CrossMark

Boxed In: Human Cargo and the Technics of Comfort

Julie Y. Chu [1]

Abstract Since the 1990s, public outcries over the "return" of human cargo commonly point to the physical horrors of travel as a key sign of the inhuman and the unfree in contemporary social life. Whether in debates over migrant shipwrecks across the Mediterranean or over air rage battles on budget American flights, the moving vehicle and its uncomfortably tight quarters often serve as the space par excellence for grappling with questions of proper stranger sociality and the limits of "fellow feeling" or moral sympathy in a globalizing world. This paper examines how a relatively novel problem of "comfort" came to inform and shape the politics of mobility starting in the late eigteenth century when abolitionists first successfully argued for distinguishing the human/izing rights of passengers from the movement of nonhuman goods through sensory invocations of the techno-rational and embodied terrors of the slave ship. Through both the historical and contemporary cases discussed, this paper suggests that the problem of comfort was never just a technical one of cramped transport resolvable through mere material and instrumentalist means. Rather, comfort is better described as a form of technics in so far as its technical-material dimensions are always already entangled with an existing social repertoire of ideas, habits, and aspirations, that is, it has aesthetic and affective capacities as part of moral imaginaries of how to deal with Others and, in turn, how to live the good life.

Keywords Mobility · Migration · Travel · Stranger · Relations · Sympathy · Materiality · Infrastructure · Technics

> …a ship is a habitat before being a means of transport.
> —Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

From Noah's Ark to Spaceship Earth, the moving vehicle and its cramped quarters have long served as a microcosm of the best and worst of social life. Writing at the dawn of mass transport in the early nineteenth century, the French economist and social theorist Constantin Pequer touted the

✉ Julie Y. Chu
   juliechu@uchicago.edu

[1] Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1126 East 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA

intimate spaces of the railcar and the steamship as ideal models of liberty and equality, where all the classes of society could be brought together "into a kind of living mosaic" to "prodigiously advance the reign of truly fraternal social relations" (cf. Schivelbusch 1986, pp. 70–71). In contrast, the tight spaces of contemporary transport increasingly spark dystopic visions of the unraveling of the West's most cherished liberal principles. This is where unruly plane passengers exemplify the breakdown in rational, civic order by exploding in "air rage" over ever-shrinking legroom and overhead bins in scenes one journalist described as "befitting the pages of 'Lord of the Flies'" (Rosenbloom 2014). Meanwhile across the Mediterranean as well as the Indian Ocean, boats crammed with migrants left adrift and sinking at sea continue to make international headlines and escalate public outcries over the lack of humanitarian response among potential host nations.

In all these cases, the moving vehicle clearly is more than a means of transport. Yet if it is a habitat, as Roland Barthes once argued (1972 [1957]), it is also a distinctive and often politicized one of enclosure and movement—a non-place of captive travelers, where everyone is a stranger and no one is expected to feel quite at "home." This article examines the moving vehicle as a space par excellence for grappling with the dis/orders of stranger sociality and with the limits of what moral philosophers since Hume and Smith have described as the political good of "fellow feeling" or sympathy. Whether encouraging an enlightened traveling public or a threatening irrational crowd, the cramped space of mass transport has been both milieu and medium for cultivating moral imaginations of how to deal with strangers and how, in the process, to live the good life. It is, moreover, a lightning rod for questions of personhood and its relationship to such liberal ideals as civility, humanity, and freedom.

Perhaps nothing captures these concerns better than the figure of "human cargo," whose unseemly "return" to contemporary scenes of transport has been hailed repeatedly in recent debates over both air rage and migrant shipwrecks alike. Such invocations are commonly accompanied by visceral descriptions of passengers "crammed like cattle" and "breathing foul air" in vessels designed to maximize the transporter's carrying capacity and profit margins. Critiques of mercenary airlines and cruel human smugglers especially fixate on the infrastructural features of physical discomfort in the moving compartment. In recent air rage controversies, for instance, journalists and consumer advocates typically highlight the uncomfortable condition of passengers by citing the same litany of technical details: in the past decade, legroom between seats have plummeted from an average of 35 to 31 in. while seat width decreased from 20 to 17 in. (Elliott 2015; McCartney 2014; Muskal 2014; Patterson 2012; Post 2014). Meanwhile pets traveling in the cargo hold of the same planes are guaranteed by U.S. federal law to a minimal standard of personal space—enough to turn around in their crate—in contrast to the humans "stacked like sardines" in the economy cabin (Lipsey 2015). Across the seas, recurring descriptions of "pitiful human cargo" similarly focus on the physical discomforts aboard barely seaworthy vessels with their waterlogged cabins, poor ventilation, and overcrowded bodies jostling for a bit of floor to sit and rest. The infrastructural problems of the migrant ship make it a "fetid floating coffin," as one journalist put it, in language intentionally reminiscent of the cramped horrors of the transatlantic slave ship (Birrell 2015).

While physical misery has been an object of sympathy and humanitarian reform since the late eighteenth century—and well studied as such by many scholars (Crowley 1999, Halttunnen 1995, Lacquer 1989)—what I would like to examine in greater detail here are the peculiar technical and aesthetic fixations that shape this kind of politics of dis/comfort. Such fixations, as I will show, make it possible to conceive of the "problem" of moving strangers in terms of the material culture of transport, where cramped conditions—and their distinctive rhythm of "turbulent stillness" (Martin 2011)—become iconic of the improper arrangement of

intermingling bodies, vehicles, and infrastructure. I am especially interested in the presumed metric of "comfort" that governs these debates over the in/human, the un/civilized, and the un/free in the movement of migrants and other travelers. Once referring only to spiritual and emotional support, the notion of "comfort" came to denote the self-conscious embodied satisfaction with one's physical surroundings during a time of expanding consumer culture in eighteenth century Anglo-American societies (Crowley 1999, 2001). As a middle ground between necessity and luxury, comfort provided a new idiom for linking the material aspirations of a rising bourgeois class to a moral project of modern self-fashioning and embodied rights premised on prevailing standards of "decency" and "ease." In this paper, I examine how this relatively novel redefinition of comfort has come to inform the politics of mobility since the late eighteenth century when abolitionists first successfully and iconically invoked the physical terrors of the slave ship to argue for the "rights" of all passengers to certain minimum standards of the "humane" in transport in contradistinction to the movement of nonhuman things.

It is important to note that as a rights-claiming concept, comfort is not just a pragmatic matter of material satisfaction and technical utility; it is also aesthetic and affective as a key sign of the good life capable of moving people to help themselves and to help (or impede) others. This latter point notably appears in Adam Smith's discussion of approbation in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, where Smith argues that what often moves people into sympathy and action is not rational utility per se but rather "the propriety and beauty" of utility as an aspirational means; that is, as a pleasing vision of "the perfect machine," artfully fitted for "conveniency or ease," which one can imagine and strive for regardless of the actual satisfaction of ends (Smith 2011 [1759], pp. 153–4). In fact, in his parable of the poor man's son, Smith points to such aspirations in travel as one of the catalysts for moral action. Forced to "walk a-foot, or to endure the fatigue of riding on horseback," the poor man's son, as Smith tells us, is enchanted by the sight of "his superiors carried about in machines" which he imagines could enable him to "travel with less inconveniency." And it is with "the distant idea of this felicity" in mind that the poor man's son comes to share a sensibility of comfort with his superiors and to aspire for its signs, through "the pursuit of wealth and greatness" (155). In the contemporary era, we do not need to look further than popular ads for luxury cars or first-class air travel to see Smith's theory of aspirational comfort and its distinctive techno-aesthetics at work.

