the question of honour later.

[49] C. Magone, M. Neuman and F. Weissman (eds.), *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed: The MSF Experience* (London: Columbia University Press, 2011).

unchallenged by military or political bodies.[50] This space is 'challenged when states pursue humanitarian goals'.[51] Of course, from our perspective, there has never been 'neutral' humanitarian space. Since amelioration became colonial governmental policy, humanitarianism has always been imbricated with Western state projects and has always been spatialized in various ways.

As Fassin points out, today humanitarianism's 'sites of action are clinics for the poor and refugee camps, a social administration where undocumented migrants are received and a military garrison where earthquake victims are treated'.[52] In our period and places, spaces such as the mission and protectorate station were intended to provide refuge from the catastrophic effects of colonization for indigenous peoples, and resources for the reconstruction (in Eurocentric ways) of indigenous society. They were also often locales in which a critique of surrounding settler practices could be articulated. These spaces were co-created through symbiotic relationships between colonial practitioners and their intended 'beneficiaries', although these relationships did not always work in the ways that donors and practitioners anticipated, and understandings of them by their various participants were not always equivalent. As we will establish, particularly in Chapter 4, rather than being imposed by practitioners, these colonial humanitarian spaces were the products of a tentative and negotiated coming-together of indigenous and colonial geographies within the much broader assemblages of empire.

Governmentality

If humanitarianism has specific temporalities and geographies, it is also manifest in specific registers. The combinations of words, text and images that humanitarian agencies use to express and mobilize concern for vulnerable and distant others, so as to raise consciousness and funds, are different from those mobilized by political lobbies on behalf of state intervention, and these in turn are different from the articulations by governmental figures of their own 'humane' policies. Each humanitarian register corresponds to a particular project of humane intervention – a particular kind of change that the humanitarian is trying to effect in the world on behalf of vulnerable and precarious others. Each such project involves different forms of expression, different combinations of actors

---

[50] DFID, *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*, March 2011, 40.
[51] P. Redfield, 'The Impossible Problem of Neutrality', in E. Bornstein and P. Redfield (eds.), *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics* (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2011), p. 62.
[52] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, p. x.

and different circuits of dissemination and reception. It is these differentiated re-combinations of expressions and actions, at least ostensibly motivated by compassion, that we are referring to when we use the term 'registers' of humanitarianism.

Through the course of its history, humanitarianism's individuals, networks, organizations and states have developed new registers and discarded old ones. Although they are multiple, dynamic and often intersecting, it is useful nonetheless to draw a conceptual distinction between these registers, since the term 'humanitarianism' in itself is incapable of conveying their diversity.[53] In our period, for instance, lobby groups such as the Aborigines' Protection Society functioned as actors in metropolitan-based colonial politics, key nodal points within imperial networks; but the missionaries who often informed such groups were concerned to pursue more evangelical projects focused on spiritual as well as material welfare *in situ*.[54] Governing officials, as we will see, attempted to regulate and order colonial societies in humane ways which were different again, and which were expressed in broad temporal succession, as projects of emancipation, amelioration, conciliation, protection and development. And yet all of these projects, their articulations and their assemblages of people, texts, images and objects – all these registers – were humanitarian in some sense.

A specifically governmental humanitarianism is neither a contemporary novelty, nor universal. As Fassin points out, humanitarian reason 'serves both to define and to justify discourses and practices of the government of human beings'.[55] Our understanding of governmentality is derived above all from Foucault, who sought to describe the practices of government of a population that emerged in Europe from the Renaissance. 'Among all the societies in history, ours – I mean, those that came into being at the end of Antiquity on the Western side of the European continent', he argued:

have perhaps been the most aggressive and the most conquering; they have been capable of the most stupefying violence, against themselves as well as against

---

[53] For a parallel argument in respect of global health, only using 'regime' rather than 'register' (which we feel to be less compartmentalizing), see A. Lakoff, 'Two Regimes of Global Health', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 1, 1 (Fall 2010), 59–79. My thanks to Simon Reid-Henry for alerting me to this source and for discussion of how to develop a finer-grained analysis of humanitarianism.

[54] For an analysis of some of the distinctions between these two groups, see Z. Laidlaw, 'Heathens, Slaves and Aborigines: Thomas Hodgkin's Critique of Missions and Anti-slavery', *History Workshop Journal*, 64, 1 (2007), 133–61.

[55] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, p. 2.

others. They invented a great many different political forms. They profoundly altered their legal structures several times. It must be kept in mind that they alone evolved a strange technology of power treating the vast majority of men as a flock with a few as shepherds. They thus established between them a series of complex, continuous, and paradoxical relationships. This is undoubtedly something singular in the course of history.

For Foucault, governmental rationalization within these societies 'differs from the rationalisation peculiar to economic processes, or to production and communication techniques; it differs from that of scientific discourse. The government of men by men – whether they form small or large groups, whether it is power exerted by men over women, or by adults over children, or by one class over another, or by a bureaucracy over a population – involves a certain type of rationality. It doesn't involve instrumental violence', but rather the inducement by various means to affect behaviour, both of the individual and of the collective: 'right from the start, the state is both individualising and totalitarian'. The 'aim of the modern art of government, or state rationality', for Foucault, is 'to develop those elements constitutive of individuals' lives in such a way that their development also fosters that of the strength of the state'.[56]

Foucault identifies three main sources for the emergence of this modern governmentality in Western Europe: the Christian pastoral model inherited and adapted from the ancients, diplomatic–military techniques for interstate dealings, and what he calls the 'police'.[57] Humanitarian reasoning is intrinsic to each of these. It may relate most obviously to the Christian pastoral model for the provision of codes of conduct and concern for the population as a flock to be tended and cared for, but it informs also the techniques of external governmental relation in the case of humanitarian intervention, and it sits within Foucault's expanded notion of 'police' as that which allows for the functioning of the polity as a whole, by providing welfare to elements of the population in need.[58]

For Foucault, such care is a fundamental aspect of biopower – the technologies of government that progressively replaced the individual power of the sovereign over life and death from the eighteenth century.

