THE PASSAGE OF AUTHORITY

Imagining the Political Transformation of Australia's Christmas Island, from Sovereignty to Governance

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Abstract

In 2012, Australia's Christmas Island is best known as an island of immigration detention, a key component of Australia's growing offshore border security apparatus, where interdicted boat arrivals seeking asylum are detained and processed. This article offers one account of how the Island came to be what it is, by providing two snapshots of the operable set of power relations on Christmas Island, then and now: 'Island in the Sun', and 'Tropics of Governance'. Side by side, their stark contrast reveals the passage of authority through time and place, from the embodied, unified voice of the sovereignty of the British Empire to the palliative communication and bureaucratic sincerity that characterise governance. By disclosing shifting patterns of emergence and decay and showing border security's intimate relation to governance, this article seeks to offer a deepened understanding of the current detention situation in its immanence. What can now be seen as Christmas Island's past follies also reveals the restless work of successive political imaginations, the shifting ways and means by which an island can be translated into a solution to a political problem, and how successive solutions tend toward wreck and ruin.

Key words

Christmas Island, immigration detention, border security, palliative communication, bureaucratic sincerity, utopia

Introduction

> *O God, I could be bounded in a nut shell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams. (*Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Act 2 Scene 2, lines 251-252)

Australia's Christmas Island currently functions as a component part of Australia's border security apparatus, where interdicted boat arrivals seeking asylum are detained and processed. This is a complex situation; one with a definite history. Building upon an earlier genealogical examination of the Island's successive political problems and solutions (Chambers, 2011), this article discloses the passage of authority[1] (Rush and Kenyon, 2007) through time and place by describing and analysing its transformations on Christmas Island. What follows is not a conventional political history or genealogy, but rather a pair of snapshots – 'Island in the Sun' and 'Tropics of Governance'. These

two starkly contrasting worlds tell us crucial things: about the specificities of power's exercise[2] on the Island, then and now; about how authority functions within the clearing[3] characteristic of border security; and, finally, about how that which is eventually built first needs to be imagined. The passage of authority – *through* time *in* Christmas Island's changing political spaces – tells us about how dreams become concrete, while the Island's ruins remind us of the transience of all things human.

We can approach this transformation of power as follows. The British Empire first annexed, then occupied, then excavated Christmas Island to extract phosphate, a resource that could be profitably deployed to satisfy a growing regional demand for the fruits of industrial monoculture. Australia's border security apparatus uses Christmas Island to scrupulously and anxiously screen the region for threats, which, having interdicted, it transfers and detains until such time as they can be recognised by the state as either recipient-objects deserving of protection or unacceptable, unworthy risk-entities who should be rejected and returned, depending on the decision. In this transformation of power, we also note the shifting passage of authority, and the relation between an island, the people entangled in its political history, and the way space and power are imagined and practiced through mutating norms and forms of statecraft.

Before proceeding to explicate this transformation, however, it is first necessary to give a sufficient sense of the island's status and locus. This is a story of a persistently political geography, and of an island that, again and again, became problematic for those who would govern it. Elsewhere (Chambers, 2011), I have explored the shifting problem spaces, or 'clearings', within which power was practiced and problems were understood. What has to be grasped here is Christmas Island's incredible isolation from those who governed it: first of all the British, secondly the Commonwealth of Australia. Yet when sovereignty was transferred from Great Britain to Australia in 1958, it was Christmas Island's proximity to other islands of concern that also prompted its acquisition, a process that was itself unintelligible except as the expression of a political sovereignty that could cognise territory as transferrable property. Yet simultaneously at this conjuncture Australia, as one concerned actor in this complex negotiation, was also concerned to prevent 'Asiatic penetration' and sought to use the island to secure itself from the perceived threat of communism behind a peripheral 'screen of islands'. What continues to slip away from these expressed solutions to political problems is the island itself in its immanence: for the purpose of political analysis, it is precisely this slippage that is crucial to grasp.

Christmas Island is the tip of an oceanic volcano. It sits approximately 320km to the south of the closest point in Java, and 2630km north-west of Perth, Western Australia. It is km from Canberra, where it is directly governed as a territory of the Commonwealth. This makes the Island fascinating as a site of political action and experimentation; it also strains the very notion of 'relation' to its limit. In what sense is Christmas Island 'Australia' or 'in Australia'? Due to its extraordinary isolation, the Island plays host to a number of endemic species, from Abbott's booby to the famous red crab, whose annual migration across the island have resulted in Christmas Island being dubbed 'the Galapagos of the Indian Ocean'. The migration of the red crabs also posed unusual problems in the construction of the detention centre: for them, special 'crab crossing paths' were constructed, in order to ensure their orderly migration did not disrupt the process of immigration detention. What's notable with the emergence of administrative detention on the island and the paradigm of governance that I interpret as its

administrative form is the erasure of this visceral context – the submission of the living and moving to something both objectively nonliving and subjectively inhuman.
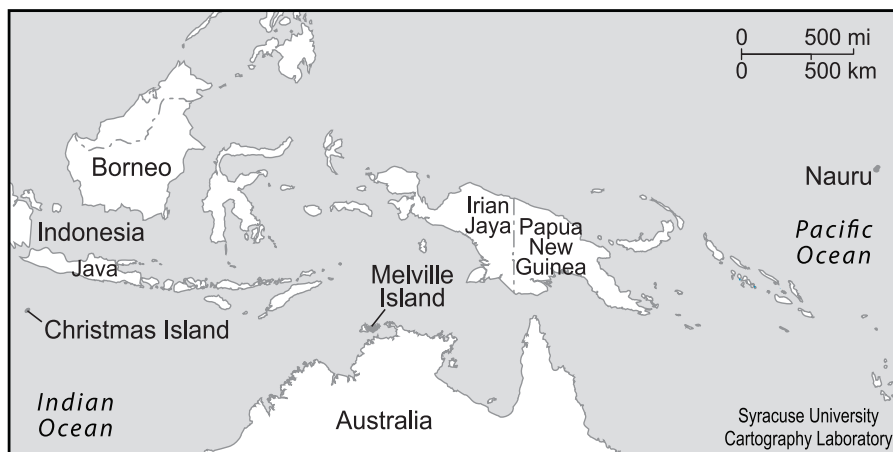

Figure 3: Christmas Island and area north of Australia

Governance's erasure of living history and its constitutive exposure to pain and vulnerability is all the more alarming given that independent environmental assessments have shown the island's ecology to be in a parlous state. These are strains that are being exacerbated by the large numbers of people dwelling on the island, precisely because of administrative detention for border security. The passage of authority I trace here is deliberately about the erasure of the island itself from itself. Christmas Island has come to be dominated by something alien to it; a practice that, paradoxically, is used to solve the problem of alienation from citizenship and state sovereignty. But this, as I will now begin exploring, is something that emerged from the contingent inter-action of a number of factors.