In the remainder of this paper, I focus mainly on the other end of the spectrum: those cramped vehicles of lowly travel where technical breakdown, sensory displeasure, and the figure of "human cargo" dominate. I come to this interest as an anthropologist who has spent over a decade doing fieldwork among Chinese transmigrants from Fuzhou made infamous in international media and political debates as the unfortunate subjects, as well as perpetrators, of many human smuggling disasters: from the Golden Venture boat drownings off the coast of New York in 1993 to the Dover incident in 2000 when 58 migrants suffocated in the back of a cargo truck making its way from Belgium to England. Perhaps the most notorious cases of all have involved Chinese human smuggling along transoceanic shipping channels, in which these migrants were guided into standard metal containers with limited provisions and makeshift ventilation to endure 10–15-day journeys aboard giant cargo ships. More than any other mode of transport, container smuggling crystallized the politicized yet porous boundaries between "cargo" and "passenger" mobilities; it did this by showing how an increasingly liberalized system of "free trade" could be repurposed by people otherwise subjected to an illiberal regime of immigration control. And in doing so, it challenged our prevailing assumptions of a world of smooth and speedy circulations by pointing to the lurching rhythms and hidden stasis of travelers crowded together and sometimes lost among the transnational flow of goods.

One way to police and reinstate the distinction between "passenger" and "cargo" mobilities is through invocations of dis/comfort as a measure of the human in the vehicle and, moreover, of that human's promise as sociable stranger or un/free subject capable and deserving of rights in a broader political community. As I will show, one cannot easily separate these questions of the human in transit from the moving vehicle and its infrastructures in contemporary migration politics. In this sense, I join William Walters' call to attend to "viapolitics"—that is, to the ways in which "vehicles, routes and journeys matter not just because they shape migration worlds; they matter because the ship as well as the city, and the road as well as the agora have provided a locus for problematizations of the human and the possibility of politics" (Walters 2014, p. 4).

The specific political possibilities that cramped transport invoke, and which occupies the remainder of this paper, hinge on an unspoken *technics* of moving strangers through which a sense of dis/comfort is key. By technics, I mean to get at more than the technological aspects of transport in shaping politics under cramped conditions. Rather, I draw from Lewis Mumford's distinction between technology and technics; the latter referring to the dynamic interplay of social milieus and technological innovation, in which technology-as-tool is only ever as efficacious as its cultural translation and social assimilation into an already existing complex of "ideas, wishes, habits, goals" (Mumford 2010 [1934], p. 3). Unlike technology per se, technics focuses on the resonances and relations of various elements—both human and machine, organic and nonorganic—in a sociotechnical ensemble. Moreover, it gestures to relations that are not only utilitarian and functional but also poetic and affective. Finally, it suggests how all these relations find coherence, as well as develop transmutations, only under specific material and historical conditions.[1]

This paper makes a similar argument about the technics of moving strangers across oceans and into shared sociopolitical worlds. I do this by looking at the ways in which modes of transport and their metrics of comfort have come to orient how we deal with both (1) the pragmatics of travel as well as (2) the poetics of the vehicle as a powerful symbol for garnering sympathy, as well as revulsion, towards distant and intimate Others. To trace the formation of this mobile world of tight quarters and stranger dis/comforts, I start by returning to the figure of "human cargo" as it comes into recognition as a political problem and through which the reform of moving vehicles and its infrastructures promises resolution in the name of the (human) passenger's right to comfort. I then examine one aspect of these technics in greater detail by homing in on the politics of ventilation and its related suspicion of smells in the policing of strangers boxed in together and on the move. The conclusion returns to a general discussion of the cramped vehicle and the insights enabled by attending to its technics in relation to migration politics, stranger sociality, and moral imaginaries of the good life.

Human Cargo, Passenger Comfort

In Alex Rivera's remarkable documentary project, the *Borders Trilogy* (2003), three video snapshots of mobile subjects—moving from a realist to surreal to magical real mode—build a composite portrait of the off-kilter energies commingling between a liberal regime for expanding "free trade" in goods and the illiberal one for restricting the movement of people. The trilogy opens with a 2-min film entitled "Love on the Line" which soberly observes people

---

[1] For a cogent example of technics as more than technology, see Mumford's discussion of the clock and the emergence of a clockwork world (2010, pp. 16–17).

gathered for regular transnational picnics through the open slats of an imposing metal fence cutting across the beach and into the Pacific Ocean between the USA and Mexico. A father awkwardly plays with his infant daughter and wife through one of the gaps in this border fence. A woman defiantly kisses a man through another partial opening. Slapping his hand against the thick columns of the fence, this man later says to the camera, "This is solid…you can't cross through. But there are things that aren't solid and *they* can cross through."

In the second segment, "Container City, USA," images of the American flag hanging in a quiet neighborhood are accompanied by horror film music and a sinister voiceover proclaiming that "America is being attacked by *invaders* from faraway lands." These invaders turn out not to be people but the growing stack of shipping containers encroaching on prime shoreline real estate next to a Newark, New Jersey town. As a result of globalizing free trade and the subsequent two-to-one imbalance in the flow of commodities in and out of the USA, the film ominously warns us that with no goods to carry and no place to go, "the abandoned containers are *slowly* taking over." Slyly playing with our expectations of the nature of people and things, the film sets up containers as if they were battling Americans in a vintage alien invasion film or better yet, in its related contemporary political genre of the scaremongering, anti-immigrant ad.

This query into the relation of people and things culminates in the third film, "A Visible Border," which focuses on a single haunting image captured at the Mexico/Guatemala Border using technology developed by the company, American Science & Engineering, Inc. Juxtaposed against the faraway distorted sounds of a telephonic voice explaining the company's history and signature surveillance products, a blurry close up of an incandescent black-and-white image slowly zooms out to reveal an X-ray scan of a container truck concealing ghostly human silhouettes among its stacks of cargo. A caption under the image explains that "The immigrants seen in this image were headed to the United States. They were in a shipping container, disguised as bananas for import."

In many ways, Rivera's documentary is exemplary of what I have sketched above as the study of moving strangers as technics. With its evenhanded treatment of the relation between humans and machines along with its astute eye for their uncanny effects as part of larger ensembles of regulation, the film ultimately zeroes in on a tacit distinction in transport that we have come to take for granted—that "passengers" and "cargo" have different natures and means of movement. This assumption slowly starts to unravel as the figure of the "Border" takes on different resonances and palpable forms through the interplay of metal fences and affective bodies, trade pacts and port overflow, X-ray scanners, and cargo trucks. Reciprocal effects between humans and nonhumans abound in these various concretizations of "the border." The metal fence turns out to be more than an inert technical object for keeping people out; it is also a poetic vehicle for relaying the immaterial bonds of love across the USA and Mexico. Likewise, the flow of containers, not just of people, moves in ways that trouble our common sense of national belonging and security as they take over spaces once deemed only good for human dwelling and enjoyment. Further scrambling assumptions of human and nonhuman mobilities, the concluding image of migrants disguised as goods especially disturbs our contemporary assumptions of traveling and shipping as divergent ontologies of movement, each subject to different technical standards and material infrastructures (e.g., passenger versus cargo terminals, immigration versus trade law).

