

# **Between crime and colony: interrogating (im)mobilities aboard the convict ship**

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## **Abstract**

Recent literature in carceral geography has attended to the importance of mobilities in interrogating the experience and control of spaces of imprisonment, detention and confinement. Scholars have explored the paradoxical nature of incarcerated experience as individuals oscillate between moments of fixity and motion as they are transported to/from carceral environments. This paper draws upon the convict ship—an example yet to gain attention within these emerging discussions—which is both an exemplar of this paradox and a lens through which to complicate understandings of carceral (im)mobilities. The ship is a space of macro-movement from point A to B, whilst simultaneously a site of apparent confinement for those aboard who are unable to move beyond its physical parameters. Yet, we contend that all manner of mobilities permeate the internal space of the ship. Accordingly, we challenge the binary thinking that separates moments of fixity from motion and explore the constituent parts that shape movement. In paying attention to movements *in* motion on the

ship, we argue that studies of carceral mobility must attend to both methods of moving in the space *between* points A and B; as micro, embodied and intimate (im)mobilities are also played out *within* large-scale regimes of movement.

**Keywords:** carceral, mobilities, movement, convict ships, transportation

## **Introduction**

In recent years, the sub-field of carceral geography has been rapidly expanding, taking seriously the temporal and spatial relations inherent within spaces of detention, confinement and imprisonment, past and present (see Bonds 2013; Conlon 2011; Conlon and Gill 2013; Loyd, Mitchelson and Burrige 2012; Martin and Mitchelson 2009; Moran 2012a, 2012b; Moran 2013a; Mountz 2011; Mountz, Coddington, Tina Catania and Loyd 2012; Pallot 2005; Pallot 2007; Turner 2012, 2013a, 2013b). However, as part of this growing interest, Moran, Piacentini and Pallot (2012) have argued that geographers exploring a range of incarcerated experience, from those of prisoners to asylum seekers (see Gill 2009), have largely failed to take seriously the role of mobilities. As Moran et al. note, the “body of work coalescing around the spatialities of detention and imprisonment, has thus far tended to overlook the mobilities inherent in carceral practices” (2012, p. 446). Carceral experience, it is argued, is an experience of fixity; of the denial of movement and the restriction of agency. Yet as Ong, Minca and Felder note, “[t]he control and regulation of mobile subjects within disciplinary spaces has recently become the focus of ... academic scholarship” (2014, p. 4). This attention has brought increasing nuance to discussions of how, where, why and under what conditions, (im)mobilities occur in carceral settings. In particular, Mountz et al. have argued that carceral experience—in particular the experience of im/migrant detention—presents an inherent

paradox whereby immobilising processes of detention and detainment are ever reliant on mobility as migrants are moved to remote places, such as islands, to keep them from the territories they seek to enter (2012, p. 527).

In this paper, we expand upon these topical debates, intervening in geographic literatures relating to the (im)mobilities of incarcerated individuals. Whilst there is now an acknowledgement that carcerality is far from simply a process of ‘fixity’, rendering incarcerated subjects ‘static’ (see Moran et al. 2012; Mountz et al. 2012; Philo 2014), we contend that scholars are yet to fully interrogate the mobilities at work within the immobilizing environ of the prison, detention centre, or asylum. It is our contention that mobilities are primarily understood as the macro-movement, or wholesale *removal* of individuals from place-to-place. Yet mobilities studies, as conceptualised by scholars such as Adey (2009), Cresswell (2006), and Urry (2007), contend that mobilities do not pertain to simple movements from point A, to point B; or to the push and pull factors either end of mobility (the place of departure and the destination). Rather, mobilities refer to the power-filled dimensions *of* movement that happen in the space *between* A and B (Cresswell 2006, 6). Through paying attention to what happens *during* movement, and the “constituent parts” that make up movement (Cresswell 2010, p. 17) we can better understand what it means to move (or not move) and the experiences and politics of motion. It is this attention to movement *in the moment of motion*, which drives our discussion in this paper.

In opening space for a more nuanced appreciation of mobilities we aim to attend to the paradox that the experience and process of incarceration encapsulate. Mountz et al. (2012) challenge the idea that mobility sits in opposition to the immobility of carceral life. In respect of im/migration detention they note that processes of control over subjects is “part of a rationale to *regulate* mobility through technologies of exclusion rather than to end mobility altogether” (Mountz et al. 2012, p. 526). Likewise, in a recent intervention, Chris Philo has

noted that carceral spaces often produce a “strange phenomenon of mobilities within immobilities” (2014, p. 494); and urges us to explore this at both ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ levels (2014, p. 495). In this paper, we seek to extend this debate by showing how (im)mobilities unfold within processes of movement—*during* movement—in the space *between* A and B. To date, studies rely on traditional transported-inspired ideas of mobility (as mass movement to/from points) (see Shaw and Hesse 2010); and even when investigating the greater complexity of motion in carceral settings, do so in the static spaces—such as islands—that precede or intervene in movement (see Briskman and Mountz 2012; Loyd and Mountz, 2011; Mountz et al. 2012)

In this paper, we draw upon the convict ship, as a particular form of carceral mobility to contend that in the space between crime and colony—the voyage of incarceration—elucidates the paradox of carceral (im)mobilities in a new light. Prison hulks—vessels that act as holding stations for convicts—and prison ships—those that transported them to the colonies—have been the subject of academic attention for the past century from a variety of disciplinary perspectives: maritime history, colonial history and legal history (for example Anderson 2000; Bateson 2004; Campbell 1994; Vaver 2011). These ships, a space defining a system of discipline and punishment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have not, to date, been examined by geographers of colonial history, carceral geographers or those whose focus is the spatialities of ships and seas. Following growing geographic interest in the prison (Moran, Gill and Conlon 2013), the ship (Hasty and Peters 2012), and more broadly in the experiences, practices and materialities of mobilities (see Adey 2009; Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007), this paper brings geographic debates relating to carceral mobility to the prison vessel; specifically those that transported convicts across the ocean to new colonial outposts, 1817-1857.