Island in the Sun: a single voice of authority carrying the full force of the law

Victor Purcell: a modern model of an Imperial civil servant

We begin in 1926, when Christmas Island was imagined to be an unproblematic mining island, whose proper functioning involved the extraction of phosphate at the lowest possible cost, under the administration of the British colonial civil service and the management of the Christmas Island Phosphate Company (CIPCo). We could accurately characterise Christmas Island at this time as a 'colonial microworld'; even in 1926, the year of the Balfour Declaration[4], the Island presents a stark diagram of high empire in miniature, one that had no intimation of its effective destruction to come, only sixteen years later. Christmas Island in 1926 was a placid isle on a British lake of an empire on which the sun never set. The figure who can best help us approach this clearing is Victor Purcell.

After graduating in history at Trinity College Cambridge, Victor Purcell joined the Civil Service, where he stayed for twenty-five years, mostly in south east Asia, becoming a

specialist on 'Chinese matters'. After a brief stint as a United Nations Consultant just after WWII, he returned to Cambridge, where he taught Far Eastern History until his death in 1965. When he arrived on Christmas Island he was thirty years old. Purcell was on Christmas Island for no other reason than that he was sent there, a six to eight month rotation which a junior officer without influence could be relied on taking without complaint, and which was punctuated by the arrival of ships. Purcell spent only seven months on the island, and was one of 25 District Officers who served on the Island throughout its colonial history. In spite of his being one among many, there are two things set his recollection apart and make it an incomparable source for present purposes. Firstly, Purcell's account of his Christmas Island experiences – included as a chapter entitled 'Island Interlude' in his memoirs (1965) – is written in a tone and style redolent of the era and his background: it richly evokes Purcell's expressed understanding of his relations with himself and others, both as a governing official and as a person doing their best to live with the Island's peculiarities. Secondly, it is a retrospective reflection recalling a period of boredom and introspection – offering a window into an unshaken memory. Purcell's clearing is calm, and this lets us see its untroubled operation. It clearly and lucidly expresses the utopia[5], horizon[6], and paradigms[7] of the clearing and describes both the power relations on the Island and Purcell's role among them. To that extent it is still an invaluable resource for understanding the passage of authority through Christmas Island, past to present.

The essence of Purcell's chapter is in its expression of boredom, isolation, and loneliness. Purcell's descriptions return again and again to his inability to find his hoped-for utopia. At one point he interjects, asking himself and the reader the following: "[w]hat had I expected of my island? What had people expected of islands before?" (196). Throughout the account, the scarcity of paradise is contrasted with the manifest overabundance of a range of readily available worlds – most of which are described as foreign, anathema, or unappealing. Purcell's Christmas Island consists of many overlapping but mutually unintelligible little worlds: of aggressive crabs, unmusical birds, petty social intrigues, cheating spouses, and never enough to do, especially in the evenings. From his lived perspective on the edge of the discrete human worlds of the island, Purcell writes: "[t]he truth was that this tiny community, shut in by cliffs and encircled by the imprisoning sea, was *a microcosm of humanity in a straightjacket*, and this excited the Houdini-impulse in every man or woman within the age group of romance or misbehaviour" (193, italics mine). Throughout the scenes in which comments like the one above emerge, Purcell positions himself in relation to the rest of the Island through repeated descriptions made from the District Officer's residence, Tai Jin House. The residence, "on a promontory to the west of the cove, reached by a narrow path that had been blasted through the cliff face" (179) is set at a significant remove from the other communities of the Island, which it overlooks across Flying Fish Cove[8]. Here, power and distance meet; Purcell's is an island he governs but never really lives in the thick of – he is *on* it, but never *in* it, always apart from even those communities of the island of which he could legitimately be a part of. Purcell's 'microcosm of humanity in a straightjacket', was something he oversaw through binoculars – and it made him, like many others, want to escape.

At this point, let us respond to Purcell's question: *what had he expected of his island?* At the beginning of the chapter, Purcell attempts to orient his pre-arrival idealisation of his stint on the Island as a 'desert island', to which he could "retire to take stock of reality 'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife" (177). Yet as the examples accumulate, Purcell reveals again and again his inability or failure to find this or any

other kind of utopia. He returns briefly to his education for inspiring examples[9], but one by one Purcell rejects Christmas Island as possibly belonging to any of these famous 'islands of fiction and poetry'. Christmas Island was categorically *not* a "place of exile, of shipwreck, or marooning", nor was it one of "the 'islands' of the satirists.... convenient Utopias (that) might just as well have been in the middle of a country or a continent". It was nothing like "a retreat where (one) could enjoy the good things of this world while avoiding its drawbacks"; an ascetic retreat "where monks or anchorites turned their backs on this world and contemplated the glories of the next"; nor, finally, the "ivory towers of the poets, a spiritual dominion over which the poet's imagination held undisputed sway" (197). Purcell's conclusion is flat and unequivocal. "I went to Christmas Island because I was sent there. It allowed me simultaneously to earn my living, to furnish my mind, to drink whisky by the quart, and to contemplate my navel" (198).

It is not only because of his weakness for bathos that Purcell's flights of poetic fancy crash repeatedly against the hard, isolating materialities of island life. Christmas Island *was and is a place where dreams break*: throughout its human history, it has been a disappointment to all its imagined utopias, offering as a substitute the impossible embrace of 'humanity in a straightjacket' and the cold consolations of hard work, hard liquor, hard drugs, tinned meat and isolation. To this is added the ambient effects of distance and transience. As Marg Neale, resident school teacher on the Island in the early 1980s, recalls:

> *Few if any go with the intention of making it a permanent home. Few are born or die there and no one lives out their three scores and ten.... Unlike many other small communities there is no real sense of time and place as part of a continuum... A few stone walls, abandoned phosphate buildings, and ruins of fettlers' camps along the railway line may suggest to residents that people once lived and worked differently on CI. But there are few answers to be found on the Island nowadays.* (1988: 7)

Indeed, this sense of impending obliteration and doom takes us to the heart of Purcell's assessment of the Island. In the middle of the chapter, he describes lonely evenings at House, surrounded by the bats, birds and crabs and "the ocean, the night, the stars" (198). The centrepiece of Purcell's description in 'island interlude' is the poem 'The Tropical Isle' (196). The following are its fourth and fifth verses:

> *Above the cliff in a leaden sky,*
> *The dying sun like a bloodshot eye*
> *Glowers with its feeble rays aslant*
> *At the mounds that mark the phosphate plant.*
> *The gantries are gone and the piers are rust,*
> *The galvanized roofs are one with the dust.*
>
> *On a tangled mass of purple weed*
> *A host of crawling creatures feed,*
> *And they crawl with a sort of clumsy stealth*
> *O'er heaps of ancient mineral wealth,*
> *But phosphate has no worth a ton*
> *For man is extinct and the Crabs have won.*

Purcell uses the extinction of man and the future victory of the red crabs to circumscribe the horizon of his world: from the death of any possible human *topos* is projected a probable future already envisaged from the visible 'phosphate plant across the way'. Taken together, these and the poem's other verses suggest ambivalence, at best, for the *topoi* that 'man' has been capable of building on the Island; in Purcell's estimation even Tai Jin House, though "well-built and roomy" was "spoilt by a red tin roof" (179). Crucially, it is *this* horizon – the mean, mere structures that man actually builds on Christmas Island, in turn "shut in by cliffs and encircled by the imprisoning sea" that shows the limit of possibility within which Purcell's paradigm of governing the island was circumscribed and deployed. And this returns us to power. For while the above illustrations tell us something about the effects that living on Christmas Island actually has on many people, then and now, they do not acquire their proper sense and force until we position them within the set of power relations they were enmeshed with – a task to which I now turn.