---

[56] Foucault, *Omnes et Singulatim*.
[57] S. Elden, 'Governmentality', in D. Gregory, R. Johnson, G. Pratt, M.J. Watts and S. Whatmore (eds.), *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 314; M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*, trans. G. Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); M. Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*, trans. G. Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). See also Foucault, *Omnes et Singulatim*.
[58] S. Elden, 'Governmentality, Calculation, Territory', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 25 (2007), 562–80.

Biopower 'sought to secure conditions optimizing the life of populations in its most immediate biological manifestation', reshaping society 'as a secure, life-supporting environment'.[59] Epistemologies such as demographics, epidemiology, social hygiene and psychiatry, and their institutional inscription within healthcare systems, insurance regimes, social medicine and urban planning constituted 'a new episode in the history of sovereignty' based on 'the dispensation of a modicum of social security, which deeply transformed the logic of government'.[60] As Reid-Henry puts it, 'technologies of care were thus an unavoidable consideration both of and for the modern bureaucratic state … if in his analysis of the emergence of the modern era of government [Foucault] was right to suggest that the new aim of punishing was not to punish less but to punish better, with more universality and to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body, then the same is no less true of the desire to save'.[61]

Beyond being a lobby extrinsic to government, then, one humanitarian register has been intrinsic to modern governmentality.[62] As Fassin argues, humanitarianism enables specifically a mode of governing the 'moral economy of suffering' within a society by dealing with the precariousness of subjects.[63] While the reason behind humanitarian governance remains 'morally untouchable' it 'serves as both an *enabler* and a *limit* on state discourse'.[64] As Foucault remarks, the task of the state in Europe had changed between Machiavelli and the late eighteenth century. It was 'no longer that of fixing and demarcating the territory, but of allowing circulations to take place, of controlling them, sifting the good and the bad, ensuring that things are always in movement'.[65] When it comes to disasters affecting elements of its population, former practices required the state to do no more than reinforce the conditions of law and order as soon as possible. But from around the beginning of the eighteenth century, periodic crises demanded management of the recovery and care of affected people and places. The security of the state itself was the issue here. 'The modern state cannot tolerate no-man's lands and

---

[59] Guilhot, 'The Anthropologist as Witness', p. 81.
[60] Guilhot, 'The Anthropologist as Witness', p. 81.
[61] S. Reid-Henry, 'Humanitarianism as Liberal Diagnostic: Humanitarian Reason and the Political Rationalities of the Will-to-Care', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, forthcoming. Our thanks to Simon for showing us this paper in advance of publication.
[62] N. Rose and P. Miller, 'Political Power Beyond the State', *British Journal of Sociology*, 43, 2 (1992), 173–205.
[63] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*; Reid-Henry, 'Humanitarianism as Liberal Diagnostic'.
[64] Reid-Henry, 'Humanitarianism as Liberal Diagnostic'.
[65] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 65.

hence mobilizes all its resources in order to prevent or eliminate them'.[66] 'Quite simply, left untended, the human consequences of disasters such as earthquakes and epidemic diseases represented a fundamental challenge to the state that could not go unaddressed'.[67]

Since the 1990s, there has been a profusion of works taking Foucault's ideas of modern governmentality and locating them within colonial, as well as Foucault's own largely European, contexts.[68] Colonial states have been interpreted as coming into being through their interrelations with various apparatuses designed to ensure the security of populations, including science, medicine, urban planning, moral hygiene, political economy and civil society.[69] But the role of a humanitarian register within these colonial governmental innovations has yet to be fully explored. If we agree with the suggestion that humanitarianism was intrinsic to the emergence of modern governmentality in Europe, then its colonial variants 'may ultimately be seen ... less as something that western liberal societies have imposed upon others, and more as constitutive of those liberal societies and their wider paradoxes themselves'.[70]

While the consequences of disasters within Europe could not be left to go untended without the imposition of state order, the same could be said of the violent destruction of indigenous societies in the settler colonies. The annihilation of such societies could not (generally) be allowed by a colonizing government, not just so that a defensive British state could be morally differentiated from rival European empires, and distanced especially from the 'Black Legend' of the Spanish; not just so that inexpensive, secure territories could be governed rather than costly, excessively violent ones; not just so that criticism from a non-governmental humanitarian lobby could be deflected; and not just so that a basic psychological need among individuals to understand themselves

[66] A. Ophir, 'The Contribution of Global Humanitarianism to the Transformation of Sovereignty', paper presented at the International Workshop on Catastrophes in the Age of Globalization, Israel, 2003.

[67] Reid-Henry, 'Humanitarianism as Liberal Diagnostic'.

[68] S. Legg, 'Legal Geographies and the State of Imperialism: Environments, Constitutions, and Violence', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 37, 4 (2011), 505–8.

[69] See, respectively, G. Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 1999); D. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); S. Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007); D. Heath, *Purifying Empire: Obscenity and the Politics of Moral Regulation in Britain, India, and Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); R. Birla, *Stages of Capital: Law, Culture, and Market Governance in Late Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); U. Kalpagam, 'Colonial Governmentality and the Public Sphere in India', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 15 (2002), 35–58.