The convict ship is both an exemplar for complicating understandings of carceral (im)mobilities further and the paradox Mountz et al. (2012) and Philo (2014) describe. Indeed, the convict ship upsets any starting point that carceral experience is, or can be, simply a process of fixity. The convict ship is a space of macro-movement from point A to B across the ocean, whilst simultaneously a site of apparent confinement for those on board who are unable to move beyond the parameters of the ship. Yet as we will go on to demonstrate, all manner of mobilities permeate the internal space of the ship. Accordingly, mobility is more than simply the macro-movement of prisoners across space, but occurs in the space *of* movement; *between* points A and B, as micro, embodied and intimate (im)mobilities are also played out *within* large scale regimes of movement. On the ship we can be alert to the complex, conflicting, multi-scalar, micro and embodied mobilities of transporting and moving prisoners. Accordingly, we challenge the binary thinking that separates out moments of fixity from motion. In paying attention to movements *in* motion on the ship, we argue that studies of carceral mobility must attend to both methods of moving in the space *between* (the moment of transportation) and at the scale of the individual.

In what follows, we split the paper into three parts. We begin by providing a more detailed overview of theories of mobility in relation to carceral geographies. We next introduce our case study for exploring the intricate micro-(im)mobilities of carceral experience: the convict ship, examining the particular usefulness and relevance of this example in these debates. We then turn to our empirical material to explore how, in the space in between points A and B, convicts experienced a range of situations which moved them between the mobile and immobile simultaneously (through ship board health regimes, punishment, on-board work, and instances of mutiny). We close by arguing that carceral scholars must continue, in the vein of Moran, Piacentini and Pallot (2012), and Mountz et al.

(2012) to investigate the “potential avenues of exploration” opened up when mobilities are taken into account (Moran, Piacentini and Pallot 2012, p. 455).

### **Mobilising carceral geographies**

Carceral geographies seek to explore the various spatialities, temporalities, experiences and politics of detention, confinement, rehabilitation and reform (see Bonds 2013; Conlon 2011; Conlon and Gill 2013; Loyd, Mitchelson and Burridge 2012; Martin and Mitchelson 2009; Moran 2012a, 2012b; Moran 2013a; Pallot 2005; Pallot 2007; Turner 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Under such an umbrella, scholars have examined spaces of incarceration through concepts of ‘liminal’ place (Moran 2013a); ‘peripheral’ space (Moran, Pallot and Piacentini 2011; Pallot 2005); via the space-time dimensions of carceral experience (Mountz 2011); and relations between the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ (Turner 2013b). Emerging most recently has been an interest in mobility in relation to the processes and experiences of incarceration (notably, see Gill 2009; Moran, Piacentini and Pallot 2012; Mountz et al. 2012; Ong, Minca and Felder 2014; Philo 2014). The study of the movement of prisoners enables geographic insights into the spatial control and order of society. In one respect, to be imprisoned is to be moved or *removed* from wider society, involving the crossing of a border from the ‘outside’ to the ‘inside’ (Turner 2013c). When classified as ‘inside’, prisoners are involved in multiple processes of (im)mobility via transportation between prisons (or between courtrooms, detention centres, and so on); via disciplined movement ‘inside’ prison space (the cell, the canteen, the visiting room); and the restriction of movement through the temporality of work-time, leisure-time and cell-time. At the scale of the individual, incarceration limits the mobilities of the body by disciplining walking, working, resting, and playing in particular restrictive mobile forms (Foucault 1977). As such, while the experience of incarceration

appears one of fixity and the reduction in agency of the individual, mobilities are ever-present through these regimes of carceral experience and control (see Moran et al. 2012). However, whilst mobilities are ever-present in carceral experience and politics, they have not, to date, been fully attended to.

Mountz et al. (2012) go some way in pushing debates further through their investigation of island detention in processes of transnational im/migration. Similar to the work of Gill (2009), they note that mobility is an inherent part of the immobilisation (Mountz et al. 2012, p. 528, see also Philo 2014). The subject of the island is poignant, as like the ship, it exists as a space between landed territories. Mountz et al. demonstrate how identities are made mobile through processes of detention (i.e. stasis); and how “microspaces” are part of the function of detainment and control of im/migrant bodies (2012, p. 530-1). Philo also draws attention to the importance of micro-level movement within larger regimes that work to ensure relative stasis (2014). Drawing on Foucault’s work in theorising carceral spaces such as the asylum and prison, Philo notes how even though an “emphasis on immobility cannot be denied”, mobility can be tracked at the “microlevels”—in view of the intimate movement of the incarcerated body in view of the “careful regulation, even promotion, of (intended, sanctioned) mobilities” by gaolers (2014, p. 496-7).

In this paper, however, the convict ship allows us to attend to a different, unexplored dimension of carceral (im)mobility. The island, in spite of its location *between*—its liminal status as a place ‘not quite there’ for those held within its borders—and its capacity to transform or mobilise the subject in particular ways (such as through identity formation); is still primarily a grounded, motionless, static realm. This too, is akin to the limited, bordered and bounded carceral spaces of the conventional prison or asylum that Philo describes (2014). The convict ship, on the other hand, is a carceral space that moves. This character of the ship unhinges any notion that carcerality is ever a state of stasis, and moreover permits the

opportunity to embrace developments in mobility studies that take seriously the politics that occur *during* movement, a thus far under-studied dimension of carceral geographies.

The ‘new’ mobilities paradigm, as coined by Sheller and Urry (2006) (see Cresswell 2010 for a critique), challenges a stable metaphysics of spatial fixity (see Cresswell 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006). Traditionally in geographic thought, attention has been paid to fixed pockets of space—the beginning or end of a journey—the spaces that act as important precursors or destinations for/of travel. The space between—the journey itself—is relegated, depoliticised, invisible. On the one hand then, mobilities scholars have sought to pay attention to what happens between *in* the transitory space of mobility. In doing so, scholars can unlock the politics of mobility: the how, where, why and by what means people move or are unable to move. On the other hand, in unhinging a fixed ontology of the world—where places exist as discrete ‘noun chunks’ (to follow Latour 1993)—the mobilities paradigm moves beyond a bounded and bordered understanding of space, to one of fluidity, flows and connections (see Latour 1993; Massey 1997). In more recent years, this effort has been pushed forward in a number of innovative ways. Indeed, Cresswell has argued that conceptualisations of mobility remain simplistic. Mobility is viewed, he notes, as a “singular thing” (Cresswell 2010, p. 17)—a movement between points. Accordingly, Cresswell urges us to configure a “more finely developed politics of mobility” (2010, p. 17), by “breaking mobility down into ... its constituent parts” (ibid, p. 17). Mobility then, consists of multiple, complex, macro and micro dimensions: “force” that drives it; the “speed” it travels at, the “friction” that stops or prevents the journey; the “rhythm” that shapes, the “route” it takes; and the “experiences” of those who live it (ibid, p. 17).