Power relations in Purcell's clearing: race, class, voice

What was the paradigm of the British civil service in Purcell's time? Adding to the details mentioned earlier about Purcell's educational background and class, common factors of the several notable accounts (Chapman, 1988; O'Toole, 2006; Mackenzie, 1941) include the habitus engendered by an Oxbridge humanist education grounded in the classics, and, thus, an ethics whose primary shapers, milieu aside, were Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham and Mill. Typically, District Officers were drawn from the upper classes, public school educated young men with inculcated commitment to a lifelong ethos of public service among whose key skills were written correspondence and decorum. These were men with an ability to quote effortlessly from Horace, Tennyson and Gilbert and Sullivan, but who neither possessed (nor desired to demonstrate) much in the way of practical know-how. Beyond the biographical features typical of its officers, is also necessary to note the extent to which the civil service was characterised by an avowed ethos of *permanence, neutrality and anonymity*, which applied throughout its ranks: civil servants kept their jobs through changes in government; they were to be politically neutral; and responsibility and exposure was to attach to ministers (O'Toole: 2006).

Purcell, in almost every way representative of the features of this administrative caste, governed an island comprised of four distinct communities, over which his was the over-riding authority in most public matters. Christmas Island in Purcell's clearing was a race-based apartheid community; the island was run on race lines[10]. What I am pointing toward here, to be specific, is the way in which race structured the field of possibilities within which power relations unfolded; it prepared the island for Purcell's effective conduct by securing the conditions and regulations (and maintaining the antinomies) within which all day-to-day situations unfolded. Race was thus one of the key technologies of government: it determined everything from wages, housing, career trajectory – the horizons of life itself.

Purcell describes a European community comprised of twenty-three employees, including their wives, all under a Manager, as well as a few Sikh 'jagars' (watchmen). Purcell had a staff of his own, made up of "one clerk, two boatmen, and a police force of twenty-seven Sikhs under a corporal" (180). Under – but in almost every way apart from – the CIPCo Manager and all the Europeans were the "somewhat over 900" (180) Chinese coolies, who were recruited and kept working, fed and docile by Singaporean labour contractors, headed by the Ong family. Mediating between the labour

contractors and their coolies were the *mandors* (overseers), some of whom also ran the gambling, prostitution, money lending and food and equipment businesses over which the Ong family had an island monopoly. The only commodity over which the Ong family did not enjoy a monopoly was opium – a privilege retained by the Crown and administered by Purcell. The Malay community, meanwhile, were mostly involved in running the Island's harbour; accounts describe them as being extremely self contained. And yet: on an Island small enough for everyone to recognise each other by face, none of the four communities ate or played together; the social cost of breaking this taboo (even for those who were not prevented from trying) was ostracism. A quick example will suffice to show this.

In the chaotic interregnum period immediately after the second world war, Eve Akerman, wife of Dr John Akerman, recalled the following of their pre-arrival hopes: "Before our parting, castles had been built high and fair… We implicitly believed that somewhere an island waited" (Neale: 1988, 89). But the couple fraternised freely with the Malays and Chinese, making attempts to learn their language, inviting them into their homes – Eve went fishing with the Malay men after dark. The couple were soon ostracised by the Island's Europeans:

> [T]he message had come through. At first we laughed, but gradually the barbs of reprobation were less padded, and every innuendo helped cloud my (looking back, ingenuous) impression that Utopia did exist… *A repeated protestation… 'They're my friends!'… met only with a smile and 'But dear, it's just not done'* (ibid: 96, emphases mine).

The only common life all islanders shared was through phosphate mining and whatever shaping of conduct that may have involved, including the following quote, where Purcell summarises his governing role within the set of relations that existed on the island in 1926:

> As D.O. I was a veritable 'Pooh Bah[17]'. I was District Officer, Magistrate, Assistant District Judge, Port Officer, Port Health Officer (though the Company had a doctor), Postal Agent, Assistant Protector of Chinese, and half a dozen other things as well. When any clients decided to visit me (which was seldom), I would ask them which of the dignitaries they wished to see. If Chinese, they might well ask to see the tai jin (I being the Assistant Protector of Chinese), in which case I would give them advice on their problem, which had not the force of law, but, should they not be satisfied, I would refer the matter to the Magistrate. I would in that event mount the steps to the Bench (the court-room was in the lower part of my house), my clerk would swear in the men as witnesses, I would hear the evidence, and come to a decision (usually the same one) which had all the force of law. Appeal lay only to the Supreme Court in Singapore. (179)

Purcell's tone gives the above a harlequinade quality, until the swerve comes at the end, forcing us to recall: if this was a pantomime, *it was nonetheless one "which had all the force of law"*. The account also enfolds several of the embodied contradictions of Purcell's rule: on the one hand permanence, neutrality and anonymity; on the other, the application of decisions with the force of law *made with no further consultation – by one man*. *Purcell's was an authority both autonomous and personal*: one man was "District Officer, Magistrate, Assistant District Judge, Port Officer, Port Health Officer, Postal Agent, Assistant Protector of Chinese, and half a dozen other things as well" (179). Teo

Boon How, a very prominent long-term resident recalls (in 1986) how his position as the Administrator's interpreter shaped the way he was viewed, as well as the Chinese communities understanding of those who governed them:

> *I was seen by the Chinese as the King's advisor, the one closest to the Administrator – the King. In fact right up until now the people on the Island still call the administrator the King and refer to his residence as the King's Palace – Tai Wong Lau – the big king's castle or palace.* (Neale: 1988: 173)

One necessary caveat to counterweight this picture of potential tyranny is that precisely because much of the dirty work of power was performed by the race and class based division of labour, the island's problems, as presented to Purcell, were civil, minor – spats. The coercion of the Chinese workers, for example, was overwhelmingly carried out by the mandors, out of sight and mind of Purcell and the European population. It is thus unsurprising that Purcell was able to recall that "[t]he Chinese population proved to be no great problem". As he recalls it, his main interaction with the Chinese as D.O. involved the sale of opium "at a reduced rate, as compared with the mainland… Opium smoking no doubt helped to keep the Chinese population quiet, and what happens now that the sale of opium is prohibited altogether I do not know" (179). Of the population groups on the island, only the "trivial frictions of human intercourse" among the Europeans that were consistently problematic for Purcell, "whether Mrs. X had received her mail before Mrs. Y; or whether or not Mrs. Z was entitled to receive a parcel C.O.D. without producing the cash (which, from previous experience, the D.O. knew she intended to avoid doing)" (182). In these circles, within which there was no wireless, no cinema, and no club, Purcell's *de facto* role was relieving the 'Houdini impulse', which he and the Manager did by "hosting gramophone dances on alternate Saturdays and give amateur movie shows" (182).