[70] Reid-Henry, 'Humanitarianism as Liberal Diagnostic'.

as doing good rather than evil in the world could be satisfied, but also, and fundamentally, because of a modern state's imperative to control, regulate and as far as possible monopolize the violence of colonization. The alternative would be individual colonists' anarchic free rein.

Governmentality consists in the regulation of social life, and especially in control over decisions concerning life and death. If emigrant settlers were allowed to determine these things at will, there would be no state-sanctioned governmentality in colonial spaces (which was indeed sometimes the case). Humanitarian regulation as a function of government – a way of *being* governmental – was thus as intrinsic to the project of Britain's colonization of other lands as it was to the coeval emergence of a modern state system in Europe. In both kinds of space, humanitarianism 'set limits on the state in terms of what we might today call "human" rights, *but only to the extent* that it made possible a mobius-like recuperation of sovereignty, the power over life, in other ways'.[71]

In the period between the abolition of the slave trade and Florence Nightingale's expression of concern (specifically about the fate of Aboriginal Australians), individuals powerfully located at various tiers within the British state, then, adopted certain humanitarian principles, arraying them alongside those of political economy as part of the disciplinary apparatus of governance. They did so domestically, but also to deal with the newly expanded settler empire.[72] This was something of a turnaround. For, as James Epstein points out, 'Britain's imperial regime' had only just become 'more authoritarian, hierarchical and militarized' during the late eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth. In one sense the turn to humanitarianism was a reaction, for in this preceding period, partly as a result of the trial of General Thomas Picton at the heart of Epstein's narrative, 'unease about issues of abuses of power and of the rights of colonial subjects began to grow'.[73] As Fassin points out, humanitarianism is a 'mode of government that concerns the victims of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and exile, as well as of disasters, famines, epidemics, and wars – in short, every situation characterized by precariousness'.[74] The acquisition of an expanded settler empire produced such precariousness in multiple, and previously relatively disconnected contexts, for all of which British governing men were now responsible.

---

[71] Reid-Henry, 'Humanitarianism as Liberal Diagnostic'.
[72] M.J.D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787–1886* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[73] J. Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic During the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), back cover.
[74] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, p. x.

Zoë Laidlaw's focus on commissions of inquiry in the years after the Napoleonic wars and up to 1826 (of which there were sixteen; six of them in non-European colonies and a further three in Ireland) outlines some of the concrete ways in which the governance of empire became humanitarian, not simply as a result of idealist endeavour, but through a process of practical 'empirical investigation' and recommendation concerning the securing of governmental order in unfamiliar places. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, humanitarian forms of governance were recommended specifically to deal with the most pressing concerns of the British state, including slavery, warfare against France, the anglicization of new colonial territories inherited from other European powers, and fears of revolution. Commissions such as that of Eastern Enquiry, founded in 1822 to investigate and reform colonial relations in the formerly Dutch and French Cape Colony, Ceylon and Mauritius, enabled the production of the evidential bases of humanitarian campaigns and governmental reforms within the same process of investigation and recommendation.[75] The function of such commissions was to bridge the gap between the messy and idiosyncratic detail of each new colonial society and the need for a coherent metropolitan governmental understanding of, and strategy for, empire as a whole.[76]

Missionaries on the settler frontiers of British North America, Australia and New Zealand, as well as southern Africa, were simultaneously extending humane concern for indigenous peoples, whose lives were frequently being taken and whose lands were comprehensively being seized, during what James Belich productively calls the Settler Revolution.[77] This wholesale invasion produced populations 'characterized by precariousness' on a scale even greater than the better known Industrial, American or French Revolutions. Between 1838 and 1840, the metropolitan and colonial governments established Protectorates of Aborigines with magisterial authority in the mainland Australian colonies and in New Zealand. Intended to set a new moral template for Britain's settler empire in the wake of the 1836–7 Select Committee on Aborigines, which decried the moral, political and economic effects of the destruction of indigenous peoples, the Protectorates belie Barnett's claim that 'it was only with World War I that states became involved in humanitarian

[75] Z. Laidlaw, 'Investigating Empire: Humanitarians, Reform and the Commission of Eastern Inquiry', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40, 5 (2012), 749–68.
[76] Laidlaw, 'Investigating Empire'.
[77] J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: the Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-world, 1783–1939* (Oxford University Press, 2009); J.C. Weaver, *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650–1900* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

action'.[78] Arising out of the Committee's insistence on the need for national atonement, both for slavery and for violent colonization, the Protectorate policy was a specific governmental attempt to render further colonization humane and controlled from the very start.

Humanitarianism is thus beginning to be reconceived by colonial historians as one of the significant discourses shaping the institutions and languages of political administration.[79] The proliferation of new encounters between emigrant Britons and indigenous peoples between 1820 and 1860 gave rise to novel social problems on an unprecedented geographical scale. Much of the literature on the changes in governmental practice that occurred in Britain itself during this period locates reform in context of the new social problems of industrializing and urbanizing Europe. But colonial frontiers were an obvious, but relatively neglected part of the emergent complexity of humane governance.[80] These were the sites where 'race' and its relation to Britishness was produced and entered the complex of social problems to which governing individuals had to respond.