As Rivera well understood, the ghostly X-ray scan has come to be one of our most iconic images for hailing the return of "human cargo" in the contemporary era. Less object of regulation that lightning rod for political discourse, "human cargo" has become a phantasmagoria for

conjuring the Technics of retrograde infrastructures and devalued migrant worlds, of cramped transport by convoluted sea routes and slow-going roads, rusty freighters, and crammed trucks. These are conveyances supposedly more suitable to durable goods rather than to impatient modern people in the global age of speedy and abundant air travel. As William Walters noted of the transit patterns in migration today, "A mere fifty years ago, as the age of mass air travel was dawning, no one would have predicted that migrants would once more return to the sea in such numbers…But it is not just the ship, in its various forms and states of disrepair, that populates imaginations of irregular migration today…Think of the public display of X-ray images of trucks, and containers, their interiors made to disclose diaphanous figures huddled together in adversity" (Walters et al. 2012, p. 8). Noting past associations of visually cramped interiors with human abjection in travel, he goes on to ask:

> Does it risk trivializing the scale of inhumanity and killing that was the Middle Passage to note the eerie resemblance between these ghostly X-rayed images and Thomas Clarkson's famous diagram of the slave ship Brookes (1789)—a diagram whose mass circulation was to prove so instrumental in assembling a public against slavery (8)?
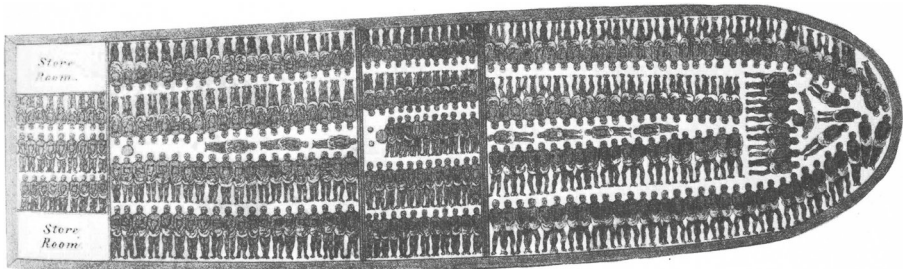

Diagram of the slave ship Brookes.

X-ray scan of "human cargo" as featured in Alex Rivera's *Borders Trilogy*.

Reprint courtesy of Getty Images

Crusaders against "human trafficking" certainly have no qualms in drawing such comparisons when describing the contemporary movement of people-as-cargo as newfangled forms of "slavery." Since 1993 when the Golden Venture freighter grounded off the coast of New York with nearly 300 unauthorized Chinese aboard, moral panics about "human cargo" have routinely pointed to the unsavory condition of transport as iconic signs of migrant abjection and

enslavement. Conjuring the ghosts of the Middle Passage, a *Newsweek* article entitled "The New Slave Trade" first described the Golden Venture in 1993 as a "dismal rust bucket" where migrants were trapped in "the darkened hold" with "barely enough room to lie down" and with "no shower, and…only one toilet for 281 people" (Liu 1993). In a more recent 2011 case in which two cargo trucks hiding 517 people were captured by X-ray scanners in Mexico, popular images and descriptions of the migrants as "crammed like cattle" and "stacked like wood" continued to raise the specter of the slave ship as a dehumanizing vehicle of commodity capture. This comparison of migrant transport to slavery continues to figure prominently in the current Mediterranean crisis, especially as a rationale for militarizing the seas and for preventing further refugee flows into Europe.[2]

In many cases, the very materiality of the cramped vehicle can become merged with the ontology of migrant bodies themselves. For instance, following a slew of Chinese boat smuggling incidents in Canada in 1999, Alison Mountz (2010) observed how government lawyers successfully argued against the asylum claims of most of these migrants by marshaling the same generic images of rusting boats as key evidence of the applicant's suspect dispositions. Can someone recently transported along such decrepit channels be trusted to become the kind of law-abiding, autonomous individuals expected of citizen-subjects in a liberal democracy like Canada? The answer, as Mountz noted, was a definitive no.

A common pushback from some scholars and activists is to celebrate human agency in unauthorized travel. For instance, sociologist David Spener has argued against using terms like "smuggling" and "smugglers" altogether—not to mention "trafficking" or "human cargo"—because "they wrongly imply that migrants are inanimate objects that have border-crossing 'done' to them rather than acknowledging that they set their own migratory agendas and actively pursue strategies, including the hiring of professional service providers, carry out those agendas" (Spener 2009, p. xii). In the effort to assert migrant agency in these arguments, it is all too easy to reduce the figure of "human cargo" to a mere dead or inert thing. Migration remains trapped as an either/or proposition—it is either "active humans" over "inanimate objects" or vice versa.

Yet the relation of "human" to "cargo" has a more interesting and ambiguous history. As late as 1941, the U.S. Supreme Court formally declared that people, like goods, were "article of commerce" and that this issue was "settled beyond question" (Bilder 1996, p. 745). Since then, this legal construct has gone largely unnoticed and unchallenged in both U.S. courts and the broader public sphere. Under the laws of commerce, humans and nonhumans, passenger and cargo, may be different in degree but not necessarily in kind as "articles" holding commodity potential. This conceit does not seem so controversial when we think of such common industries like travel and life insurance today, which are in the business of pricing the value of both mobile people and mobile things.

In fact, far from being distinct and oppositional terms, "cargo" and "passenger" have long been elastic categories for describing a range of human and nonhuman mobilities. Derived from Spanish and Latin terms for burden, charge, and to load, "cargo" has been used variously to refer to a freight of goods, a load of travelers, and the moving vessel carrying the load.

---

[2] For instance, in public statements about the current Mediterranean crisis, the Italian Prime Minister has described the migrant flows as "the slavery of the 21st century" (BBC News 2015) while the French rightwing party, the National Front, denounced the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, for her migrant-friendly policies by arguing that "Germany needs market slaves to supply its industry" (Vinocur 2015). Also see Kingsley 2015, O'Connell Davidson 2015, and OpenDemocracy 2015 for scholarly critiques of the slavery rhetoric in the European debates about migration.

Similarly, "passenger"—coming from Middle English and French terms for passing and temporary—could point not just to the person being transported but also to the ship or other vehicle doing the transporting. This porousness among travelers, products, and vehicles probably did not seem so strange when it was still common to see people mixed in with goods in a ship's compartment and then off loaded together through the same dock and checkpoint.

So what makes "human cargo" such a lightning rod these days? Here it may be useful to return to the iconic image of the slave ship Brookes that has been the referent for so many macabre descriptions and political rants about contemporary migration and travel. While all sorts of images and writings conveying the evils of slavery had been circulated by British and American abolitionists throughout the late eigteenth century, the diagram of the Brookes seemed to have been singularly powerful when it was introduced in 1789 because of the unique objectivist standpoint from which it made the physical miseries of the Middle Passage legible (Rediker 2007, Wood 1997). Instead of the usual baroque styles and sentimental appeals popular in abolitionist campaigns, the image of the Brookes offered a sober realist rendering of the precise architechtonics and financial calculations that went into maximizing the ship's capacity for the capture and delivery of humans for sale. Following the graphic conventions of naval architecture plans at the time, this was a work about the techno-rational horrors of slavery from the "system-building" perspective of merchant-capitalists and transport engineers (cf. Law 1987). It meant to foreground the ruthless logic of capital in structuring the experience of the slave trade, a logic uniquely captured by the business of transporting people-as-cargo (as opposed to plantation life per se) in which economic efficiency was key. Here what appears from the ship owner's perspective as a winning design for maximizing profit comes to be seen as unconscionably cramped and cruel through the successful humanitarian reframing of the vehicle as a space of fellow feeling with suffering strangers.

