# Introduction

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Our three chapters in Part 1 explore entanglements between human and more-than-human mobilities. In some respects, this is not a groundbreaking topic: we know perfectly well that merchants carry goods (indeed, as Bridget Anderson points out in the introduction to this volume, goods often move across borders far more easily than people), and we know that human movement itself usually depends on the enrolment of non-humans, whether it be aeroplanes, horses or shoes. But we try to demonstrate that there are also more surprising ways in which more-than-human entities co-configure – and sometimes disrupt – forms of human mobility. When we 'follow the thing' (Cook et al, 2004), we may newly illuminate the forces that shape – rather than simply provide the background or context for – human movement, and this may, in turn, encourage us to think in new ways about categories of people in motion and to consider how these categories can overlap or intersect in ways harder to see when we *begin* with the human.

To take one well-known example, the history of the European colonization of the Americas is in some respects a history of the precious metals sought by Europeans because they were relatively easy to melt down, transport across the ocean and exchange for other goods back in Europe. It is also a history of the pathogens those Europeans carried, which killed vast numbers of Indigenous Americans, which in turn contributed to one of the most traumatic and storied episodes in human mobility: the forcible transportation of Africans across the Atlantic to work in the plantations that were left without a ready source of labour. The Columbian Exchange initiated by these wider events in human history, meanwhile, is perhaps the best-known story of more-than-human migration: plants and animals were carried across oceans – sometimes deliberately, sometimes inadvertently – and these reshaped ecosystems globally, a process that continues today as microorganisms are carried in the water providing ballast for container ships. These events, and colonial extraction more generally, have also contributed to the environmental crisis and the broader anthropogenic change that have disrupted the migration patterns of numerous more-than-human species.

In all these ways, human mobility is entangled with that of the more-than-human; and in fact, we would want to insist, appreciation of more-than-human mobility does not always have to be turned back towards a better understanding of human movement – it can have value in and of itself.

Scholarship in human migration and mobility often attends to these issues, either implicitly or explicitly. But there is perhaps scope for further interdisciplinary work that draws on and thinks with scholarship from cognate disciplines. We have already mentioned the 'follow the thing' approach developed in cultural geography,[1] and we would also draw attention to work in the environmental humanities – in particular the field of ecocriticism – which troubles conceptions of the bounded human and stresses the entanglement of humans within more-than-human assemblages; such work has itself drawn on ideas developed within the new materialism, actor network theory, object-oriented ontology, 'thing' theory and posthumanism. Scholarship within migration studies has, of course, long been alert to the limitations of human autonomy in terms of examining which humans are granted the privilege of movement across borders and which are not, due to imbalances of power within the social domain. But there is further work to be done on how human autonomy might also be shaped or compromised by other 'things', some of which are themselves on the move, such as animals, ocean currents, soil and bacteria.

Work in the humanities can also be valuable in addressing these matters because it invites us to think historically. Doing so is necessary because studying the historical movements of people and things can help us understand where we are today (as in the case of the European colonization of the Americas), but more than this, approaching questions of mobility with historical understanding can mean probing the systems of thought that have encouraged the 'human' sciences to divorce human mobility from its more-than-human counterpart. Greg Anderson has written of the 'unapologetic anthropocentrism' of modernity, how it creates in the human and the non-human domains two entirely different orders, assuming the latter to be composed of 'mute lifeforms, inert "resources," [and] subject-less "processes"' (2018, p 93). From the perspectives of other cultures, including that of premodern Europe, examined in Chapter 2 by Lucy Donkin, and the Mughal Empire, referred to by Laurence Publicover in Chapter 3, such assumptions are far from evident. Moreover, many cultures beyond those of European modernity can be far more sensitive to what María Paula Escobar Tello, in Chapter 4, calls animals' 'participation in the (un)making of worlds' (pp 67–8). Such cultures may conceive the world through systems of belief that also shape ideas about movement, whether these encourage or inhibit particular patterns of motion, and attending to these worldviews may involve thinking about mobility in ways framed less by legal, economic and political issues than by emotional and (broadly speaking) 'religious' ones. It may also

help us think about the trauma of forced migration; displacement means something different to those whose cosmologies assume human entanglement in a specific life-world than it does to those whose sense of self is shaped through a valuation of unique interiority and personal autonomy (that is, a self that is essentially sealed off from the world). The following chapters can only touch on such vast matters, of course, but they aim to understand how human mobility might be linked to matters such as faith, chivalry and temporality. This is apparent partly in their interest in the life cycle of people and animals that move – the birth of a cow, a death at sea, the slaughter of animals then consumed during a voyage – and the ways in which human bodies are assimilated into specific material places at the end of life.

Time is also important to these essays in another sense. With some notable exceptions, work in migration studies – and indeed in transnational studies – tends to focus on human mobility as a fait accompli rather than a process. Attending to more-than-human agencies can help direct focus onto the journeys themselves – the materials carried and consumed during periods of mobility and the consequences of mobility on both human and more-than-human entities. What this approach also brings into focus is that the thing that arrives is not the same as the thing that left, that both humans and non-humans – sailors, soil – have new meanings and possibilities as they enter new contexts. To some extent, questions like this have long been asked in studies and histories of mobility (not to mention in literary texts). To what extent does the colonial officer posted to the British Raj remain fully 'British'? What happens to the German exile who sets up in 1940s California? But focusing on processes and technologies of mobility itself can help us think in greater detail about the identity (quite literally, the *sameness* or otherwise) of the person who moves. Marcus Rediker, for example, has argued that it was only when they entered the slave ship and experienced the transatlantic passage that Europeans and Africans became 'white' or 'black' (2007, p 10).[2] And beyond this, the more complex picture of the human emerging from scholarship in posthumanism and the new materialism – scholarship which views the human as composed of multiple agencies and stresses that human agency is forever shaped and qualified by the more-than-human world – can help reframe the question of who or what is on the move.

In some more straightforward ways too, including more-than-human elements in studies of mobility brings into greater focus aspects of human experience. Who gets to carry things with them, and who doesn't? What are the materials – tea, spices, clothes – that people carry with them to establish a sense of home during the journey and beyond, and how might we weigh the right to transport a beloved pet with the right to transport a family member? What kinds of more-than-human entities might require passports of some kind, and what material form might these passports take – a chip

or an ear tag for an animal, or an imperial document that travels with a box of relics, for example? The legal structures of export controls tend to make a distinction between the border crossing of concepts (that is, technological know-how) and of materials, but a scholarship trained on multiple mobilities might pay greater attention to the material structures through which ideas travel, whether it be scrolls, books, transoceanic cables or physical brains.

In all these ways, we would suggest, a focus on multiple mobilities might lead us to see new patterns and nodes, ones that are connected to – but also exceed or refashion – the usual grid for studies of migration, the boundaries of the state. The chapters that follow focus, for example, on sites that can be considered floating pieces of a state (ships), that serve people from a particular region when they move outside it ('foreign' cemeteries) and that possess their own forms of boundedness (the farm). But more than this, the essays try to show how such sites are comprised of their own ecosystems (sometimes literally, sometimes more imaginatively and metaphorically) and how they are so owing to agencies and movements that are entangled in but also qualify those of the human.

## Notes

[1] For a witty and engaging introduction, see: http://followthethings.com

[2] Rediker's (2008) work on the sharks that trailed slave ships offers another brilliant example of how human mobility intersects with more-than-human agency.

## References

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