In the late 1830s the notion of humanitarian colonialism crystallized out of the complex assemblages and networks of a newly expanded empire. During the three decades preceding this, we will argue, humanitarianism came to rank among a number of affective dispositional characteristics *defining* both colonial governance and many colonial governors themselves. 'Managed hearts', both of the governing self and of the colonized other, as Stoler puts it, became 'crucial to the political grammar of the colonial enterprise' at this time.[81] By the 1850s, we suggest, although colonial governmentality continued to consider itself 'humane', its modes of effecting humanitarianism were altered. The project of Aboriginal Protection, derived from the amelioration of slavery and adapted to the conditions of colonial invasion had morphed, in a context in which the settler colonies were now established, into projects for the ethnographic understanding of 'dying races' and into forceful proto-development policies. In our epilogue we suggest that ethnography

---

[78] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 30.
[79] See also Penelope Edmonds, 'Travelling "Under Concern" and Imperial Reform: Quakers James Backhouse and George Washington Walker Tour the Antipodean Colonies, 1832–1841', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40, 5 (2012), 769–88, which 'seeks . . . to place the antipodes, so often deemed peripheral, at the centre of humanitarian reform by understanding the antipodean colonies as sites of humanitarian advocacy, not merely as sites of depredation, and to show how these colonies were crucial to the generation and policy shift in humanitarian governance', p. 769.
[80] Laidlaw, 'Investigating Empire'.
[81] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 40.

persuaded Britons that any government that did more than simply smooth the pillow of 'dying races' was humanitarian, while Development provided the means of assimilating both the descendants of these 'dead' races and other colonized people such as Indians, to a more humane future. If we are to comprehend the process by which these transitions came about, however, we need to move beyond the impersonal and aggregated analysis of humanitarianism's function within governmentality based upon Foucault's insights, and develop a more intimate and affective account of the individuals who embodied transition.

Individuals and networks

We need to see humanitarianism as more than an abstracted set of ideals derived from European Enlightenment thought, more than a disposition defined purely in opposition to other, 'de-humanizing' kinds of spatially extensive relations, and more than a palliative for globalized forms of exploitation (although it is, ambivalently, all these things). We also need to see it as expressive of the deeply felt, emotive desire, to 'do the right thing' that motivates many people in positions of governmental authority – their imperative to make the world better through a will to power – but in very different ways in different contexts.

This intersection between a societal moral revolution of the kind that the late eighteenth-century rise of humanitarianism represented and the standards of ethics to which individuals feel obliged to adhere in their daily lives, lies at the heart of Kwame Anthony Appiah's recent argument – that all the great moral revolutions of the modern period, ranging from the abolition of the duel, through that of foot-binding and slavery shared a 'deep and persistent concern with status and respect, our human need for what ... Hegel called *Anerkennung* – recognition. We human beings need others to recognise us as conscious human beings and to acknowledge that we recognise them'.[82] Central to that recognition is the issue of honour. Morality is not necessarily intrinsic to honour, since honour has to do also with status and achievement, but, as Appiah puts it, 'one kind of honor is the right to respect you gain by doing what morality requires'. It is 'the concern for respect that connects' the desire to do the right thing 'with our place in a social world'.[83] 'If you adhere to an honor code, you'll not only respond with respect to those who keep it,

---

[82] K.A. Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), p. xiii.
[83] Appiah, *The Honor Code*, p. 179.

you'll respond with contempt to those who don't. So, if you yourself meet the standards, you'll have self-respect; and if you yourself fall short, you will have contempt for yourself, which is shame'.[84]

While Appiah stresses that 'honor is peculiarly well suited to turn private moral sentiments into public norms', it is also possible to reverse this metamorphosis.[85] The creation of a new sense of humanity, calling forth more extensive obligations to care that occurred in conjunction with Britain's imperial expansion had especial implications for the identities and behaviours of those men who took it upon themselves to govern that empire. For them in particular, with their careers especially subject to public scrutiny and critique, honour was 'an engine, fueled by the dialogue between ... self-conceptions and the regard of others' that drove them 'to take seriously [their] responsibilities'.[86] To get to know what feelings and behaviours, what affects and effects, a humanitarian moral code engenders, one has to try to understand these men at various levels of governmental structures as complex individuals with varying capacities in a world of dynamic social relations that they only partially comprehended and controlled, but sought to improve, in the process raising their self-esteem and the esteem in which they were held by others.

The main 'characters' in this book were individual men charged with the task of ensuring that a settler invasion of indigenous peoples' lands would be facilitated with the 'due observance of justice' to those peoples.[87] The absurdity of the instruction is obvious to us now. There are clearly dangers of reading these colonial humanitarian figures 'along the grain' of their own internal rationalizations and external representations, without reference to the destructive effects that those rationalizations had in the world. Accordingly, we have tried to situate their humanitarian governmental interventions alongside what we can read, hear and infer of the experiences of those on the receiving end of the invasions that they helped to orchestrate. Our chapters on the Protectorates of Aborigines in Australia and New Zealand, and our account of utilitarian humanitarian governance in the Cape, attempt to do this.

Recognizing that humanitarian colonial governance failed in its most basic principle of protection does not necessarily mean that an analysis of its practitioners is complicit with the acts of violent dispossession that they organized, legitimated and sometimes mitigated. As Stoler

---

[84] Appiah, *The Honor Code*, p. 177.   [85] Appiah, *The Honor Code*, p. 178.
[86] Appiah, *The Honor Code*, p. 179.
[87] *Report From the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements)*, Parliamentary Papers, 2 vols., 1836–37 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), p. 3.

points out, an attempt to 'capture the more complex psychic space, tacit ambivalences and implicit ambiguities in which European agents and ancillaries to empire made their lives' is of value in its own right; but it also speaks more persuasively to the present predicaments of humanitarianism. Labelling colonial governmental figures, who considered themselves humane, solely as complicit in brutal colonization, would mean the assumption of historical 'persons with far flatter, two-dimensional interior spaces than we would demand for treating our own fractious subjectivities'. It would demand that we 'assiduously refuse recognition of comparisons, convergences, and accommodations that might comprise and implicate ourselves'.[88] Like Stoler's relatively obscure Dutch East Indies colonial officials of the early twentieth century, and also like Eyal Weizman's lawyers caught up in the 'politics of the lesser evil' in their deflection of, rather than resistance to, the Israeli–Palestinian separation wall, the humanitarian governmental figures in this book occupy 'an unsettling space that spans . . . good and bad faith, refusal and acceptance'; they are 'neither particularly malicious nor sympathetic figures'.[89]