Two metrics of the ship's design especially galvanized public imaginations of the brutalities of slave transport—one concerning the spatial allocation of "living cargo" on the vessel and the other the material infrastructure of slave provisioning and waste management during the journey. The first metric concretized the degradations of crowding on board by making explicit the ratio of slaves to each tonnage of ship weight (2 slaves to 1 t) and the dimensions of each space of stowage per body (a maximum of 6-ft long × 1.3 wide with only 2.5 ft of height or "headroom"). The second metric captured the ship's metabolic dysfunctions in the feeding and "airing" of its stock of "living cargo" through descriptions of the deathly stench and "contagious disorders" circulating from the overcrowded slave decks into the sailors' quarters. In linking the handling of slaves to the perilous conditions of lowly seamen, these descriptions would also begin to disassociate the "human" from "cargo" in transit infrastructures. If the financial logics for transporting slaves was to maximize their stock as one might do with cattle or any other kind of perishable good, then by exposing the plight of suffering sailors literally "in the same boat" as these slaves, the goal was to recast the human stakes in ship design. Once removed from the experience of slaves themselves, the put-upon white seamen proved to be especially powerful as relatable witnesses and victims of the slave trade, whose embodied perspective of misery aboard the ship could be more readily translated into sympathy from a largely white public. They did this by raising moral questions about the materiality of comfort, as opposed to the mere technicalities of survival, for all the human passengers aboard. By the last stages of the debates over slavery, even defenders of the institution would point to

evidence of physical comfort in the transport and housing of slaves to argue for the humane and worthy nature of their enterprise.[3]

Just 2 years after the 1807 passage of the first British law banning the slave trade, this association of comfort with human dignity and entitlement in transport would start to get codified through a series of increasingly detailed "passenger" laws in both England and the USA. The same cold calculations that inspired horror over the Brookes—its spatial allocation, its management of food, waste, and air—emerged as the key practical targets of legal reform. For instance, against the brutal slave ship metric of two slaves to one ship ton, successive passenger laws in England would expand the ratio from one person to 2 t in 1809 to one person to 5 t in 1823. In the USA, similar passenger laws have been hailed as the beginning of state recognition of the migrant as a "person" with natural rights to "comfort and convenience" rather than as "cargo" with commodity potential to be maximized (Dillingham 1911). Over the first half of the nineteenth century, the "passenger" would take on increasingly detailed embodied presence in law as a subject entitled to a certain minimum of square footage, hygiene standards, daylight, and fresh air, not to mention the detailed lists of daily staples and drinks. By 1849, the U.S. passenger law even demanded ships to meet a specific discriminating sense of taste:

> at least fifteen pounds of good navy bread, ten pounds of rice, ten pounds of oatmeal, ten pounds of wheat flour, ten pounds of peas and beans, thirty-five pounds of potatoes, one pint of vinegar, sixty gallons of fresh water, ten pounds of salted pork, free of bone, all to be of good quality, and a sufficient supply of fuel for cooking…

It is important to note that despite the stated intentions of the passenger laws to secure the traveler's rights to "comfort and convenience," they turned out to be quite ineffectual in enforcing these stipulations on the major commercial shippers moving people across the Atlantic and other long-distance routes (Zolberg 2008, p. 147; Page 1911, pp. 741–2). Ironically, the detailed regulations for improving infrastructure and spatial allocation on ships often lead to even more exploitation of migrants by the transportation companies—such as through fare hikes for the poorest and most debilitated travelers to offset new costs associated with "reform"—without actually leading to more comfortable and safe traveling conditions (Dillingham 1911; Page 1911; Hirota 2013; Zolberg 2008). Far from being migrant-friendly in their orientation, the passenger laws also proved to be productive for xenophobic nationalist agendas by demanding severe restrictions on the number of potential migrants aboard each ship headed for British and American ports (Zolberg 2008).

Nonetheless, by articulating a new entitlement to "comfort" in travel, such laws not only helped cultivate our contemporary assumptions that passenger = human = rights while cargo = nonhuman = price. They were also important technical projects for drawing together all kinds of forces—lawyers, portholes, upholstered seats, good navy bread, air vents, "head tax" collectors, and quarantine rooms—into the distinct worlds of passenger versus cargo infrastructure, which we have all come to know and now take for granted. Today it may be easy to assume that the illegality of "human cargo" is the result of people simply moving via the "wrong" channels in this dual system of shipping and travel. Such facts of law and its violation are hard to dispute. However, in tracking the techno-aesthetic chain of associations back from the ghostly X-ray of migrants to the slave ship Brookes, it should be clear that before the parallel regimes of passenger versus cargo transport could take legible and durable form, other

---

[3] For instance, see Crowley (1999, p. 777).

infrastructures of mobility first had to be destabilized and broken into their constituent parts. This crucially included the successful decomposition of the slave ship into a set of question-able calculations and material arrangements which in turn lead to the disaggregation of passengers and their human/izing claim to "comfort" from the sociotechnical complex of cargo with its lower standards of perishability in transit.

Bad Airs: the Politics of Ventilation

Since the slave ship Brookes captured public imaginations, the cramped vehicle as political problem has been crucial to the concretization of "comfort" as a privileged measure of the human and the lawful in transport. This can be gleaned most obviously from the cushioned interiors of vehicles and port terminals designed for passengers as opposed to the more stripped down spaces organized for cargo shipping. Yet comfort can also be materialized in less visible and architectural forms, less as a thing-like substance than as the sensible effect of a shifting confluence or friction of forces. It can become palpable, if not fully legible, as an eventful intermingling such as in the common feeling of a shift in the air while moving from an open dock into the enclosure of steerage. In this section, I would like to further elaborate on the necessary rapport and reciprocal relations between heterogeneous elements—both machinic and organic, technical and social, and thing-like and phantasmic—crucial to the production of comfort as a sensible sign of migrant il/legality and humanitarian claims. To do this, I will take a look at one of the more embedded and diffused operations of the moving vehicle and its related infrastructures—what I am calling its politics of ventilation.

Stifling air and foul stench have long been signs of migrant disorder and of necessary reform in transportation (as well as later, in housing) since the heydays of the abolitionists and passenger rights advocates discussed above. In 1849, the revised U.S. passenger law formally subtitled, "AN ACT To provide for the ventilation of passenger vessel, and for other purposes," made it clear that fresh air was an essential component of "comfort and convenience" due to passengers. Air's circulation became a legal right of the migrant-as-person to be secured by the state through new infrastructural demands on transport providers for ample open doors, windows, and hatches on lower decks and for a minimum of two ventilators with "an exhausting cap to carry off the foul air…[and] a receiving cap to carry down fresh air…" Yet it was not until the early twentieth century after innovations in electric-powered ventilation and cooling systems that the pervasive stench of long-distance travel would shift from a common condition of passengers, largely irresolvable through law, to an incriminating sign of only the most lowly migrants. Interestingly, this capacity to dispersed foul smells in passenger transport would come from breakthroughs first made in the cargo shipping industry, particularly via new technologies of refrigeration for moving perishable foods like dressed meat (Cronon 1991).