Purcell's overall portrait is: of an island by turns silly, drunk and punctuated by nuisances; of a European world whose surface calm was largely unbroken by the brutal treatment of the coolies; and of a rotation and official role that was boring but bearable. Two things we can extract from these details are crucial to note as we turn to connect these moments to a broader set of relations: *personation*, and *sovereignty*.

The powers of personation and the sovereignty of the British Empire

Even on the Christmas Island of the 1920s, a far-flung speck in the Imperial Crown, the various artificial persons of state remained unified in the natural person authorised by the Crown to represent them. Actions of Victor Purcell as actor (responsible for authorised representations), as stage director (responsible for continuity), indeed, as any of his dignitaries (and the hats they wear), always referred, without contradiction, back to the single source of authority, the Crown. As Hobbes described it in 1650: "it is the Unity of the represener, not the Unity of the Represented, that maketh the person One" (1968: 220). In Hobbes' description, this power is called personation[12]. In essence, Hobbes' usage of the word – which deliberately conveys the theatrical senses of mask and persona – describes that which allows us to speak on behalf of ourselves or some group, in order to form contracts and association. To personate is for someone "to Act, or Represent himselfe, or an other". This, in turn, makes that representative an actor, "and he that owneth his words and actions, is the AUTHOR: In which case the Actor acteth by Authority" (ibid: 112).

Apprehending Purcell's description as an act of personation allows us to understand how one man managed to wear so many hats (and, indeed managed *by* wearing so many hats). It also may help convey something of the felt spaciousness of Purcell's clearing, and how it enabled him to reflect so whimsically on what, for his others, had the force of law. This law, in turn, had a direct and unambiguous relation to what, within this clearing, was that law's *single source of authority* – which brings us to the second key point.

The structural, functional unity of the sovereignty of the British Empire, and the pivotal underpinning that it effected and guaranteed, formed the key enabling pre-condition of any and all actions of Victor Purcell in his various capacities as office holder, meaning that all authorised personations referred, without contradiction, back to the monarch that was its single, indivisible source. If Purcell never raised the issue of sovereignty in 'island interlude', it is only because the sovereignty of the British Empire went without saying. This was a sovereignty that would have had great difficulty even recognising as such the form of sovereignty projected by border security. But to get from there to here, the world Purcell described first had to be destroyed.

Tropics of governance

The passage of authority within governance

Among the unexpected discoveries provoked by closely following the changing clearings of power through Christmas Island is the transformation of the *expression* of *authority*[13] traceable through the emergence of governance[14]. As we will now see clearly through the contrast between Purcell's clearing and our own, this is more than just a change of style (though it does include that); what we are dealing with here is an entirely different project, one whose institution has restructured everything from *the use of language in political interactions* to the *construction and maintenance of an entire apparatus*, with all its structures and processes. In this article the *example* I've chosen from Christmas Island's political present bears most of the weight of explanation, however, in the interest of avoiding ambiguity, it's worth framing what I mean by governance.

Following the critical analyses of Bop Jessop (2003), governance is that which effectively produces and defends a *modus vivendi*[15]. Governance is a project, a programme, containing and executing programs that, as applied, *manages*: it facilitates functioning, and in so doing it makes bearing the message of governance bearable for its bearers. I locate governance as primarily operative at the scale of interpersonal expression, where it is reflexively deployed in immediate, intersubjective situations which are experienced as inherently conflictual and which are taken to be of overwhelming *complexity*. In this context, governance is a cluster of deployable concepts shaping practices mostly concerned with the preemption, displacement and management of the conflict that emerges in the course of attempting to make an unruly multiplicity work to secure competitive advantages in a game of accumulative circulation. Simultaneously here, it is a way of maintaining a semblance of autonomy and agency in these conditions, seen as inextricable (but often barely tolerable) *interdependence* (Jessop, 2003). Governance is anti-perfectionist and atelic: it simply says that things that must be addressed and managed, here and now, by 'us', through

consultation, with no more resources than what we 'bring to the table' as 'stakeholders'. The final point, which will be obvious as we now reconnect back to its application on Christmas Island, is that governance is extraordinarily *generic* and *self-referential*. As one programmatic document, highly influential in the Australian context (see Bartos, 2005) states: "[w]hen working well, a governance framework produces better outcomes simply because it exists… [t]he right structure will depend on many factors, including the nature of the entity's functions. A key question to consider in getting the structure right is whether it is designed so as to support (rather than impede) the operation of governance" (Uhrig, 2003: 2-3). As a structure then, governance is self-supporting and circular. Being 'in the loop', in relation to this structure, means imagining one's conduct to be a contributing, stakeholding component of *a spiral of ongoing consultation*, looping its way discursively toward transparency.

The Consultative Group: bureaucratic sincerity, palliative communication

Of all the recent governmental countermeasures, constructions and interventions that have taken place on Christmas Island since the construction of the purpose-built Immigration Reception and Processing Centre (IRPC[16]) in the current clearing, there is one, I suggest, whose establishment takes us directly toward the heart of this change. After arriving at its net positive assessment of the economics of doing border security on the Island, in 2010 the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories (JSCNCET) published a report, entitled 'Inquiry into the changing economic environment in the Indian Ocean Territories', which includes the following:

> *In addition, DIAC[17] has established the Christmas Island Community Consultative Group which meets monthly. The consultative group 'provides an opportunity to explore and consider issues relating to the range of services, activities and welfare opportunities available to people in immigration detention'. The group also serves to 'foster communication and consultation between the Department, the Detention Services Provider and local community support/service providers'.* (JSCNCET, 2010: 36)

How can the Consultative Group be understood in relation to transformations of political power and the expression of authority? The first thing we have to keep in mind is that the Consultative Group was installed *after the construction of the IRPC*, in the context of a massive expansion of immigration detention on the island, which more than doubled its population (not just detainees but also the various staff, bureaucrats, lawyers and NGOs who minister to their needs), stretched its natural resources (depleting the water table), and which happened, largely, as a result of *decisions* (not consultation), all made from 3220km away, in Canberra. As an opening approach I will consider what the above quote says, what it does, and what that implies.