Rather than simply providing biographical details and reflection upon key life moments for the individuals that feature in this account, we try to understand their agency as components within social, and specifically governmental, assemblages and discourses. As Isaiah Berlin noted:

Ever since the issue was first raised towards the end of the 18th century, the question of what is meant by 'an individual' has been asked persistently, and with increasing effect. In so far as I live in society, everything that I do inevitably affects, and is affected by, what others do . . . I am not disembodied reason. Nor am I Robinson Crusoe, alone upon his island. It is not only that my material life depends upon interaction with other[s] . . . or that I am what I am as a result of social forces, but that some, perhaps all of my ideas about myself, in particular my sense of my own moral and social identity, are intelligible only in terms of the social network in which I am (the metaphor must not be pressed too far) an element.[90]

A number of recent developments across a variety of disciplines have created the theoretical foundations for an approach that bridges between specified individuals and discourses, networks and practices at large, and that tries to get at this question of the relation between individuals and societies. The notion of trans-imperial, networked flows of people, ideas, texts, and objects, co-constituting metropolitan and colonial sites, found

---

[88] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, pp. 248–9.
[89] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, p. 249; E. Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (London: Verso, 2010).
[90] I. Berlin, *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*, edited by H. Hardy (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 201.

for instance in the work of Catherine Hall on Jamaica and Britain, has been deployed quite widely within the 'new imperial history'.[91] Although in social network theory 'it is the pattern of recurring links, as well as the properties of those links, which form the subject of study, not the attributes of the persons occupying positions in the network', many of these historical studies of pro- and anti-slavery, humanitarian, settler, governmental and scientific networks have been populated with key personalities at particular sites.[92] The primary difficulty of interweaving biographical and societal analysis is that both deal with dynamic and multifaceted subjects – there are no constants in the relationship between individual and context. As Bruno Latour puts it, people don't have static identities – they are 'simultaneously seized by several possible and con-tradictory calls for regrouping' on a daily basis.[93] Rarely, in this litera-ture, then, has the relationship between dynamic individual agency within imperial networks and the shape and function of those networks been explicitly theorized.

A closer study of the relationship between the individual and imperial networks and discourses has been encouraged by a recent proliferation of biographical studies manifesting a turn towards the notion of the decentred subject developed in the field of life history. As Lois W. Banner explains: 'What is now called the "new biography" first appeared in the 1990s. Its practitioners have been especially influenced by feminist, postmodern, and race theorists.' They tend to focus 'on the diversity and complexity of movements and institutions and decry what they call "essentialism"', stressing instead 'the shifting and multifaceted nature of individual per-sonality'.[94] In its extreme form, this decentred approach means that there is no such thing as a 'coherent self', no 'unified "I"'.[95] However, if we evacuate individuals of any relatively stable characteristics, we end

---

[91] C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Cambridge: Verso, 2002); A. Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); Z. Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815–45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester University Press, 2005); T. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860–1920* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); K. Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[92] M. DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 56.

[93] B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 29.

[94] L.W. Banner, 'AHR Roundtable: Biography as History', *American Historical Review*, 118, 4 (June 2009), 581.

[95] J.B. Margadant, *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 7.

up seeing them simply as ghost-like ciphers for social processes. This involves a denial of phenomena that are apparent within psychological and psychoanalytical studies, including 'the probability that elements of personality developed in childhood can remain reasonably coherent over a lifetime, or that the social and cultural modalities that influence personality development can encourage the production of a fixed core within an individual persona'.[96] The relationship between interior personality formation and external relations thus remains ill-defined in these new biographical approaches.[97]

Geographers have made inroads into the relationship between the interiority of the subject and the web of external relations in which subjects live through their insistence on both the interiority and exteriority of space and place. A relational approach to space – one in which space is conceived as being dynamically constituted by the relationships among and between objects, rather than pre-existing as a neutral grid or backdrop on which they are positioned – has encouraged the exploration of life geographies.[98] These have recently been seen as a way of analysing the relationship between individuals' continually reconstituted subjectivity, the places in which they dwell and the spaces through which they move.[99] As Doreen Massey notes, place, itself conceived as the juxtaposition of multiple trajectories, 'change[s] us ... through the practising of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place ... [is] an arena where negotiation is forced upon us'.[100] The recognition of this spatiality of personhood entails a different kind of biography: 'Instead of the remorselessly sequential narrative that typically characterises biographical accounts', David Livingstone argues, 'greater sensitivity to the spaces of a life could open up new and revealing ways of taking the measure of a life'.[101]

---

[96] Banner, 'AHR Roundtable', p. 581.

[97] Although, see Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), for an outstanding analysis of the emotional dimensions of Zachary and Thomas Macaulay's visions of nation and empire.

[98] J. Murdoch, *Post-structuralist Geography: a Guide to Relational Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); N. Thrift, *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2008); S. Legg, 'Of Scales, Networks and Assemblages: Trafficking in Women and Children and the Scalar Apparatuses of the League of Nations and the Government of India', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 34 (2009), 135–55; M. Jones, 'Phase Space: Geography, Relational Thinking, and Beyond', *Progress in Human Geography*, 33 (2009), 487–506.

[99] S. Daniels and C. Nash, 'Life Paths: Geography and Biography', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30 (2004), 449–58.