Where carceral studies have considered mobilities it has, we argue, neglected a more thorough interrogation of movement *in* the process of moving, and of the “constituent parts” (Cresswell 2010, p. 17) that are implicit in incarcerated experience that enable a more



complex understanding of the power dimensions encapsulated in motion. The detained individual is often rendered immobile in situations of mobility as they are transported (see Gill 2009; Moran et al. 2012). Here their agency is reduced as they are *forced* to travel via particular vehicles, routes, speeds and so on. It is only at the other end of the journey (the static prison) that subjects may become, in varied ways, mobilised once more. In effect, whilst moving, bodies are disciplined or coerced to move (or not move) in via particular regimes of power (Moran et al. 2012; Mountz et al. 2012; Ong et al. 2014). As such, current studies position those incarcerated as passive, as *moved*; as opposed to *moving* during moments of mobility. By focusing on the space *between* or movement *in* the process of moving, we seek to unlock a more complicated picture of (im)mobility through exploring constituent parts such as rhythm, force and friction, where incarcerated individuals can find small, micro-methods of challenging confinement, even whilst remaining largely confined.

Accordingly, applying mobilities thinking (Cresswell 2010; Sheller and Urry 2006) to the convict ship, we focus not on the fixed points preceding and following voyages, but rather on the intricate, inconsistent, fleshy mobilities encapsulated *in* a motionful journey itself that complicate how we conceive of carceral life. We argue the convict ship becomes an important space for uncovering the politics of mobilities that emerge *in* motion, thus pushing understandings of carceral mobility into uncharted waters. To some degree, this focus on the space *between*—the ship itself—is similar to the approaches of historians such as Clare Anderson (2005) and Marcus Rediker (whose pivotal work refigures the history of transatlantic slavery through a sustained examination of the middle passage (2007)). Anderson’s work in particular, has contributed significantly to understanding penal, ship-board experience (Anderson 2000, 2005, 2007a, 2007b). Anderson’s extensive research relating to convict transportation and labour in South East Asia and Australasia has grappled with the particulars of life aboard these ships, detailing social orders and hierarchies of

convicts and crews; impacts of travel on traditional ‘landed’ social regimes (such as the suspension of the caste system); alongside an analysis of the convict body in view of tattooing, dress, and identity; and the materiality of confinement in view of shackles and restraints (notably, see Anderson 2005). More recently, geographers Ong et al. have explored the fee-paying, voluntary migratory journeys of passengers via the ships of the Royal Dutch Lloyd Company in the early part of the twentieth century (2014). Here they have examined the emotional aspects encapsulated in the highly regularised and disciplined movements of those on board travelling from Europe to South America (Ong et al. 2014). However, it is our intention to add to these various ship-board debates through the lens of mobility thinking, in order to reconceptualise ideas relating to systems of incarceration.

Similar to scholars such as Anim-Addo (2011, 2014), in her rich analytic work concerning the mobilities of circulation of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (RMSPC), we contend that using the ship upsets divisions between mobility and immobility. Anim-Addo’s traces how shipping labour was regularised in a ‘slave like’ manner, through networks of the RMSPC, even in the post-emancipatory era (2011). She explores how a shipping system of mobility predicated on smooth flows of goods, people, and capital was tied to the immobilisation of those working at coaling stations that made such movements possible (2011, p. 73). In such an argument, Anim-Addo demonstrates how mobility and immobility are never separate conditions, but often bonded in systems of power (see also Mountz et al. 2012; Philo 2014). Similarly, we take a nuanced view of mobility, unlocking the constituent parts and ‘politics of mobility’ on board ships – in the moment of movement – in relation to prisoner incarceration (Cresswell 2010). In what follows, we introduce the convict ship, on which our arguments rest.

## **Introducing the convict ship**

Convict transportation has been a much studied subject (see Anderson 2000; Bateson 2004; Campbell 1994; Vaver 2011). It might be assumed therefore, that there is little left to say about the era of transportative punishment. However, to date, the subject has not been attended to by geographers, who may offer new spatial insights into this history. Indeed, in recent years “[t]he so-called ‘punitive turn’ has brought new ways of thinking about geography and the state, and has highlighted spaces of incarceration as a new terrain for exploration by geographers” (Moran 2013b, p. 174). Accordingly, although geographers have attended to carceral spaces, the convict ship has thus far eluded examination (in spite of more recent efforts to historicise geographies of prisons and jails<sup>1</sup>). Moreover, geographers have begun to attend to the ship—a site traditionally overlooked given the heightened importance of the terrestrial in geographic study (Hasty and Peters 2012). Scholars have contended that considerations of ships, at sea, open up new spatial imaginaries not possible by looking only inwards to the land (Lambert, Martins and Ogborn 2006). Arguably the ship complicates existing geographical studies relating to the spatialities of incarceration because it encapsulates a host of (im)mobilities that differ from conventional forms of ‘landed’ imprisonment such as the island (as previously described) and the conventional prison. The convict ship is itself, a prison that moves, thus upsetting an assumption of carceral fixity. Moreover, the ship at sea (whether a prison ship or not) may be seen as confining—a limited, solid architectural space amidst a vast expanse of open ocean—offering no immediate refuge or escape. As such, we unpack how, when convict ships are taken into account, prisoners were both mobilised and immobilised in distinctive ways. We explore how the ship at sea (materially, socially and in view of the elements of the natural world in which it was immersed (see Ingold 2011); and from the scale of the sea, to the ship, to the particular

interior space of vessels, and the space of the body as the most intimate geographical locale (see Longhurst 1997)) mobilises and moves prisoners.

The earliest record of convict ship transportation can be dated to 1584 when geographer, cleric and historian, Richard Hakluyt (c. 1552-1616) found a use for convicts in the American Colonies. Hakluyt recommended convict transportation as a method of providing a useful, and free, workforce for such tasks as felling and sawing trees or planting sugar cane. Whilst the removal of offenders from their communities, and even countries, had been previously employed as punishment, from the late sixteenth century this process was institutionalised to a greater extent. As opposed to banishment (as had previously been usual), transportation no longer “abandoned the offender to fortune’s whim” (Brooke and Brandon 2005, p. 19). Transportation became, therefore, a significant part of the penal regime in Britain.