I consider, first of all, what the above quote says, assuming as I do that, minimally, it is neither cynical nor unconscious – that it says what it means and knows that it does so. What we are dealing with, I urge, is an instance of what I call *bureaucratic sincerity*. Taken in this way, the above quote demonstrates what I interpret as an avowed desire for *palliative*[18] *communication*. The Consultative Group *is* facilitated to "provide an opportunity to explore and consider issues" and discuss the "range of services, activities and welfare opportunities available to people in immigration detention".

Inherent in this facilitation is, surely, the notion that differences and conflicts *can* be soothed and smoothed over (if not solved) by meeting and talking. The constructive, imperfect sharing of issues, information and even opportunities makes detention, and by extension Christmas Island, better, or, failing that, makes it feel a bit better.

It's worth considering at this point what the terms of such consultation preclude. At no point in such a meeting would the *fact* of border security be raised as a likely or appropriate topic for discussion. DIAC *does* procure and maintain a space for consultation, but does so in a way that precludes any likely expression of what fundamentally causes all these headaches in the first place, at least by all the stakeholders other than the Islanders, whose dissenting voices, in any case, have historically had a negligible influence over the steering of matters of concern. This form of palliative communication also makes border security itself what one cannot *not* want; any alternative is almost unmentionable by those whose mention might make a difference. Consultation, seen in this second way, is quite literally a coping mechanism built in as a small component of the larger infliction of border security, unmentionable and ineradicable.

The following should also be considered in relation to the next point: what are the probable psychological effects of being involved in a consultation process that tends only to speak about narrow measures and small adjustments that, one way or another, involve the perpetuation of the processes that cause all the problems in the first place? What does it mean to *have to* turn up and participate in a monthly meeting whose outcome can never offer any hope of fundamental change, offer a meaningful voicing of disagreement, or deliver government over to the affected? In order to respond to this, we have to attend to what governance *does*.

The desire and affective effects of the consultative group's palliative communication connects with what it does, and what the probable political effects of that may be. No doubt, the Group's meetings *are* undertaken in the *bureaucratically sincere* hope of better communication and co-ordination between key stakeholders, resulting in fewer issues, less anxiety, and (thus) more effective and efficient management. As I've just touched upon in the previous paragraph, these measures are also analgesic: they dull the anxiety and pain regularly and reliably provoked by the practice of border security itself. They also blunt criticism to the point of removing from contention (and even consciousness) the keen sense of the thing itself. What this unfailingly *does* – and this, I argue, is the most important political point – is perpetuates and reproduces both border security and governance measures like the Consultative Group, turning and returning the attention of all stakeholders in attendance back to the anxious management of 'facts on the ground'. Criticisms and problems are taken on board, managed, and neutralised – and the governance of border security lives to meet again, one month hence. This in turn renders the helplessness and hopelessness the consultation may provoke as a side effect: whatever pointlessness may be subjectively perceived is beside the point. And as to their lived effects? In their submission to the Commonwealth in 'Current and Future Governance Arrangements for the Indian Ocean Territories' (JSCNCET, 2006), the Christmas Island Shire Council's earlier assessment of the effects of these measures is succinct: "*no accountability, no transparency and no responsibility*" (ibid: 18-19, italics mine).

One further political effect of the ongoing presence of the Consultative Group bears mentioning, because it helps us understand why the Commonwealth commits its employees and other stakeholders to a time-consuming consultation process that can

do little more than dull the pain slightly. In order to draw out this point, I return for a moment to Purcell's clearing, and begin to contrast their two worlds in a way that should clarify the transformation that has occurred.

Contrasting two clearings: Purcell and the Consultative Group

The weight of extant records clearly indicates that being on Christmas Island has never been easy. But consider the authority of Purcell in the first clearing discussed here. Of an Imperial evening, the dominant groups of the island assuaged their anxieties with billiards, charades and whisky, while the dominated withdrew into the consolations of religion, family, gambling, prostitution and opium. And yet, within the limits circumscribed by the D.O.'s working day, Purcell autonomously made decisions, reached verdicts and mediated in conflicts. These actions, though all expressed with the fullness of his personality and voice, had the full force of law.

At the monthly meetings of the Consultative Group, we can note some striking contrasts. Firstly, it is beyond the jurisdiction of any 'one' to decide anything; consultation is a standardised, reportable, reproducible process, that takes place in comparable, compatible ways, not just across the Commonwealth but across the OECD. Secondly, the inextricable, interminable process of consultation requires a masking of personality and voice by stakeholders, if they are to express their concerns in an authoritative way, that is, a way that stands a chance of being heard. Governance subjects all stakeholders to the norms governing its authoritative form of expression, and its persona, its mask, is the mask of disinterestedness. Governance maintains its *modus vivendi* by expressing a lack of desire, interest, affect, or personality; that constantly strives, on the contrary, to present the mask of disinterested objectivity, bureaucratic sincerity. Decisions are always-already made; commitment to process goes without saying (and keeps going, *ad infinitum*[19]). The net effect is paradoxical: governance primarily expresses a desire for itself; but the mode in which it does express itself says: *I don't want anything.* Governance is 'nothing personal'; it is nothing if not impersonal. And this helps it achieve its objective. This, of course, is effective, in that it is capable of presenting a defensible posterity to future critics, one that can say – with bureaucratic sincerity – that all decisions were rational, process-driven, outcomes-focused, consultation-mediated, free of personal, subjective, and arbitrary. This, of course, gives all stakeholders a common standard to which all can refer to, to which all are objectively subject, while modulating, managing and neutralising whatever dissent and anxieties arise from month to month and forestall, foreclose, defer, displace – make manageable, keep governable. Indeed, in contrast to Purcell's world of personal authority, *the archives of the contemporary clearing are devoid of the local and the actual*. Even if a frank and fearless discussion of what is actually substantially happening on Christmas Island was within JSCNCET's terms of reference, the language of governance assures that there are simply not the words to say it. And the political effects of that are profound.

Before moving on, it's worth recapping by way of noting the deep and real changes here. Governance involves more than just novel bureaucratico-linguistic mechanisms for 'passing the buck' and 'shifting the blame' (though may do both those things effectively); it is more than just a new jargon or 'a new planetary vulgate' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2004: 43). It is nothing less than a transformed distributive form of and for the expression of authority. It is *an empty form, filled with endless consultations*. From the government's side, it conducts an indefinite deferral of decisions and responsibilities through an inscrutable relay of partial authorities, *all* of whom are

involved and implicated, *none* of whom can ever be *fully* scrutinised or held accountable. This is integral to its design. From the boat arrivals' point of view, governance mandates and maintains a succession of screens, long tunnels (Mountz, 2010) and generic rooms, marked by boredom, repeated questioning, and the indefinite suspension of any guaranteed secure future.