[100] Massey, *For Space*, p. 154.

[101] D. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago University Press, 183).

The relationship between individual agency and historical colonial discourse and practice in particular sites has recently been the subject of a resurgence of interest in geography and history.[102] These studies highlight the ways in which a variety of different colonial subjects introduced certain modes of gendered, raced and classed thought to new contexts where they were recreated; reformulated their own identities through trans-imperial mobility; introduced knowledge of other places to new sites; corresponded with others to create new, unevenly empowered networks, and thereby created meaningful connections rather than just comparisons between colonial sites.

The sequential location of our 'characters' in different colonial sites with their differently assembled characteristics, is as important to this study as their conceptual positioning within the discourses of governmentality and humanitarianism. As they confronted differentially contrived sets of relations between Britons and others in each of the colonies that they administered, these men could both increase their capacity to affect the discourses of colonial governance and humanitarianism – in other words, their power – and exercise that capacity to different effect. They could also, as we will see, dramatically lose that capacity.

In Chapter 2, our main character is George Arthur, who was, successively, aide de camp in Jersey, Quartermaster General in Jamaica, superintendent of Honduras, lieutenant governor of Van Diemen's Land, lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, and governor of the Bombay Presidency. Arthur's life and character was bound up in many of the most significant transitions reshaping the British Empire and the wider world in the first decades of the nineteenth century: evangelical humanism, antislavery and emancipation; warfare against revolutionary and Napoleonic France; the suppression of rural protest in the English countryside; the invasion of indigenous peoples' lands by waves of British settlers; the rapid expansion of the settler colonies, and the consolidation of British rule and designs for the redevelopment of India. Following the trajectory of his career in colonial governance enables us to chart first the incorporation of ideas of humaneness into the practices of colonial governance, as amelioration policies were adopted in the British Caribbean following the abolition of the slave trade. Arthur's disposition and rationalizations during the 1810s also indicate the ways in which governmental humanitarianism was conditioned by a

---

[102] Lambert and Lester, *Colonial Lives*; D. Deacon, P. Russell and A. Woollacott, *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); M. Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550–1800* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

reactionary fear of democracy and revolution, as Britain's governing men sought to ward off challenges from the French revolutionary state and its Napoleonic successor, and to deal with social transformation at home.

Arthur's rise through the ranks of colonial governance – his acquisition of greater capacity within governmental networks – was inextricably connected with his move through British imperial space from the Caribbean to the settler colony of Van Diemen's Land. Here he exercised that greater capacity and engagement with new networks of humanitarian reform centred in London, to help engender a transition in humanitarian governance from amelioration of enslaved people's conditions to policies for the protection of indigenous peoples during colonization. We return to Arthur at the end of the book as his career also enables us to touch upon the later transition between humanitarian colonial governance and early development discourse in India. We argue that Arthur's personal performances and expressions of colonial government in different sites of empire and through specific episodes of contestation and networks of communication, assisted in the mutability of certain kinds of colonial governmentality considered 'humane' around the empire.

Arthur's concern for the fate of Van Diemen's Land's Aboriginal population during the period of his governorship (a period in which this population is popularly believed to have been subjected to effective genocide), was ultimately manifested in the offices of Protectorates of Aborigines in Australia and New Zealand. The men who populated these offices are the main subjects of our Chapters 4 and 5. But before we come to them, we take a diversion, as did many of our governing figures on their way to the Australasian colonies. We examine briefly the Cape Colony, a crossroads of empire linking the Atlantic and Indian Oceans at the southern tip of Africa, and its links with the 'hub' of empire itself, London.

It was conflict on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony in particular that prompted Thomas Fowell Buxton, William Wilberforce's successor as leader of the antislavery campaign in the House of Commons, to think beyond British abuses of vulnerable people in the Caribbean and India, and to consider the effect of large-scale settler emigration on indigenous peoples. Buxton's family circle sat at the centre of an evangelical, humanitarian network rooted in the Clapham Sect and driving a humanitarian colonial policy agenda in Britain. Taking testimony from witnesses to abuses carried out by British emigrants across the growing empire of settlement, this London-based network would author the defining narrative – effectively a set of guidelines – for humanitarian

colonization, the *Report of the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements)* in 1837. Paying particular attention to the indigenous witnesses who appeared before the committee, Chapter 3 shows how Buxton and his allies marshalled geographically dispersed testimony to create a universalistic humanitarian agenda for empire. Succeeding chapters show how this agenda was re-introduced to the geographically dispersed contexts that provided its 'raw material', and how it had to change form as it became 're-localized'. The chapter reveals a global economy of morality, in which testimony was extracted from colonized 'peripheries', shaped into humanitarian governmental discourse at the metropolitan 'core', and exported in refined form back to the 'peripheries' of empire, only to break down in practice.

In Chapter 4 we analyse the relationship between colonial humanitarianism and indigenous agency in the Port Phillip Protectorate, an office of government created as a result of the Aborigines Committee and George Arthur's influence. We focus on the dispositions, activities and relationships of two men in particular, Charles Sievewright and Edward Stone Parker. Both men were deputies to the Chief Protector of the District, George Augustus Robinson, whom we will already have met in Van Diemen's Land. We use the stories of Sievewright and Parker in particular to show how, despite all its other impacts, many of them destructive of indigenous autonomy and cultural integrity, as a project engineered specifically to attend to indigenous welfare, humanitarian governance *could* yield opportunities for the acquisition of indigenous capacity within violently introduced, colonial societies – although not necessarily in the ways intended by humanitarians.