There is of course an obvious irony in this line of technological development since cargo transport has become the source of most of our horror stories about the stench of contemporary migration. Migrants themselves are often quick to point to the oppressive smells of cargo hulls and containers as an index of the degradations resulting from such illegalized transport. In Longyan where I have done fieldwork since 2000, villagers assessing travel options often described how the qualities of passengers and their mode of transport became intimately entangled through the very practice of long-distance travel (Chu 2010). Air transport elevated passengers literally and figuratively, distinguishing a privileged class of mobile subjects from

that of the *toudu* (smuggled) passenger, whose lesser capacities and lowly status were indexed by the very inefficiencies and penetrating smells of their journeys through smuggling channels. Chinese migrants who had experienced *toudu* (human smuggling) often noted how difficult it could be to simply breathe amidst the stale air and olfactory oppressiveness of bodies crammed together in a container or hull of a ship. Echoing the arguments of nineteenth century passenger laws, one woman from Fuzhou once told me how the stench of cargo transport had made her feel "not like a human being" (*buxiangren*). This was an experience this migrant, and others like her, ultimately traced to the structural violence resulting from first, being immobilized as a state-classified "peasant" with few prospects for prosperity in China and secondly from draconian anti-immigrant regimes overseas, which compelled ambitious "peasants" to embark on such cramped and dangerous travel (Chu 2010).

But the degradations of air were not only experienced by those being smuggled; they were also being materially and discursively reinforced by an elaborate infrastructure of state surveillance and border control. Often the poetics and pragmatics of smell became intimately entangled in the policing of unauthorized migrants. Since the discovery of container smuggling in the late 1990s, for instance, immigration officers and customs inspectors have routinely relied on techniques and technologies for detecting the olfactory signature of human waste as a means of identifying stowaways in and around cargo ports of entry. A booming industry in "stowaway detectors," including carbon dioxide monitors and special sniffer dogs, now work with border police to search for the distinctive chemical profile of the odiferous human hidden among nonhuman cargo in shipping containers. As an article reviewing a profiling technology, "the zNose 4200," noted:

> In recent years, smugglers have put humans inside cargo containers to slip them into the country. The presence of human cargo might be signaled by the odor of human waste, which contains a high percentage of E. coli bacteria. E. coli produce a very recognizable olfactory image, which is dominated by the chemical indole. The presence of molds and fungus in cargo containers can contaminate and even damage sensitive cargo. These life-forms produce distinctive olfactory images and unique, detectable chemicals called microbial volatile organic compounds (Staples 2004, pp. 25–26).

Images of garbage-strewn shipping containers and descriptions of reeking waste also feature prominently in stories about Chinese human smuggling circulated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as well as by the U.S. news media. For instance, in a report about the discovery of 29 Chinese migrants at the Port of Los Angeles in April 2006, ICE officials noted:

> The circumstances of this latest incident are similar to those of past human smuggling scenarios. Officers at the scene say the stench coming from the containers was overwhelming. Inside, agents found piles of discarded food packages, blankets, and containers overflowing with human waste (Inside ICE: 2005).

Such an effluvia of stench and garbage has become so indexical of the Chinese stowaway in border enforcement that one reporter concluded, "even if they make it here alive, they are easy to spot…because of the smell of waste they create [while in transit]…" (Grossberg 2006).

Through the sensory associations of odor with criminalized discomfort, what both aspiring migrants and state authorities recognized were the reciprocal effects that occurred when bodies and vehicles came together in the act of traveling. Mode of transport was more than a simple instrument or prosthesis of the traveling person. Rather, something like a shipping container

actively shaped the traveler both materially and symbolically, just as passengers gathered in the container transformed its various properties from its air quality and chemical composition to its uses and meanings. The merger of container with human passengers even produced new "life forms" like the *Escherichia coli* in human waste and new technologies like "stowaway detectors" which together could then act as new mediators of il/legality in global shipping and border control.

This is not to suggest that there is something entirely novel in the privileging of smell in the policing of contemporary migration. As part of the technics of moving strangers, odor has a long semiotic-material legacy as a key differentiator of the uncivilized, contagious masses, with their animalistic and threatening smells, from the deodorized modern world of disciplined, self-possessing individuals, who claim more enlightened and delicate senses of hygiene, well-being, and comfort (Corbin 1986; Classen et. al. 1994; Elias 2000). Moreover, far from being technologically dependent, efforts in the policing of "bad airs" often point to the relative autonomy of the poetics of aroma from the pragmatics of ventilation. As both Martin Manalansan (2006) and Aihwa Ong (2003) have shown in their separate work on the politics of olfaction in, respectively, the valuation of migrant homes and the hygienic training of "good" refugees, imaginations of "the smelly migrant" often precede and shape the terms of regulation, such as by turning attention to the racialized body, rather than structural conditions, as the key "problem" in need of reform.

While the abolitionist movement and later the passenger laws first invoked the stench of overcrowding to call for infrastructural changes in long-distance transport, by the last decades of the nineteenth century, anti-coolie campaigns and legislation, especially against the Chinese in the USA, would show how the same problem of odor could be recast as the incorrigible sign of bad strangers threatening to a national body and its civilized ways of life. As passengers traveling on some of the same ships and routes that formerly served the slave trade, Chinese coolies occupied a peculiar position of ambivalence in Western moral imaginaries of freedom, humanity, and labor. As a transitional figure at the cusp of slavery's demise, the coolie served both as a new model of free labor (mostly for the British) and as a threatening vestige of the unfree (mostly for Americans) (Lowe 2006, p. 202). Yet despite such disagreements over the coolie's status as laborer, there appeared to be widespread consensus about how to deal with the coolie-as-passenger on dangerously overcrowded ships that continued to defy humanitarian and legal standards of comfort. Whereas the cramped conditions of the slave ship inspired all sorts of material and structural reforms, it is striking how similar horrors of coolie transport did little to further such efforts so much as they directed public attention to the backward nature of the Chinese, who on the one hand, appeared as ignorant victims of their more savvy and ruthless countrymen (McKeown Adam 2008) and on the other as a distinctive race of insensible bodies inured to their own physical discomforts as well as to the suffering of others Lye 2005; Hayot 2009).[4]

In his widely read account of *Chinese Characteristics*, the late nineteenth century American missionary Arthur Smith argued that "It is in traveling in China that the absence of helpful kindness on the part of the people towards strangers is perhaps most conspicuous" (Smith 1894, p. 209). Smith traced this Chinese apathy not only to cultural limitations of a "barbaric" civilization but also to the racial distinction of Chinese bodies themselves, which he argued made them much more tolerant of physical discomfort than they

---

[4] See Hayot 2009 and Eng et al. (2012) for more detailed historical discussions of the association of Chinese insensibility with Western moral imaginations of the human, strangerhood, and sympathy.

would be if they "had an outfit of Anglo-Saxon nerves" (94). This Chinese incapacity to feel, both for their own pain and that of others, was made especially clear in Smith's discussion of the problem of cramped space and its attendant bad airs. After offering various examples of Chinese indifference to physical confinement and noxious overcrowding, Smith summed up the inhuman limit of Chinese bodies by noting: "we must take account of the fact that in China breathing seems to be optional" (92–94). Just a few years after Smith published his account, a similar line of argument would appear in anti-coolie campaigns for banning all Chinese migration to the USA.[5]

In diagnosing the continual problem of bad air in cramped transport among the Chinese, the moving vehicle no longer appeared as an external force impinging on the traveler's sense of freedom, humanity, or comfort. Instead, it became a symptom of a degraded "race" and its innate insensibilities to overcrowding and poor ventilation. In turn, the solution was not in fixing the ship and its infrastructure but in banning its passengers from bringing their alienating habits and lowly standards onto Western shores, where they threatened to undermine the good life. This powerful reduction of the cramped vehicle to the bad, unsympathetic stranger not only supported a half century of Chinese exclusion laws and other race-based restrictions on immigration in the USA. Its legacy can also be glimpsed in contemporary invocations of rusty ships and smelly containers to disqualify migrant claims to asylum and other rights, as evident in the Canadian response to Chinese stowaways discussed earlier (Mountz 2010) as well as in the current debates over security and un/freedom in the Mediterranean crisis.