In the remainder of this article, I will show where and how governance fits in to the broader diagram of power now operative on the Island, by returning to consider certain aspects related to the construction of the IRPC. Here, I would like to try to get as close as possible to those aspects of this process that connect governance to power relations more broadly, show the kinds of structures the project tends to construct, then use these connections to stage a final contrast with Purcell's world.

Connecting governance to the Green Heart of the IRPC: a structure in recoil

The utopia of the IRPC's clearing is disclosed by the 'green heart', designed as the central space of the purpose-built detention centre. But how can this space be understood in relation to governance and the bureaucratically sincere hope of achieving transparency? As I see it, and building on the points just emphasised, we are dealing here with something that is objectively 'no joke' – indeed, that is characterised precisely by an absence of any humour. Like the Commonwealth's 'Pacific Solution' and the later attempted 'Malaysian Solution', the 'green heart' is neither cynical nor unconscious: it is as arid in its programmatic, process-bound assertions of good intentions, fairness and humane accommodation – good governance – as it is emphatically, processually rational in relation to the justifications that ground and surround it. There is no 'heart of darkness' here; the bearers of transparency have ensured that the green heart is drawn very carefully in black and white.

The notion of bureaucratic sincerity that I have been developing in this article is clearly expressed by the comments of the detention centre's chief architect, Ross Carseldine, when he explicated the contrast between the village-like facility he designed in this case and a prison:

> *Mr Carseldine – It is significantly different but, at the same time, there are some common characteristics. For example, in the design of a prison, providing humane accommodation is part of it; we do not expect to lock prisoners in black holes or anything like that these days.*
>
> *Mr Brendan O'Connor – Except in Cuba!*
>
> *Mr Carseldine – The issue of security and safety is just as important in prisons as it is in a detention centre. Because these centres cost a lot of money to run – there is a high staffing level – being able to put together a design that is efficient to run is extremely important. Those are things in common between correctional centres and detention centres. However, what we look at in detention centres, as well as that, is giving people a much higher level of freedom of movement within the centre when we determine the structure of their day – what they will be doing at any given time. Prisons are typically very controlled in terms of a structured day. So there is quite a shift there. If I put up a design of an 800-person prison, you would definitely see some similarities, but I could point out to you some quite different features, particularly in the design of the accommodation*

area. (Australian Joint Committee on Public Works. Official Committee, 2003: 10)

Senator O'Connor drew an easy analogy with Guantánamo's camps; but equally, Carseldine had no difficulty in swatting down the comparison and continuing to explain the careful reasoning shaping the facility's prudent design. It's worth pausing here to emphasise a point that, though important in relation to the argument of this section, also carries an autonomous salience for understanding how power is effectively conducted through governance, and how consciously.

Carseldine's bureaucratic sincerity expresses an indomitable commitment to *process.* This is more than just a leap of faith or suspension of disbelief, though it may well require both those things. There may be ideological factors at work. Perhaps Carseldine is a naked cynic or unreconstructed neoliberal in his private moments. And yet, on reading the above dialogue closely three things are striking and telling. Firstly, Carseldine *knows very well* what he's doing. He knows *how the process works* and *how to make it work for him*; further, he knows *that* it works. But, and connecting to the second point, he is more than just a shrewd operator gaming the system (though he may well be both of those things). As I see it, his words and the work they relate to, in being so expressed, are all working parts of an inter-active, normative process that *is* explicable, justifiable, and rational on the grounds given in the brief. There *is* a process, there *is* a brief, and (in the language of governance) there is a way to explain problems that appear in documents by 'talking to' them: where Purcell spoke the law, Carseldine 'talks to the document'. When he does, to the extent that he is capable of formulating his expressions according to the norms governing them, the suggestion of Camp X Ray evaporates: this is part and parcel of how governance functions, *including how it functions to perpetuate itself*. Thirdly, finally, and connecting us back to the main thread of this section, with the evocation of a fully constructable, viable, efficient, defensible 'green heart', Carseldine places a utopia on the other edge of the horizon of the brief, to the extent that its construction follows it. Indeed, it's his job to do so, *and he does*, placing it at the centre of the centre – without blinking. Carseldine's commitment to transparency delivers the green heart, simultaneously demonstrating the effectiveness of the blueprint, its architect, and the processes of governance that ensure its passage through the senate. The IRPC is not fortified, but it is a thoroughly defensible structure, legally explicable as humane, efficient and secure.

We can zoom in a little more on this green heart in order to emphasise its various relational functions by returning to the Brisbane architectural firm Philips Smith Conwell's[20] response to the brief (and as we do so, note how far we are from Purcell's Christmas Island). First of all, the green heart *links* "living spaces, gardens, recreation areas and community facilities" (10). This linking function, secondly, transforms the various buildings of the centre into a *coherent, accommodating* "self-contained human scale '*village*'… complete with a main and business street" (10). Thirdly, the 'green heart' and its surrounding 'village' provide *central areas of mingling*, all of which are under "screened from view" surveillance and the structural security of the perimeter zones which, fourthly and finally, provide "the level of control required for secure, safe and efficient operations" (AGDFA, 2003: 10, italics mine). This cluster of co-operative, relational functions is, I argue, characteristic of the diagram of power here; the green heart is also a way of making the complex intercourse of linked facilities, a coherent village and the aleatory mingling of inhabitants work without further coercion to provide the requisite level of safety, security and efficiency, while the surveillance functions are

subtly withdrawn in such a way that, as the 'villagers' mingle freely in the green heart, they can easily forget they are being detained and surveilled. The structural and functional homologies with Australia under border security are, to me, striking. Though as caricature and in miniature, PSC has drawn a utopian diagram of the topology of power relations in Australia under border security.

The green heart also retains a high degree of indeterminacy. It is not constructed as (for example) a bronze monolith in the centre of a concrete square. Rather, it is an empty, open space that the free play of people – and *only* the free play of people – can activate and thus transform. Like the stakeholders of the Consultative Group, detainees must consult with one another, they must activate their freedom by voicing their concerns and interacting. Fundamentally, the 'green heart' suggests that it is the responsibility of the detainees to take possession of and deploy their negative liberty through their social interactions – and it is also their responsibility if they fail to do so. The role of the architect here is simply to exercise due diligence in constructing the enabling conditions of an indeterminate number of utopias, privative individual utopias that can and must be transformed into 'community' through interaction in the 'village'. The role of the employees of Serco Australia, on a day-to-day basis, is to ensure that free play in the green heart is conducted within reasonable limits set by the Commonwealth. The detainees play – mostly football, it turns out – secure in the knowledge that any derogation from these terms may be recognisably a violation that will be met with force.