Transportation was also attributed to a wider desire to civilise punishment. Whilst prison sentences were used as a method of punishment in medieval Britain, they mainly attended to debtors. Instead, non-modern societies often offered vindictive or retributive actions against those found guilty of other wrongs. Punishment was often enacted upon the body, and did not rely on the incarceration of the individual as a method of retribution. By the sixteenth and seventeenth century, although the actions against crimes became more quantifiable, their physical undertaking was nevertheless as gruesome (Jackson 2000; Parry 1975). Acts of torture and brutal executions rested on the body of the condemned—the point at which the application of sovereign power was manifested (Foucault 1977, p. 55). Punishment was deemed a “quantitative art of pain” (ibid, p. 34). As such, Britain entered what came to be known as the era of its ‘Bloody Code’ (from around the early-seventeenth- to the middle of the nineteenth century). However, this was eventually brought to an end.

A Whiggish history contends that an increasing distaste for blood occurred from the perspective of progress (Radzinowicz and Hood 1986). Pratt (2002) argues that there was increasing sympathy and humanity for the condemned, which rendered crimes against the body less acceptable to public taste (Vaughan 2000). Amongst the newly emerging middle-class intelligentsia, as well as penal reform groups, there was arguably a growing disdain for what Spierenburg (1984) terms 'spectacles of suffering'. The public execution "seemed in breach of what should be the standards of correct conduct in the civilised world" (Pratt 2002, p. 18). Such severe punishment was also becoming counter-productive, as the distaste for the gory outcome was causing jurors to refuse finding people guilty of offences that would lead to their death or torture. The changing economic nature of the society also saw petty offences grow. Criminality began to be an event "to which the lower strata were attached as to conditions of existence" (Foucault 1977, p. 83). Popular attitudes therefore became ambiguous. As Foucault explains, sympathy was often created for certain types of criminal (such as the smuggler or peasant who had fled from a cruel master) and the distaste for others (such as the beggar, using his vagrancy as vindication for acts of burglary or murder). As such, here emerged more nuanced identities of the offender, from the idle poor, to the hardened criminal who is liable to commit more heinous crimes. This resulted in a necessity for punishments that were in proportion to the crime committed. This reflected, especially in urban contexts, less the 'mercy' dispensed by the gentry and more the concern of the rising middle classes (who were sitting on juries (London Lives 2010)), that the punishment should fit the crime. Judges often granted a reprieve and juries tended to convict of a lesser offence those whom they thought should not go to the gallows.

The Piracy Act 1717<sup>2</sup> established a seven-year penal transportation to North America as an alternative punishment for those convicted of lesser felonies. Furthermore, those with more severe punishments, including those sentencing to death, could have this sentence

commuted to transportation via a Royal pardon. In this way, transportation became a much-used method for disposing of convicted people. Transportation of criminals to North America flourished from 1718 to 1776. By 1775, 50 000 British convicts were transported to North America, providing a substantial part of the early white population. When the 1776 American War of Independence prohibited this transportation, criminals were transported to the British colonies in Australia and Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) (The Howard League for Penal Reform 2012). The years 1787-1868 witnessed the movement of 162 000 British and Irish convicts in 806 ships to these destinations (Brooke and Brandon 2005, p. 13).

In order to use the convict ship as a lens for mobilising carceral geography further, we have drawn on a variety of archival records pertaining to transportation. All archive material tells a partial story in view of what is kept and stored for the future; the ability of the researcher to access all materials relating to a story (some sources may be missed on account of search criteria used; the cataloguing of material or the geographical limitations relating to the reach of the research); as well as the situated interpretations of the past made by scholars in the present. This politics of archive work played out in our research too. Convict ships are a subject both much researched, and about which, many different records, primary and secondary, exist. Records relating to convict ship labour are present in the National Maritime Museum Archives, the London Metropolitan Prison Archives, and the National Archives (NA), to name but a few. It is this latter archive, the National collection at Kew, which holds a vast number of Admiralty records concerning transportation. We focused our attention on these records; which included transportation registers, captain's diaries and the medical folios of surgeons (or doctors) on the ships. This provided the point of view of the mobilities of confinement from the perspective of the 'confiners'—those on the 'right' side of the law: the crew, guards, captains and notably—surgeons or doctors on board. The NA holds almost 4000 records concerning transportation; 3708 of these dating to the nineteenth century.

In order to make the data set of the NA manageable we limited our search period to 1819-1857<sup>3</sup>; marking the period of transportation to Australian colonial outposts. We were interested in this latter period of transportation as only 191 records exist dating from 1700-1799 (largely the era of American transportation). Studying transportation in the later period (to Australia) therefore provides a greater wealth of data. Moreover, from 1801 voyages were subject to more strict regulation by the British Government in terms of provisions and medical support following serious outbreaks of disease with heavy loss of life on board some early convict ship voyages. Due to this change, there are in-depth on-board medical records available from this period. Moreover, 1819 marks the beginnings of a formalised penal system more generally with centralised control and an increased emphasis on record taking/making. Two committee reports in 1819 and 1822 led to Peel's Gaol Act (1823) which sought to impose standardised practice across the prison system. The later Prison Act of 1835 sought to make (annual) reporting mandatory in prisons. Ships are also typically places with strict record-keeping. Bringing these factors together, we selected the date range 1819-1857 to study because this was, perhaps, the peak time when records would have been kept. In view of ships' records, we have focused mostly on medical records. These permit a good insight not only into the health of convicts (and their ailments) but the routines of days on board; tasks of convicts (via injuries associated with such tasks); jobs taken on board; mutinies and uprisings; and the role of the body on the ship (the uses the body is put to; the confinement of the body; the body in relation to the sea). These records also provide knowledge of hierarchy and other elements of life on the convict ship (via mention of captains, crews, wives, children and so). In what follows we trace the constituent and micro-(im)mobilities that occurred in the moment of motion, aboard the convict ship—between crime and colony.