Conclusion

> Before we can feel much for others, we must in some measure be at ease ourselves. If our own misery pinches us very severely, we have no leisure to attend to that of our neighbour; and all the savages are too much occupied with their own wants and necessities, to give much attention to those of another person.
> —Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*

> The list of the stresses, indignities, and perceived injustices airline travelers are expected to accept as a matter of course these days can be overwhelming…But the real test of civility comes at 34,000 feet in the air. The days when airlines enticed passengers with the promise of comfort—meals, blankets, pillows, reading materials, movies—throughout their flying journey are long gone. Passenger, comfort thyself.
> —Anna Post, *The Washington Post* Etiquette Expert

In September 2014, the diagram of the Brooke's returned to public attention as part of two separate jokes about cramped space and the discomforts of air travel in the media. Following a series of passenger fights over legroom which forced three American flights to make emergency landings over little more than a week in August, the Pennsylvania newspaper *Lancaster New Era* ran an editorial cartoon showing an elderly couple responding to a framed image of the Brookes hanging on a gallery wall with the comment, "Must be where the airlines got their

---

[5] For instance, see the American Federation of Labor (AFL) 1901 pamphlet, *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion*, which argued that the problem of bad air in Chinese residences was not a structural one of poor ventilation or lax enforcement but rather a racial puzzle about insensible bodies accustomed to "the dense and poisonous atmosphere" of cramped spaces (American Federal of Labor 1901, p. 22).

ideas for passenger seating" (Gordon 2014). Meanwhile on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, the television comedian performed a similar joke in a segment called "Coach-Class Conflicts" in which he satirically raved about a "truly revolutionary new seating design" by showing the diagram of the Brookes superimposed on the frame of an airplane. Extolling the capitalist virtues of shrinking passenger space in his usual faux-conservative elite bluster, Colbert noted of the design: "Not only can you pack twice as many people into coach, you can fill the cargo hold with spices and molasses to bring back from the colonies" (Fiorillo 2014).
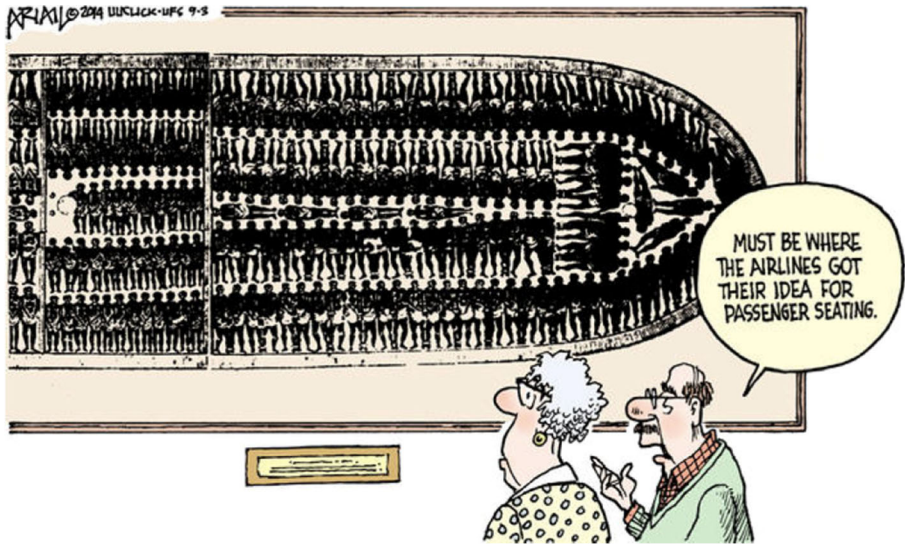
Reprint courtesy of Robert Ariail
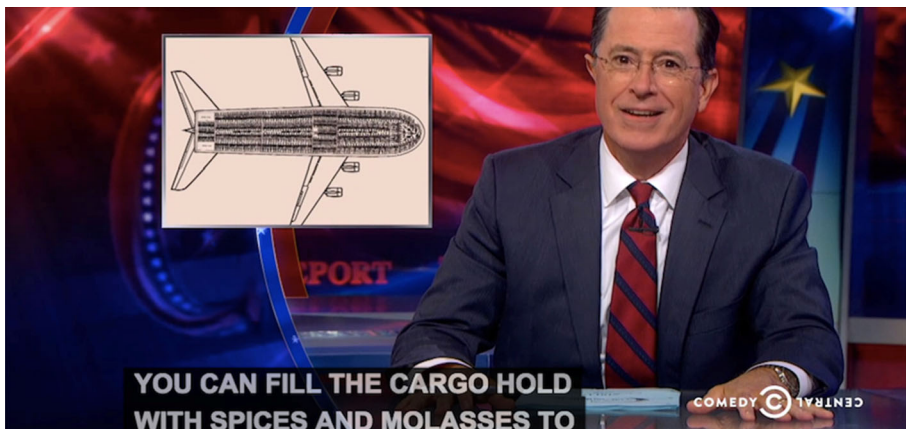
Soon after these jokes were made, public outrage over the use of the Brookes became so intense that the Lancaster newspaper issued an immediate apology and retraction of its editorial cartoon. By way of explanation, the newspaper acknowledged how the comparison

of cramped vehicles was not only "just plain wrong" but also "deeply hurtful to our African American community and all those who understand the horrors inflicted on the men and women forced into the slave trade" (Kirkpatrick and Roda 2014; cf. Taibi 2014). While Colbert did not respond to the controversy, media pundits and bloggers would raise similar issues of racial insensitivity and poor taste in his invocation of the Brookes to examine the discomforts of air travel.

In the aftermath of the controversy, the cartoonist of the retracted illustration tried to explain how he did not mean "to trivialize slavery" but only wanted to "make a hyperbolic point about our modern day condition" by comparing airline seating with the most extreme and famous example that he could think of (Gordon 2014). Such hyperbole, after all, was not unusual in common jokes and gripes about the discomforts of flying, especially after three decades of airline deregulation and industry cutbacks of in-flight services and amenities in the USA. As one frequent flyer quipped to a reporter more than a decade ago: "hell is the middle seat in the back row of a 757 with the smell of rancid lasagna wafting in the air" (Berger 1999).

By way of conclusion, I would like to consider how this analogy to "hell" could be read appreciatively by the reporter (and his audience) as humorous criticism of air travel while a similarly hyperbolic comparison with the Brookes only sparked widespread outrage and controversy. We might also ask how the same "slave ship" analogy continues to capture public imaginations of the current migrant crisis across the Mediterranean despite some serious critiques of the historically wrong and politically harmful implications of this comparison (O'Connell Davidson 2015; OpenDemocracy 2015). Why are European publics unmoved by similar criticism of the slavery analogy, especially when these comparisons make no claims to comedic exaggeration as they appear in the somber, realist form of news coverage and political commentary?