It is the relationship between humanitarianism's various agents and networks, including 'donors' in Britain, but especially practitioners and indigenous peoples 'on the ground' in the settler colonies, that we want to examine here, using three individual Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal people's engagements with the Port Phillip District Protectorate of Aborigines (1838–1850) as our case study. As we have noted, research on humanitarian interventions inevitably tends to concentrate on donor–practitioner connections rather than practitioner–recipient ones because of the availability of sources and the difficulties of comprehending the variety of sites and languages through which humanitarian resources were deployed around the globe. Our attempt here to uncover some of the uses to which humanitarianism was put by Aboriginal people in the Port Phillip District, and to highlight those aspects of the project which they simultaneously resisted, cannot stand for indigenous engagements with humanitarianism *per se*. Nor is it unmediated: much of what we know about Dja Dja Wurrung engagements comes from the pen of

Parker himself.[103] Nevertheless, the relationships that we can glimpse between Protectors and 'protected', we suggest, highlight two overarching arguments.

First, humanitarianism is always comprised of heterogeneous agents, whose effect upon others is networked through those other agents.[104] This is not to say that power (or what we could think of more concretely as capacity to effect change in networks), is evenly distributed among those agents. Capacity within societies is dependent upon an array of acquired and also socially constructed characteristics such as sex and phenotype, while learned attributes such as career experience and 'the acquisition of new skills [also] . . . increase one's capacities to affect and be affected'.[105] Regardless of the extent of individual capacity, affect can be achieved only through networked associations with other individuals, organisms and objects. In one way this approach to discourses, networks and places decentres both white and indigenous agency, since each is effected only relative to, and through, the other. In another way it highlights indigenous agency, since it redresses a historiographic tendency to write it out of the picture altogether.

Second, this approach also entails a less spectacular view of indigenous agency than a narrow focus on 'resistance' would allow.[106] As has been long argued, our ideas of agency need to encompass the quotidian and 'local' as well as the spectacular and the geopolitical; agency is exerted by the farmer as much as the warrior. It is as much about bureaucratic warfare over small parcels of land as wars for sovereignty and independence; kin and homestead as tribe or kingdom. We need to integrate histories of the family with histories of resistance – to reveal the courage in maintaining family life in the midst of colonization and celebrate the art of 'holding on'.[107] After initial colonial encounters, indigenous and colonial agents entered new social assemblages. The

---

[103] We must also acknowledge the work conducted by Australian historians such as Ian Clarke and, in the case of the Dja Dja Wurrung in particular, Bain Attwood, to write the histories of Victoria's Aboriginal people in association with their descendants.

[104] See M. DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (New York: Continuum, 2006), pp. 32–3.

[105] DeLanda, *A New Philosophy*, p. 50.

[106] Avoiding such an approach does not mean that the historical geographies of colonial violence are irrelevant. As we will see, episodes of violent conflict are peculiarly significant beyond their precise moments and locales, but they need to be embedded within the social and family histories of communities undergoing colonization rather than detached from them.

[107] Among a large literature, see for example, W. Beinart and P. Delius, *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850–1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986) and P. Brock, *Outback Ghettos: Aborigines, Institutionalisation and Survival* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

agency of each was effected through complex actor-network chains that mediated any individual effect in the world.[108]

In Chapter 5, we follow the humanitarian governmental experiment of establishing Protectorates of Aborigines from New South Wales to New Zealand, where a protectorate office was a central provision of the Treaty of Waitangi. This meant that the structure of colonial governance in New Zealand in the 1840s and 1850s was predicated on a certain type of humanitarian sensibility, as a new colonial state was charged from the outset with responsibility for the 'protection' of Māori.[109] The key figure upon whom this chapter focuses, George Clarke, made the journey himself between the humanitarian 'care' and instruction of Aboriginal children in New South Wales to the 'protection' of Māori in New Zealand. Appointed Chief Protector, he directed a team of Sub-Protectors who sought to mediate between the demands of emigrant settlers and the injunction that Māori should be shielded from their malign influence. If we use the study of the Port Phillip Protectorate to highlight the agency, albeit limited within the context of colonization, that indigenous people could effect through humanitarian networks, the experience of the Protectors in New Zealand highlights the misrepresentations of vulnerability and precariousness that often drove humanitarian action.

Humanitarian colonists struggled with the resolution of a difficult paradox: how to marry the perceived necessity of transforming an existing culture for its own benefit, with the cultural and material displacement of that culture entailed in the progress of colonial settlement. After the abolition of slavery, and the unprecedented influence wielded by humanitarianism, it seemed that a policy of 'moral suasion' in New Zealand may have provided a solution. But the very idea of humanitarianism was itself founded upon hierarchy, wedded to the notion of civilizations in relative states of progress towards a specifically Christian English ideal. There was thus always great scope for the articulation of the humanitarian project in terms that benefited settler over indigenous interests. Humanitarian governors found themselves complicit in the subversion of those ideas and practices they had hoped would allow them to reconcile settler colonialism with respect for the rights, needs, possessions and cultures of indigenous peoples. As the humanitarian Attorney General of New Zealand William Swainson, later wrote:

[108] B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 46.
[109] Our thanks to Tony Ballantyne for some productive informal correspondence on this point.