## **The micro-mobilities and constituent parts of transportation**

Journeys on the convict ship featured varying levels of (im)mobility: moments of greater and lesser movement *in* the process of moving. The usual routine of life board is an example of the tension between mobility and immobility during movement itself. Mobility was determined by the guard and crew; but, crucially, could be shaped by the convict themselves, challenging the passive role often attributed to prisoners under lock and key. Exploring the “constituent parts” (Cresswell 2010, p. 17) of movement in the motionful space between shows how rhythms of movement were central to the underlying projection of dominance and control enacted on board vessels. For example, prisoners on the convict ship would move in a cyclical, habitual fashion both between deck levels (below deck to on deck) at the command of those in charge (see also Bissell 2014). Once embarked, prisoners were assigned to a particular berth below deck in the ‘prison’ part of the ship. Release from this part of the vessel was dependent upon employment to a particular role or daily chore on the ship by the gaolers and sailors. For the most part, usual routine would see most convicts on deck for the majority of the day, and being secured below overnight. Whilst temporally restricted then, movement around the ship was permitted and convicts were able to take stock of the horizon and breathe the sea air. However, whilst on deck; this freedom was partly restricted as convicts would be mostly restrained in iron shackles. Most on board remained single-ironed during their voyage in order that they be able to fulfil regular daily chores such as airing beds, scrubbing decks and fixing sails. This then, was a partial mobility; neither complete mobility, or total immobilization. The convict body was rendered partly static and confined through apparatus of incarceration, but simultaneously granted some laboured movement around the ship. In what follows, we attend to examples where this paradox moved beyond the ‘usual routine’ to draw out the intimate, micro-mobilities that were part and parcel of a mobile process of incarceration.



### *Shackled at sea*

Ships were specially converted for the purpose of holding or immobilising prisoners during the passage to Australia. Former-Naval vessels, for example, were adapted to include prison cells or cages in the bowels of the ship. As such, the convict ship became a kind of ‘floating prison’ where, like on land, the use of cellular confinement was instrumental in organising the ship as a space of separation, isolation, deterrence and reform. As Johnston highlights, “although now often occupied by more than one prisoner, the cell has remained architecturally the most significant space in the prison” (2010, p. 14). Like a landed prison, removal to the ‘prison cell’ was crucial to the successful running of the convict ship whilst at sea. The use of the cell on board was symbolic in reducing mobility further, within an already relatively confined and limited space, where greater bodily mobility was already curtailed by the ultimate physical barrier; the sea. Between the space of departure and destination, the micro *removal* of prisons to the cell, often by *force*, was a strategy for maintaining control on the vessel by gaolers (Cresswell 2010, p. 22).

Bad behaviour (beyond the original conviction) was one of the most frequent causes of moving prisoners to cells, where their mobility would be limited further. Here the loss of mobility and process of confinement to smaller, less comfortable spaces, reflected a norm of punishment whereby greater immobility is equated with punishment, representing a loss of liberty and freedom. On the ship then, in the process of movement, use of the cell worked similarly to landed prisons, where, as Philo notes the “ostensible rationale is precisely the stopping of mobility” (2014, p. 495). For example, the Superintendent on board the convict ship *Earl St. Vincent* reported that he had received a complaint from the guard that:

the convicts had been abusive to the centinel [sentinel] during the night and they had also been very noisy, (I) confined them below for punishment and [did not] give them the usual Sunday's allowance of wine.<sup>4</sup> (Journal of Patrick Hill, Surgeon and Superintendent, *Earl St Vincent*, 28 May 1820)

Worse than this was the fate of Sarah Cunningham on board the convict ship *John Bull*, who, “having assaulted Bridget Lunny and being insolent to Captain Collett was confined in the coal hole, until she was discharged in the morning”<sup>5</sup> (Diary of William Elvard, Surgeon and Superintendent, *John Bull*, 27 October 1821). For some then, bad behaviour not only reduced mobility by exclusion to the cell-section of the ship; but *removal* to particularly confining areas (such as the coal hole).

Where the ship departs from the convention prison or island is the partial or paradoxical nature of practices of (im)mobility that occurred during the process of movement. Arm and leg irons were one way in which (im)mobility was shaped *in* the moving space of the ship. As previously noted, prisoners were almost always shackled, even if able to move around the top deck. Double-ironing as punishment was common. Indeed, for bad behaviour and quarrelling,

Miles Jordan one of the ring readers [was] brought this morning and [I] put an extra pair of irons and hand cuffs [on] him, convicts in prison at 8 pm.<sup>6</sup> (Journal of John Johnston, Surgeon and Superintendent, *Earl St Vincent*, 2 August 1818)

This severely hampered not the wider spatial movements of convicts (they could still undertake activities such as scrubbing decks or airing beds) but the micro-mobilities of everyday life. Daily tasks became more cumbersome, laborious and painful as the irons dragged upon the deck and rubbed the skin; impacted to a greater degree than in landed situations because the space, in which the convicts moved, was itself moving. Here the irons

moved as the convict moved in their irons; both of which also moved with sway of the ship at sea. An assemblage of mobilities combined together in transportation creating a particular form of confinement on the ship; one of reduced mobility, but also pain, as irons move and bodies move in situ with the mobilities of work and with the sea.

At other times, mobility was reduced by the joining together of two bodies. Robert Espie, Surgeon Superintendent, embarked on board the *Lord Sidmouth* at Woolwich in September 1822 for Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales. His diary remarked upon the treatment and regulation of the ninety-seven female convicts and twenty-three children (together with twenty-one free women passengers and forty-nine of their children). On 13 December 1822 he reported that convicts Sarah Bolland and Ann Gill had been handcuffed together "for violent and bad conduct"<sup>7</sup>. The ship, a space ever-mobile, was one in which *inside* micro and embodied mobilities were managed by force. Cresswell notes how the force applied to subjects and objects is crucial to understanding the politics of mobilities enacted (2010). He writes, "breaking mobility down into different aspects of moving (is necessary) in the constitution of mobile hierarchies" (Cresswell 2010, p. 22). Force, can be internal or external: we can choose to move, or it can be determined for us (*ibid.*). On the ship, the force driving (im)mobility shaped the regime and hierarchy of power on the ship. Crews of gaolers and sailors administered force in moving prisoners to cells and stocks, which in turn *immobilized* them by force. For example, removal to the stocks was used as public method of punishment on the ship, both to limit mobility (and thus associated freedoms), but as a method of enacting shame upon the body of the offender on the ship. Previously popular punishments such as whipping and pillory relied on public humiliation to discourage others (Braithwaite 1988). As Beattie recognises, the public nature of this punishment served as a warning to others about the negativities of deviance, making it effective far beyond the pain it inflicted (1986, p. 463). As William Price, noted during his time on the ship *Isabella*,

[D]ouble ironed Martin Graham for disobedience of orders and insolence, put him in the stocks [for] eight hours. This mode of punishment I consider to be less disgraceful and less painful than corporal [punishment], and at the same time equally efficient to make any insubordinate.<sup>8</sup> (Medical journal of William Price, Surgeon and Superintendent, *Isabella*, 3 December 1821).