To answer these questions, we must consider not only the technical matter of the vehicles at stake in these comparisons but also their implicit *technics* as a working social ensemble of heterogeneous parts spanning the human and the nonhuman, the practical and the aesthetic, the infrastructural, and the fantastical. Above all, the technics of moving strangers has medium specificity; it is something that comes into articulation in a distinct cultural-historical milieu. In this paper, I have tried to show this by tracing the emergence and uptake of "comfort" as an organizing symbol and measure of the in/human in transport, through which the slave ship Brookes first successfully captured public imaginations of the cramped horrors of the vehicle, and in the process, helped shape a new physical and moral landscape of travel. This is a landscape organized through dueling imaginaries of immigration versus trade in which, as we now all assume is the norm, human = passenger = rights while nonhuman = cargo = price. This separation of the human from cargo was not necessarily politically progressive and pro-immigrant in disposition. While I trace the successful articulation of comfort as a liberal right inspiring structural reform through abolition and passenger laws, I also show how it could morph into a racialized sign of insensible, bad strangers by the late nineteenth century in anti-coolie campaigns calling for the banning of all Chinese from U.S. borders and claims to higher standards of living.

In all these cases, the problem of comfort was never just a technical one of cramped transport. The "technical" was in fact always already entangled with an existing social repertoire of ideas, habits, and aspirations, that is, it had aesthetic and affective capacities as part of moral imaginaries of the good life. Whether through the iconic image of slave ship Brookes or through recursive signs of stench and garbage in container smuggling, both public sympathy and revulsion have been mobilized effectively, as I have shown, through sensory

invocations of discomfort in travel. More than just a means of transportation, the vehicle is better thought of here as both medium and milieu for cultivating sensibilities of proper intimacy and distance with Others, whether in the form of the sympathetic stranger or alienating human cargo.

To return to the Brookes, it may be worth recalling that as a vehicle-cum-media for moving strangers into fellow feeling with the human in "human cargo," its communicative power relied less on representing the experience of slaves per se (cf. Wood 1997) rather than on the crucial *re*-mediation of that experience through first, the ruthless logic of merchant capital as figured in the ship's design and secondly, in the more relatable sufferings of the white sailors aboard the same ship. This work of mediation, particularly through the figure of the sailor, reveals how the Brookes necessarily had a mode of address in its incitement of sympathy for the passenger's right to comfort. To put it plainly, it pointed to the distinctly white bourgeois roots and enduring racialized presumptions of comfort in adjudicating the "problem" of the in/human and the un/free in transit. As I have shown, this could lead to structural change of cramped conditions as well as to reactionary exclusions of those assumed to "naturally" occupy those spaces.

Air rage debates point to yet another way for imagining and intervening in the problem of passenger discomfort. In the aftermath of the three legroom incidents in 2014, the proliferation of etiquette guides and consumer advice for passengers suggested that if travelers could not afford to pay for more space in business or first class, then they should expect to bear the discomforts of their low-fare seats by working on their own civility and self-control (Consumer Reports 2014; Post 2014; Rosenbloom 2014). Despite some critiques of mercenary airline practices in these discussions, the general consensus seemed to be that there is little anyone can do about ever-diminishing space in economy cabins since it is the natural outcome of market competition in meeting consumer demands for the cheapest ticket. As one journalist put it, "unless you pay for extra space, be prepared to love your seatmates like yourself—or face the consequences" (Muskal 2014; cf. Elliott 2015, Patterson 2012). Besides giving tips on politeness, guides also encouraged passengers to discipline and arm themselves against discomfort by buying noise canceling headphones, learning Yoga breathing exercises, and in general finding ways to "tune out" and "avoid human contact" (Consumer Reports 2014; Hewitt 2014; Rosenbloom 2014; cf. Hoffman 1999). Ironically, while the seeming indifference of the coolie to cramped conditions appeared as a racial sign of the bad stranger in the past—not to mention, of the present day illicit migrant—here the anesthetized, isolated passenger is praised as the ideal civilized subject rising above the poor coping skills and resulting rudeness of their fellow bargain-hunting travelers stuffed into the coach cabin of planes.

In the end, the moral lesson of air rage seems to be a rather unsympathetic, market-driven one about proper consumer and class orientation: you get and deserve what you pay for in air travel. This recasting of discomfort as a grin-and-bear, market condition becomes especially clear in the pervasive tone of humorous resignation framing these discussions of the airline passenger:

> You may feel that the airline sees you less as a person to be pampered than as a piece of cargo to be transported. Well, yes—and a troublesome piece of cargo, one that needs to eat and drink and move around and perform bodily functions. One with a will and the capacity for discomfort. (Funk 2003)

> Experienced air travelers will tell you that like penitentiary inmates, you can do easy air time or hard time depending on your attitude and comportment. Remember the do's and

don'ts…Think of yourself as a prisoner of war but without the protection of the International Red Cross. Don't give in to air rage… (Hoffman 1999)

Ultimately, in the misfiring of airplane jokes about the Brookes, what may have been lost in translation was not only the hurtful history and effects of slavery but also the remediated promise and power of the diagram's original shock-and-awe as capitalist critique. Instead, through the emerging consumer logic, not to mention the shrugging jokes that you get what you pay for in travel, the legacy of techno-aesthetic work separating passenger "rights" from "price" threatened to dissolve back into each other. In this respect, the return of "human cargo" may no longer seem like such a problem but just an unavoidable cost—albeit, one charged against some much more than others (read: the insensible migrant, the budget consumer)—in our contemporary world of moving strangers.

References

Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies*. New York: Macmillan.

Berger, W. Life sucks and then you fly. *WIRED*, August 1, 1999. http://www.wired.com/1999/08/flying/.

Bilder, M. S. (1996). *The struggle over immigration: indentured servants, slaves, and articles of commerce* (SSRN Scholarly Paper). Rochester: Social Science Research Network. http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1524772.

Birrell, I. Voyage of the damned: pitiful human cargo fleeing jihad and slavery. *Mail Online*, July 18, 2015. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3166490/Voyage-damned-Beaten-bowels-fetid-floating-coffin-just-hour-certain-death-pitiful-human-cargo-fleeing-jihad-slavery-man-helped-save.html.

Chu, J. Y. (2010). *Cosmologies of credit: transnational mobility and the politics of destination in China*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.

Classen, C., Howes, D., & Synott, A. (1994). *Aroma: the cultural history of smell* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge.

Corbin, A. (1986). *The foul and the fragrant: odor and the french social imagination* (Reprintth ed.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Cronon, W. (1991). *Nature's metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Crowley John, E. (1999). The sensibility of comfort. *The American Historical Review, 104*(3), 749–82.

Crowley, J. E. (2001). *The invention of comfort: sensibilities and design in early modern Britain and early America*. Baltimore: JHU Press.

Dillingham, W. P. (1911). *Reports of the Immigration Commission*. Washington, D.C.: Govt. Print. Off.

Elias, N. (2000). *The civilizing process: sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing. Revised edition. Oxford.

Elliott, C. Airplanes' space wars are shifting to the human rights front—The Washington Post. *The Washington Post*, September 17, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/airline-space-wars-are-shifting-to-the-human-rights-front/2015/09/17/d54999f4-5bce-11e5-8e9e-dce8a2a2a679_story.html.