[The Protectors] virtually became protectors of the colonists themselves; they were employed in negotiating purchases of land from the natives – as interpreters in the Land Commissioner's Court and sometimes as interpreters to Her Majesty's forces when engaged in the field – in conducting official correspondence with the natives – in endeavouring to disabuse their minds of unfavourable impressions conveyed to them by disaffected people – in keeping the authorities informed of the sentiments and proceedings of the natives in the interior of the country – and generally in the performance of services of a purely political character; useful and almost essential, to the executive Government of the colony, but of no direct advantage to the natives themselves.[110]

In the ideal of 'moral suasion', in the case of New Zealand, Māori would be persuaded to 'consent' to British sovereignty and the laws that came with it, retaining customary chieftainship over their peoples. George Clarke was charged with effecting this policy. In his person, Clarke embodied many of the conflicts that fractured early humanitarianism. As a missionary in Australia and later New Zealand, his sympathy for the plight of 'natives' was framed by a moral structure that dictated he save them from themselves, as well as rapacious settlers. As a settler, his desire to provide for his family necessitated his engagement with the processes of displacement of Māori that buying land entailed. As Protector of Aborigines, charged with both 'protecting' Māori and administering the sale of their land, the tension between the ideal of protection and the reality of colonialism was more than usually clear to Clarke.

Clarke articulated the problem he faced, as have historians after him, as a conflict of interest arising from the enmeshing of 'native' with land policy.[111] The conflict was actually a deeper one – a humanitarian conception of what constituted civilization, which was closer in form to settler than to indigenous society. In New Zealand, the intention to 'protect' aborigines did not mean allowing the continuation of Māori culture without change; rather humanitarians there saw change as happening at a slower rate and in a more consensual way than the settlers required. As in the Port Phillip District, however, simply to dismiss humanitarian governance as the 'soft power' of colonization is to miss what it could mean in practice for its intended 'recipients'. A policy of 'moral suasion' opened up more space for Māori engagement with processes of governance than might otherwise have been the case. The use of communication with Protectorate representatives of the colonial state by Māori, both on a local level in the resolution of apparently trifling disputes and on a grander scale in the appeals to law disputing settler

---

[110] William Swainson, *New Zealand and its Colonization* (London, 1859), pp. 183–4.
[111] Marjan Lousberg, 'Dr Edward Shortland and the Politics of Ethnography', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2007, 34.

land purchases, reflects not only indigenous 'agency', but also an asser-
tion of rights. Like those among the Dja Dja Wurrung engaging with
Parker, these appropriations had the potential to go beyond the notion-
ally bounded spaces of the tribe or the colony. The largely unexpected
Māori engagement with processes of humanitarian governmentality
necessitated continual revision of the limits of colonial possibility.

As we trace the career trajectory of an evangelical governor who
oversaw the genocide of Tasmanian Aborigines, analyse the process by
which indigenous and British testimony was marshalled into a prescrip-
tion for humane colonization at the heart of empire, examine Assistant
Protectors' attempts to mitigate the decimation of Australia's Aboriginal
population, and analyse the complexity of Protectors' mediation between
British settlers and Māori in New Zealand, we keep returning to the
essential paradox of individuals with humane dispositions being active
agents, sometimes uncomfortably, sometimes ignorantly and sometimes
through a 'politics of disregard', in a globalized process of dispossession
and destruction.[112] We try to draw these strands together to a certain
extent in our analysis of Governor George Grey, in the final chapter.
If anyone could be said to have drawn on the experience of governing
settler colonization at multiple sites of empire in order to reconcile
humanitarianism with settler dispossession of, and domination over,
indigenous peoples, it was Grey.

In Chapter 6 we note how Grey, more explicitly than most, saw, in a
more forceful liberal utilitarianism, the scope to legitimate and perpetu-
ate humanitarian colonial rule in Britain's settler dominions.[113] Grey
was able to articulate ways in which Britons could have their cake and
eat it: they could be both humane and colonizing, but only if sufficient
force was brought to bear to persuade indigenous peoples that it was in
their own best interests to adapt and amalgamate in a colonial world. If
the project of Aboriginal Protection enunciated by the Aborigines Com-
mittee in the 1830s was a *mutable* mobile – something that was adapted
to different circumstances as it travelled – Grey's governmental agenda
was far more an *immutable* mobile. As he established a template for
the extension of British law over, and the employed enhancement of,
Aboriginal people in Australia, demonstrated imperial military resolve
and negotiated land sales with Māori in New Zealand, and undermined
the Xhosa's capacity to resist 'amalgamation' in the Cape, Grey's actions
were consistently directed at the integration of remnant indigenous

---

[112] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, pp. 255–60.
[113] More often utilitarian liberalism is associated with British rule in India: Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*; Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.

peoples with British settler societies, always posited as being in those peoples' own best interests. Implementing his vision around the empire as far as his considerable capacity allowed, Grey most successfully persuaded Britons that colonization and humanity were, after all, reconcilable, even if after the fact.

Our conclusion gestures more speculatively at the paths taken by humanitarian governmentality once the project of Protection was over – once the invasion and settlement of Britons on the lands of indigenous peoples was complete and once, by and large, initial violent resistance had failed to prevent occupation. We point out that Grey, together with some of the figures introduced earlier in the book, played an important role in effecting a transition from the project of Protection to other means by which settler colonial governance could be considered humane. We suggest that Protection, adapted from the conditions of the Caribbean and the amelioration of slavery to the conditions of invasion, dispossession and resistance in southern lands, effectively bifurcated into two parallel projects once the settler colonies were 'secure'. On the one hand, humanitarian interest and concern flowed into a project of ethnographic understanding, retrieval and policy prescription. Grey was a significant interlocutor in this trans-imperial project and he was able to deploy it to make the case that any policy of amalgamation was humane compared with the alternative, which was the inexorable and entire annihilation of whole races. On the other hand, humanitarian governance morphed into a governmental responsibility to effect what we would today call development policies. Here, we pick up George Arthur's career again, this time in India, suggesting that it helps us conceive of early nineteenth-century humanitarian Protection as one of the roots of modern development discourse.