Dissecting the character of (im)mobility and the force enacted, is crucial to understanding how mobilities functioned to maintain order in the space between.

Yet behavioural transgressions were not the only circumstances where force drove immobility aboard the convict ship. It is here where accounts detract from those from traditional confinement settings (the prison), to share similarities with the more nuanced environment of the ship at sea. Forceful weather systems that the ship travelled through had a two-fold effect. Firstly, the swell of the waves often tossed the ships around, causing the onset of nausea and sickness for the convict—many of whom had never experienced life beyond London, never mind on the ocean waves. Indeed, on an intimate level, bad weather resulted cases of seasickness that were felt or mobilised through the body. The vestibular system assists the body in determining balance through the minute nerves and fluids in the ear and what is seen through the eyes. When the body moves, messages from vestibular system to the brain ensure that movement is smooth and balanced. If the messages from these senses are compromised, the body can become unbalanced and effects such as sickness result. In the ship, a motionful space *par excellence*, convicts experienced this mismatch as the body moved in situ with the waves, but the visual sense of this movement was lost whilst confined below decks. Indeed, the incarcerated individual could not see where they were moving or in what direction and this complex motion brought about more personal motions of the body. Accordingly, Surgeons often tried to remedy this sea-sickness by moving individuals to the top deck where the bracing sea air would abate their symptoms. On the *Earl St. Vincent*,

many of the convicts were “so sick as to be literally *forced* on deck<sup>9</sup>” (Journal of John Johnston, Surgeon and Superintendent, *Earl St Vincent*, 12 August 1818, our emphasis).

In this case, the weather enforced convict mobility, under the desire of the guard. But there are examples of the opposite occurring under a different regime of power. Aboard the *Dorothy*, the “gloomy and wet” weather resulted in the prisoners being kept below in the early part of the day and unable to air their bedding on deck (Journal of Robert Espie, Surgeon, *Dorothy*, 6 September 1820<sup>10</sup>). Moreover, despite attempts to keep individuals below deck, the forceful squalls often brought waves crashing over the sides sending icy water through hatches into lower levels. Here the power of the weather-world intervened with the dynamic of order between convict and crew. In the summer, water seeped through cracks in the joinery as the wooden ships began to warp and bend. All this mixed with the stinking bilge and ballast material, created a largely unfavourable environment where bodies and bedding often remained damp for days on end. In these conditions, convicts and crew alike were regularly immobilised to the hospital with raised temperatures and aches and pains. Indeed, on an even more intimate and micro-level, poor health (brought on often through bad weather, leakages on the ship and the spread of disease) would cause convicts to suffer diarrhoea—the literal motion of the body—simultaneously resulting in immobility as convicts would be separated from others and confined to the sick list. Here they would remain, temporarily immobilised, until well again. They would also sometimes be unable to commit to ‘usual duties’. As the following excerpt details, the Surgeons were often inclined to blame the weather conditions:

James Byrne; ... slight pyrexia and acute rheumatic pains of the limbs, from exposure to the wet in doing duty as Cook's Mate. Taken ill, 18 August. ... convalescents continue in the same state, the weather being particularly unfavourable to recovery from dysentery ... there have been slight cases of pyrexia within the last week from being constantly exposed to the

wet weather upon deck and lying down in wet clothes below<sup>11</sup>. (Medical journal of William Evans, Surgeon and Superintendent, *Bencoolen* 18-20 August 1819)

The influence of the sea, however, was not merely as a force resulting in partial or temporary (im)mobilities in and around the ship during movement. It was the very particular nature of the prison on board a ship that rendered the absolute immobility of the convict unnecessary. Indeed, for particular convicts, although the ‘freedom’ to move around the vessel, particularly during the day, was always to some degree partial—as prisoners were limited in agency and bodily movement in relation to the performance of job roles prescribed by the guard—they were on occasion, released from confining technologies (such as shackles) to take on such particular tasks. The successful running of the ship hinged on the ability of its crew to harness convicts for labour. Here the status of the convicts and crews would often conflate, unlike regimes in a conventional prison. With large numbers of men, women and children to feed, bathe and move around the ship, the Superintendent often appointed individuals to roles designed to make these processes more efficient. With the coveted title of “captain” or “petty officer” came the removal of irons to better facilitate this role. Breaking down mobility *during* movement is once again key to understanding the politics of motion in carceral space. Cresswell notes how “experience” is the fifth constituent part of mobility. How it feels to move is crucial to understanding movement and what it might mean for the individual (Cresswell 2010, p. 25).

As the following accounts illustrate, the division of labour involved substantial numbers of individuals, resulting in many convicts having the experience of moving unironed across the ship, much like the crew, for the duration of the voyage:

Ordered irons to be removed from the following individuals on account of the duties they had to perform, being petty officers; David Kennaway and Thomas Jones captains of prison decks, John Hunter and Henry Wood captains of the upper deck, Walter Earing Taylor

superintendent of the hospital and captain of the 1st division, Peter McMahon captain of 2nd division, Thomas Dobbie captain of 3rd division, David Campbell captain of 4th division, Robert Hughes captain of 5th division, William Norman master of boys, Stephen Clothier superintendent of schools, and Joseph Smith ship's cook's mate.<sup>12</sup> (Medical journal of George Thomson, Surgeon and Superintendent, *England*, convict ship, 17 May 1826)

Appointed Thomas Lawless (who came on board strongly recommended and single ironed), captain of the decks, and Henry Smith (who came under similar circumstances as Lawless) as surgery man and to be in charge of the hospital, also a captain to each mess, two cooks, a swab wringer and two men to attend the water closet cisterns and two scavengers who are to be relieved weekly.<sup>13</sup> (Diary and medical journal of S Alexander, Surgeon and Superintendent, *Almorah*, 14 August 1820).