Seeing the green heart simultaneously as a space *drawn by being withdrawn from* its negative dystopian other and as an indeterminate space enabled by the design of the structure and guaranteed and secured by Serco on behalf of the Commonwealth brings us, I think, closer to a full understanding of the form of negative freedom implied by the power relations diagrammed here. Stepping back a little in order to connect the green heart's utopia to its horizon, it should be noted that the above descriptions of the imagined plan are described as being among the 'key innovations of the design' (9), all of which are considered in relation to the overall objective of "creating a humane, secure, yet efficient detention environment" consistent "with the variety of cultures that may be required to be accommodated within the facility" (9). The 'green heart' and the 'village' function in relation to the two other innovations, which, taken together and quoted in order, are framed with the following headings:

> a) culturally appropriate – Embrace the Region
> b) Non-Punitive – The Village Dominates
> c) Security and Operational Costs

With these headings in mind, let us consider the dystopian opposite of each by thinking about them in relation to the fears each implies. My hunch here is that the detention centre is a structure of recoil built from a negative diagram (analogous to a film negative). Considering the above headings via their inversions immediate implies structures that are: culturally *in*appropriate; that *reject* the region; that *are* punitive; that *dominate* those who are detained by them; that are *in*secure; and that involve unacceptably high operational costs. Knowing what we do about the catastrophic mental health effects of indefinite mandatory detention (see Silove, Austin and Steele, 2007 and the work of Derrick Silove generally) this is much closer to the actual lived experience of the centre. The effects of mandatory, indefinite detention are also long-term, they last much longer than the experience of detention itself, and they exacerbate existing trauma, which people seeking asylum are often fleeing. The emphasis of my point here is more concerned with how looking at the detention centre through these

simple dystopian inversions allows us to see very clearly the way in which its construction was in every way responsive to the point of anxiety. The detention centre was built to assuage the anxiety of those in a position to construct it. This was the exact character of the negative horizon that shaped its construction. Indeed, this is true of the structure overall. From out of the dystopian imagination of the black hole emerged the utopia of the green heart, just as the island itself emerged from the abyssal trench that surrounds it. The green heart is not just drawn, it is drawn away, withdrawn from its feared other. *The detention centre was purpose built to be as far away from black holes as possible; this is what is at the heart of the green heart*.

Having reached this central point, let us zoom out, right to the edge of the horizon of this clearing, and note the emerging outlines of broader transformations of power. With the construction of the IRPC and the co-emergence of border security and governance measures such as the Consultative Group, Christmas Island became repositioned in relation to a horizon whose attention is constantly sharpened by anxiety, twisted to a taut point by the indeterminate dystopias in which it is invested, but from which it would rather withdraw. This process of defensive construction took shape in relation to (and at times of crisis even *as*) a process of anxiety management involving not only negative withdrawal, as we have seen, but also restless scanning for and screening of unauthorised arrivals and their wreckage, right to the horizon of the EEZ[21]. There is a triple confluence here. An implemented apparatus of border security involves the fusion of:

> 1) *a general horizon of future-oriented, future-orienting anxiety* with;
> 2) *an EEZ* made synonymous with;
> 3) *the continual though unpredictable arrival of security threats (who must be cared for) who can and must be interdicted and transferred by the BPC for processing on CI*.

At this oceanic scale, we can also see how from a political perspective the Christmas Island of 2012 – *the island itself*, almost in its entirety – has become little more than a condensation point for the lived contradictions of the practice of border security in its manifold affects and effects; an expanding apparatus that can and does decide what and where the borders of Australia are, and who can cross those borders (thus also defining by negative implication who is of and in Australian society). However, border security is also a creative, generative practice, whose ongoing, expanding existence carries the possibility of saturating the cluster of concepts surrounding the Australian state-form with anxiety (then managing these anxieties away with consultation and construction) – so changing their meaning, their imagination, their practice. Here, sovereignty perdures, not as an embodied representation, but as an oceanic-scale projection, one equally 'visible' to interdicted boat arrivals and TV audiences, spectating at an enormous distance on their screens.

Conclusion

As we leave the Island, it's worth considering the effects these transformations of power have had on it. At the most general level, what should be of political concern from what we can see clearly through the contrast between clearings undertaken in this article are those forms, processes, industries and agents *who profit from, and are promoted by* the ongoing practice of border security. Border security is a profitable and politically

preoccupying activity; and it is growing. Tendentially, it appears as expansive and expensive as it is pernicious and inextricable. The inherently inter-operative, inter-changeability of such norms might mean they can easily jump tracks, lodge themselves elsewhere, or swarm around those other parts of the *socius* that become swollen with security-begging anxiety. As they participate in and contribute to border security's growth and development, all the stakeholders involved in this instantiation of governance have become entrenched, expectant bit part players in this transformed system, the very structure of which involves and implicates the full spectrum of Australia's enforcement authorities, large parts of the media, and many millions of invested viewers in homes around Australia.

What I have argued in this article also strongly suggests that the structurally integral role of governance, as described above, must be factored into analysis. Arguments in favour of human rights or humane treatment are necessary, but not sufficient. Or to put the point differently: all detainees could defensibly receive human rights and humane treatment without fundamentally disrupting the functioning of the IRPC and Christmas Island for border security. What must also be understood is that governance is also capable of modulating rights and the humane, managing them, incorporating them into itself: unlike the races and classes of people who dwelt within Purcell's clearing, no claim, no claimant, is excluded *a priori* from the detention apparatus. It is differentially accessible to all; everyone can be flexibly accommodated, according to their individual needs. Indeed, as DIAC's website explains: "There is a range of immigration detention facilities on Christmas Island which provide flexibility to respond to the individual needs of irregular maritime arrivals" (DIAC, 2012: online). In the language of governance, detention centres appear as a prospectus. The passage of authority as governance, interminably looping toward transparency, ends in the impasse of a world imagined as *good circulations* who must be rewarded for moving, and *bad circulations*[22] who must be subjected to friction, detention, or removal from circulation.

But there are also many imaginable passages out of border security. We need only recall the Imperial monopoly on opium to remind us: *nothing is strictly necessary*. Purcell wrote that "[o]pium smoking no doubt helped to keep the Chinese population quiet, and what happens now that the sale of opium is prohibited altogether I do not know" (179). The administration of opium by Purcell had very little to do with anything inherently 'noisy' or 'troublesome' about Chinese; ethnic Chinese live peacefully on Christmas Island in 2012 without opium. The Imperial monopoly on opium was not necessary for Christmas Island or its residents. However, it was integral to the British Empire: its history, its contradictions, its mode of government. Understand it, and you understand something important about that world – and its passing. It's worth asking: *what is it about our world that makes border security and mandatory detention on* Christmas Island *urgent, imperative?* On my assessment, both are needy and expansive, but *are they necessary*? What would a world without them look like? This is one possible world – not even a utopia – that bears imagining as an immediate political task.