Fiorillo, V. Lancaster Newspaper, Stephen Colbert make slave plane joke. *Philadelphia Magazine*, September 11, 2014. http://www.phillymag.com/news/2014/09/11/lancaster-newspaper-stephen-colbert-airplane-slave-ship/.

Funk, M. The visualization of the quantification of the commodification of air travel, October 8, 2003. http://www.popsci.com/military-aviation-space/article/2003-10/visualization-quantification-commodification-air-travel

Gordon, T. Pennsylvania newspaper apologizes for running slave ship cartoon—Atlanta Blackstar. *Atlantic Black Star*, September 16, 2014. http://atlantablackstar.com/2014/09/16/pennsylvania-newspaper-apologizes-running-slave-ship-cartoon/.

Grossberg, J. (2006). *Container stowaways easy to find* (The Daily Breeze).

Halttunen, K. (1995). Humanitarianism and the pornography of pain in Anglo-American Culture. *The American Historical Review, 100*(2), 303–34.

Hayot, E. (2009). *The hypothetical Mandarin: sympathy, modernity, and Chinese pain* (1st ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Hewitt, Ed. Air rage: why the caged bird sings. *IndependentTraveler.com*, 2014. http://www.independenttraveler. com/travel-tips/none/air-rage-why-the-caged-bird-sings.

Hirota, H. (2013). The moment of transition: state officials, the federal government, and the formation of American immigration policy. *Journal of American History, 99*(4), 1092–1108.

Hoffman, Nicholas Von. Come fly with me. *Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 1999, sec. Marketplace. http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB945388911433767425.

ICE Office of Public Affairs. (2005). ICE fighting Chinese human smugglers. Inside ICE. Washington, D.C.: ICE Office of Public Affairs.

Kirkpatrick, John A., and Barb Roda. To our readers: an apology for a deeply hurtful, offensive editorial cartoon. *LancasterOnline*, September 11, 2014. http://lancasteronline.com/news/local/to-our-readers-an-apology-for-a-deeply-hurtful-offensive/article_d12d2752-392c-11e4-bf22-001a4bcf6878.html.

Knee defender puts blame on passengers. *Consumer Reports*, September 15, 2014. http://www.consumerreports. org/cro/news/2014/09/knee-defender-battle-puts-blame-on-passengers/index.htm. Mediterranean migrant deaths: EU faces renewed pressure. *BBC News*, April 20, 2015. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32376082.

Laquer, T. (1989). Bodies, details and the humanitarian narrative. In A. Biersack & L. A. Hunt (Eds.), *The new cultural history* (pp. 176–204). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Law, J. (1987). On the social explanation of technical change: the case of the Portuguese maritime expansion. *Technology and Culture, 28*(2), 227–52. doi:10.2307/3105566.

Lipsey, Sid. Cramped airplane seats: are airlines violating our human rights? *Yahoo! Travel*, September 23, 2015. https://www.yahoo.com/travel/cramped-airplane-seats-are-airlines-1263017441566774.html.

Liu, M. The new slave trade, June 20, 1993. http://www.newsweek.com/new-slave-trade-193676.

Lowe, L. (2006). The intimacies of four continents. In A. Stoler (Ed.), *Haunted by empire: geographies of intimacy in North American history* (pp. 191–212). Durham: Duke University Press Books.

Lye, Colleen. (2005) *America's Asia: racial form and American literature, 1893-1945*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Manalansan. (2006). *Immigrant lives and the politics of olfaction in the global city* (The smell culture reader, pp. 41–52). New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Martin, C. (2011). Turbulent stillness: the politics of uncertainty and the undocumented migrant. In D. Bissell & G. Fuller (Eds.), *Stillness in a mobile world* (pp. 192–208). New York: Routledge.

McCartney, Scott. Airline seat battles: be kind, don't recline? *Wall Street Journal*, September 3, 2014, sec. Life and Style. http://www.wsj.com/articles/airline-seat-battles-be-kind-dont-recline-1409780915.

McKeown Adam, M. (2008). *Melancholy order: Asian migration and the globalization of borders. Reprint edition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Mountz, A. (2010). *Seeking asylum: human smuggling and bureaucracy at the border*. Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press.

Mumford, L. (2010). *Technics and civilization* (Reprintth ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Muskal, M. Recline rage: why airline seating is provoking mid-flight fights—LA Times. *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 2014. http://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-nn-cramped-seats-recline-airline-20140902-story.html.

O'Connel D. J. Rights talk, wrong comparison: trafficking and Transatlantic slavery. *openDemocracy*, May 26, 2015. https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/julia-o%27connell-davidson/rights-talk-wrong-comparison-trafficking-and-transatlantic-sl.

Ong, A. (2003). *Buddha is hiding: refugees, citizenship, the new America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Page, T. W. (1911). The transportation of immigrants and reception arrangements in the nineteenth century. *Journal of Political Economy, 19*(9), 732–49.

Patterson, T. Airline squeeze: it's not you, 'it's the seat'—CNN.com. *CNN*, June 1, 2012. http://www.cnn.com/2012/05/30/travel/airline-seats/index.html.

Post, A. I'm an etiquette expert. The Feds should ban seat lock devices on all planes. It's just good manners. The Washington Post. *PostEverything*, August 28, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/08/28/im-an-etiquette-expert-the-feds-should-ban-seat-lock-devices-on-all-planes-its-just-good-manners/.

Rediker, M. *The slave ship: a human history*. New York: Penguin Books, 2007.

Rivera, A. (2003). *The borders trilogy*. New York: SubCine.Com [distributor].

Rosenbloom, S. A recipe for air rage—The New York Times." Accessed 15 Apr 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/28/travel/a-recipe-for-air-rage.html?_r=0.

Schivelbusch, W. (1986). *The railway journey: the industrialization of time and space in the 19th century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Smith, A. (2011). *The theory of moral sentiments*. Kapaau: Gutenberg Publishers.

Smith, A. H. (1894). *Chinese characteristics*. New York: Fleming H. Revell.

Some reasons for Chinese exclusion. S.doc.137. Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Labor, 1901. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/9494809.

Spener, D. (2009). *Clandestine crossings: migrants and coyotes on the Texas-Mexico border*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Staples, E. J. (2004). *Safeguarding ports with chemical profiling* (The industrial physicist).

Taibi, C. Newspaper apologizes for offensive cartoon comparing airplanes to slave ships. *The Huffington Post*, September 14, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/14/newspaper-airplane-slave-ships-lancaster-cartoon_n_5818446.html.

Vinocur, N. National front: Merkel wants migrants as 'slaves.' *POLITICO*, September 5, 2015. http://www.politico.eu/article/national-front-vp-says-merkel-germany-wants-migrants-as-slaves-lepen/.

Walters, W. From borderlands to viapolitics: an essay on migration and its routes of power. Presented at the New Borderlands or Cosmopolitanism from Below? Keynote Lecture, Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany, December 7, 2012

Walters, W. Migration, vehicles, and politics three theses on viapolitics. *European Journal of Social Theory*, November 10, 2014, 1368431014554859. doi:10.1177/1368431014554859.

Wood, M. (1997). Imaging the unspeakable and speaking the unimaginable: the 'description' of the slave ship Brookes and the visual interpretation of the middle passage. *Lumen: Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 16*, 211–45.

Zolberg, A. (2008). *A nation by design: immigration policy in the fashioning of America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.