In some cases, convicts possessed particular skills that were of use to the crew in view of the more specific requirements of sailing ships on long voyages. On the *Richmond*, Benjamin Frost found his irons struck off when he “was permitted to assist in painting the ship’s boats” (Medical journal of T B Wilson, Surgeon and Superintendent, *Richmond*, 16 January 1822<sup>14</sup>). Similarly, the former lives of James McAlphine as “surgery man”, John Pocock as “sawyer” and George Shepherd as “joiner” all deemed them useful enough to be un-ironed to assist the crew-member responsible for those areas throughout the voyage (Medical journal of George Thomson, Surgeon and Superintendent, *England*, convict ship, 26 May 1826<sup>15</sup>). Freedom, although partial, to move around the ship un-ironed was a privileged experience that hinged on the obligation of dutifully performing certain job roles. Whilst possible to regard this mobility from the perspective of the guard as a limiting or coerced action, the practice of job roles could be seen as methods that convicts could gently resist the level of the mobility and gain agency over their movements. Through gaining jobs roles, the convict could take some

control over their fate and mobility — as opposed to being restricted visibly and materially in shackles.

However, many micro-mobilities within the ship occurred as a result of deliberate attempts by convicts to resist their confinement. Cresswell asks how friction is essential to understanding the operation of mobility (2010, p. 26). How, he questions, does movement stop? What friction is applied to slow or stop movement? In some cases, as on the *England*, the individuals deliberately tried to disrupt or create friction to the everyday rhythm and routine on board the ship. As George Thomson described,

mustered and inspected all the convicts, divine service interrupted by a heavy squall. Convicts ordered below ... convicts went down slowly and with reluctance, several offered to remain on deck to assist the sailors and were permitted to remain.<sup>16</sup> (Medical journal of George Thomson, Surgeon and Superintendent, *England*, convict ship, 28 May 1826)

Techniques such as these have been considered in other contexts by Scott (1985) who explores how subordinate groups can undermine dominant authority through everyday acts of resistance. He argues that the real ‘action’ of resistance can be found in the more ordinary ‘weapons’ of relatively powerless groups; in simple strategies such as foot-dragging, sabotage, gossip, feigned ignorance, and dissimulation. These and other methods, are covert ways of “sabotaging the demands of discipline and productivity” (Priestley 1999, p. 139). In other cases, the convicts enacted more than simply a slowing or frictionary force against their gaolers. The following account from the *John Barry* is comparable to many others found in the archives, describing events where convicts break down walls and remove restraints in order to access different parts of the ship, and the people housed there:

Thomas Brown a convict, was close confined and handcuffed for ill treating Thomas Jonas another convict. About 8 o'clock in the evening several of the other prisoners assembled in a



very riotous manner, tore down the place where Brown was confined and liberated him. After some difficulty he was taken into the small prison and secured there. The others remained quiet during the night.<sup>17</sup> (Journal of J Bowman, Surgeon, *John Barry*, 10 May 1819)

However, in some extreme cases, convicts were able to enact the ultimate mobility of escaping overboard the ship. On occasions where escape was managed, this usually occurred when the ship was anchored close to the shore awaiting embarkation of further passengers. However, in the following account from the *Chapman*, it was the incompetency of the crew that afforded the individuals the opportunity to escape:

Both the crew and soldiers were unruly and mutinous. The soldiers neglected their duties and two convicts, Robert Snelling and Joseph McDonald, escaped on the night of the 18th July 1826.<sup>18</sup> (Medical and surgical journal of Joseph H. Hughes, Surgeon and Superintendent, *Chapman*, 4 April to 11 October 1826)

It is this example that alludes to the complexity of mobility on board the convict ship. In many cases, these mobilities are partial, temporal and fleeting—‘freedom’ may be harnessed for a few seconds or minutes, often, ironically, through friction to usual everyday mobilities. Typically mobility is associated with liberty and freedom, the reverse—a lack of agency—comes through immobility. However, in taking seriously the constituent parts of mobility in the process of moving, we can see how friction—the reduction of one form of movement—simultaneously created another. These acts demonstrate an emancipatory capacity—if only short-lived—where the prisoner is not passive to their captivity and holds some small agency over their mobile experience on board.

In other cases, these mobilities result conversely in punishment or additional and/or more severe confinement. In the final segment of our empirical findings, we turn to

occurrences where ‘transgressive’ mobility results in the further confinement, or hyper-immobility of the convict body. Examples can be drawn from the convict ships *John Bull* and the *England* detailing the restrictions imposed after Surgeons reported that they had heard “mutinous language”. As mutiny, is known to be conspiracy (typically in a ship setting) to overthrow or change the authority to which convicts were subject, the consequence was a more restrictive regime:

In consequence of having heard that the convicts had made use of mutinous language during the night and had talked much about the mutiny of the Lady Jane Shore formerly taken away by female convicts and crew, I consulted the officers, and it was considered prudent not to allow more than the cooks and one of each mess on deck to provide for the rest<sup>19</sup> (Diary of William Elvard, Surgeon and Superintendent, *John Bull*, 11 September 1821).

...the eighteen men in the boy's prison, excessively insolent and mutinous refused to clean their prison and made use of abusive language to the corporal and to the captain of decks and divisions, [I] ordered them to be locked up and not admitted on deck until their prison cleaned, stopped their sherbet, their wine being already stopped.<sup>20</sup> (Medical journal of George Thomson, Surgeon and Superintendent, *England*, convict ship, 26 June 1826).

More than simply a reversion to the basic confinement of the ship prison, such transgressive mobility could result in more severe restrictions upon the movement of the body. Prisoners on board both the *Atlas* and the *Guildford* were handcuffed for rebelling against their confinement to a particular space or via the mechanism of ironing:

Several prisoners [were] overheard planning to take the ship, two handcuffed for being out of bed. At 10 am Alexander L Hayes, Edward Mills and Jonathan White ... received a dozen lashes each for having broken through the prison into the hospital and having two steel saws in their possession.<sup>21</sup> (Diary of John Duke, Surgeon, *Atlas*, 23 June 1819)

Convicts' irons examined and John Boulding handcuffed for sawing off his irons.<sup>22</sup> (Journal of Hugh Walker, Surgeon, *Guildford*, 21 May 1820)

In each case, rather than the anticipated freedom of movement, convicts found themselves conversely hampered. Mobility then, was always only ever temporary, and only ever partial.

## **Conclusions**

In this paper we have intervened in debates concerning the role of prisoner mobility in carceral settings (following Moran et al. 2012, Mountz et al. 2012 and Philo 2014). To date, carceral geographers have focused less on the mobile worlds of prisoners and more on the spatialities and temporalities of their *immobility*. Indeed, to be incarcerated is to lose the ability to move freely—to be disciplined (Foucault 1977) or coerced (Moran et al. 2012)—into movement. As Philo notes, “asylums and prisons ... do not seem the most obvious foci of mobilities research” (2014, p. 495). However, in recent years, scholars have sought to attend to the ‘problematic’ of “how mobilities and immobilities intersect in and around ... ‘closed spaces’” (Philo 2014, p. 495, citing Wolpert 1976). This paper has sought to progress discussions of the ‘paradox’ (see Mountz et al. 2012) of mobility in carceral settings, by focusing on an inherently mobile form of incarceration: ship-based transportation. The ship has been an exemplar for thinking through this issue because it unhinges any notion that incarceration is a condition of absolute fixity and stasis.

That is not to say this investigation is complete. To date, scholars such as Moran et al. (2012) have explored prisoner transportation as a window for opening up discussion of how mobilities are engrained in carceral life. Yet their study considers prisoner movement in view of the subjects and technologies which move them (notably the guard and the train); with convicts involved in macro-mobilities across space, from holding centre to colony (2012).

Whilst Moran et al. attend to the mobilities of detention on the train—much more can be said in view of the complex, multiple and contested politics of mobilities *in* prisoner transport, focusing on other transportation modes such as the prison van, police car, chain gang, or as here exemplified, the convict ship. As we have shown, the ship provides a very distinct form of prison transportation: one where ship and prison coalesce and greater agency can be earned or fought for by those incarcerated *because of* the ship *and* its setting at sea. What are the politics encapsulated in other forms of moving in carceral contexts? As we have also shown, studies of prisoner transportation have tended to focus on a broader scale of movements between points such as the traversing of the convicted subject from a start point to a destination. Yet studies of mobilities could go much further by interrogating the micro-scale (as Mountz et al. (2012) and Philo (2014) also suggest): the rubbing of irons against skin; the sawing off of irons; the labouring work on deck that earns a simultaneous freedom in a situation of confinement.

In addition, our attention has focused on the *spatial* mobilities enacted on board and whilst we have referred to the temporalities of life (in view of routinised chores for example), more needs to be considered in view of the way time (linear and non-linear) shapes mobilities of confinement. Rhythms, a “constituent part” of mobility (as set out by Cresswell (2010, p. 17)) is a key spatio-temporal element to incarceration on the ship that could be explored further still. Rhythms, as Anim-Addo notes (2011) shape maritime mobilities in a host of ways. There are rhythms external to the ship in the weather, tides, currents; and rhythms that are internal on board the vessel, in the shape of routines, chores, and divine service. Moreover, as Bonds (2013, 2009) reminds us, the politics of incarceration is never outside of a politics of identity. The ways in which on board carceral (im)mobilities are shaped by dimensions of class, age, gender or race are not attended to here, but as Anderson (2000) shows, this would be a useful frame for further investigative work.

In drawing on various records of life on the convict ship, we have proposed taking seriously a politics of mobility that occurs *during* process of moving, noting how power is conveyed and challenged through the very details of how movement occurs. Accordingly, instead configuring movement as “singular” (to quote Cresswell 2010, p. 17) incarcerated mobilities can be broken down into parts, which are shaped by rhythm, force, friction and experience. Mobility then, has a multiplicity and understanding this complexity is crucial to unpacking (im)mobilised carceral life. The ship is an ideal space from which to investigate this because the ship moves (A to B and on the sea); yet is also a platform on which further movements (or lack thereof) take place. In drawing upon the convict ship we have shown how in the space between crime and colony—the voyage of incarceration—a paradox of carceral (im)mobilities occur. This example thus allows an examination of the bricolage of mobilities that can inform an experience of incarceration. Mobilities aren’t simply those coerced or disciplined movements wholesale from location to location; they are the coerced, disciplined and also emancipatory, motions occur through experience, force, friction and rhythm. In paying attention to the intricacy of motion during movement at the micro-scale, we have attended to the minute politics wrapped up in carceral life, where mobilities and immobilities mutually inform one another. Accordingly, we have challenged the binary thinking that separates out moments of fixity from motion to a more complex, fully mobilised impression of carceral life.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example, a session at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers entitled *Historical Geographies of Prisons and Jails* organised by Karen Morin and Dominique Moran.

<sup>2</sup>This Act was originally a UK Act—(1717) 4 Geo 1 c 11 (UK). The Act was renamed as the *Piracy Act 1717* when it was first republished under the *Legislation Act 2001*.

<sup>3</sup> 1857 marks the abolition of transportation. However, it is widely acknowledged that it continued beyond this date, to the mid-1860s.

<sup>4</sup> National Archives ADM 101/21/7B/2

<sup>5</sup> National Archives ADM 101/38/7/4

<sup>6</sup> National Archives ADM 101/21/7A/1

<sup>7</sup> National Archives ADM 101/44/10/3

<sup>8</sup> National Archives ADM 101/36/2/2

<sup>9</sup> National Archives ADM 101/21/7A/2

<sup>10</sup> National Archives ADM 101/19/8/4

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<sup>11</sup> National Archives ADM 101/7/10/4

<sup>12</sup> National Archives ADM 101/26/1/2

<sup>13</sup> National Archives ADM 101/2/1/1

<sup>14</sup> National Archives ADM 101/64/2/3

<sup>15</sup> National Archives ADM 101/26/1/2

<sup>16</sup> National Archives ADM 101/26/1/2

<sup>17</sup> National Archives ADM 101/38/1/1

<sup>18</sup> National Archives ADM 101/16/9/2

<sup>19</sup> National Archives ADM 101/38/7/3

<sup>20</sup> National Archives ADM 101/26/1/3

<sup>21</sup> National Archives ADM 101/6/2/1

<sup>22</sup> National Archives ADM 101/31/2/1