End Notes

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[1] Authority in the sense I am applying here means a strategically advantageous position within a given set of power relations.

[2] I view power in transformation as a general (but *not total*) political ontology: it discloses the *general* conditions within which 'the conduct of conduct' unfolds. Here, I

understand power as: *relational*, *processual*, *restless* and *situational*. This builds from Foucault's later re-reading of his own work on power in 'The Subject and Power' (2002). My interpretation of Foucault has also been strongly influenced by Deleuze's reading in his excellent book *Foucault* (1988)*,* as well as Alain Pottage's interpretation of Foucault *and* Deleuze (1998). The article should be read as an embedded demonstration of my interpretation of Foucault's analytic of power, which also means, hopefully, that it can be read without recourse to a detailed discussion of these fundamental assumptions.

[3] My use of the word 'clearing' names a 'problem space' wherein a given set of problems appears and is 'solved' through an indefinite though intelligible set of means or equipment (our paradigms, see notes v to vii). The term does have strong Heideggerian resonances, wherein it would be a space in which things show up as 'mattering' or 'significant' for us, from our interested perspectives (Dreyfus, 1993), however I have developed from Foucault as a heuristic for understanding both the shifting 'appearance' of political problems and the changing means by their solution is attempted.

[4] In which the British Empire moved toward the development of protectorates and forms of indirect rule (see Mitchell, 2011).

[5] By utopia I understand the 'ideally perfect' form of any given *topos*. This is an interpretation from Max Weber's notion of *gedankenbild*, methodological "utopia[s] [that] cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality" (Weber 1949: 90), but that can be used to 'view' the *topos* at hand, in order to present an adequate (though never objective or total) understanding. I assume that all clearings are given shape by their utopias. To say that each of these is ideal-perfect places is utopian is less to stress their unreal and/or nonreal quality and more to emphasise how such nonexistent *topoi* make, guide, obsess, blind, and destroy those who are preoccupied with them in certain ways.

[6] By horizon, I mean a visible limit whose precise 'line' is contingent upon a whole complex of perspectival factors, ranging from elevation and the extant ambient conditions. A horizon, though always visible (unlike a utopia), is also by definition unreachable; blue skies and a mountaintop may offer a grander view, but they do not enable us to scale beyond the necessary limits imposed by the various factors just mentioned. Thinking utopia in relation to horizon: if utopia orients conduct by conveying how the world ideally would or ought to look (but never quite does), then horizon, as I use it here, circumscribes how the world does look, to the limit. Utopia is impossible; the horizon is merely impassable.

[7] Our paradigms are our problem-solving 'equipment'. If a horizon sets up the moving limit of the visible, then a paradigm figures and configures the setup – the social scientist, the window, her spectacles, etc – viewing it. A paradigm never totalizes or exhaustively describes our worldview, but, at the same time, we never govern the world except through our paradigms.

[8] To this day, these communities are still to a large extent intact, and include: the Malay Kampung, the European Settlement (called the Edinburgh Settlement until the end of WWII due to the large number of Scots employed by CIPCo), the Chinese Poon Saan (literally 'halfway up the hill') and the Phosphate Mine and its various installations behind it, stretching from the cove up the hill to the East.

[9] "I called to mind all the islands I could think of in history or literature. There was the Capri of Tiberius, of Axel Munthe, and of Norman Douglas; there was R.L.S's Samoa, Gaguin's Tahiti, and Compton Mackenzie's Jethou. There were the islands of fiction and

of poetry – the Juan Fernandez of Alexander Selkirk and 'Robinson Crusoe', the island of The Tempest, Swift's Lilliput and Laputa… There was Napoleon's St. Helena, the 'Devil's Island of Dreyfus, and Al Capone's Alcatraz. And I must not forget Sancho Panza's 'Barataria,' for his governorship of that island in some ways resembled my 'governorship' of Christmas Island" (Purcell, 1965: 197).

[10] The following from Waters' *The Union of Christmas Island Workers*:

> *There was another community on the Island containing people, referred to under the generic term Supervisors, who were engineers, accountants, chief clerks and foremen. They were mostly engaged from the Australian mainland and some had worked for the BPC on Ocean and Nauru Islands They ranged from people who were highly qualified to some few who would have been little more than base rate clerks or leading hands in Australia. They were often attracted to the Island by advertisements offering salaries free of income tax, furnished accommodation at low nominal rent and amenities which included a staff club and golf and boat clubs. All European Supervisors – and all Europeans were of Supervisor's status – were automatically members of these clubs. The two or three Asians who were given Supervisor status – the Labour Officer, the Principal of the Asian School and, at one time, a dentist – were invited to join the clubs. This meant that Europeans rarely encountered the rest of the workforce in any situation other than the work area, and here almost invariably in the context where the European was the authority figure whose orders could not be disputed... New Supervisors arriving on the Island were usually Australians who had little if any experience with people outside their own country and who shared the prejudices of most Australians. They came into an atmosphere in which the character and nature of the undertaking and the accepted attitudes had been long established during the colonial period. Naturally enough they absorbed the opinions and assumptions of their more experiences colleagues with whom they mixed almost exclusively… There were in fact two communities on Christmas Island which were distinct and different from each other. The lack of opportunities for contact on other than a master-servant basis prevented any understanding developing between them.* (1983: 6-7, italics mine).

[11] The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition reveals the excellence of Purcell's word choice: "A person who holds many offices at the same time; a person or body with much influence or many functions; (also in extended use) a pompous or self-important person" (*Oxford English Dictionary* [nd]: online).

[12] In later interpretations, personation came to take on different resonances: in 1789 Jeremy Bentham includes it "Under the head of offences by falsehood may be comprehended, 1. Simple falsehoods. 2. Forgery. 3. Personation. 4. Perjury"; in 1836 Dickens describes Pickwick as "the very personation of kindness and humanity" (examples cited in *Oxford English Dictionary* (nd): online).

[13] That is: a strategically advantageous position within a given set of power relations.

[14] It should be obvious that I do not treat the term governance as synonymous with the processes and machineries of 'government'. My methodological gambit here, following Quentin Skinner (2002), is that the emergence of the novel term indicates a probable transformation of power (while telling us very little about *what* that transformation might entail). To give another prominent example, the emergence of the term globalisation – seen from its point of emergence – suggests a discursive

attempt to come to grips with a phenomena which was, at that time, insufficiently known yet begging to be understood (in a way that required a new term to encapsulate it). The '2012 example' in security discourse is the suffix 'cyber'. It is for this precise reason that I do not use the term 'governmentality'. My gambit here twofold: firstly, in like with what I've taken from Skinner, the critical use of the governmentally-operative term offers a more direct lever to understanding the shifting link between concepts and practices in political history. Secondly, though it certainly evinces 'neoliberal' aspects and could certainly be described as a 'governmentality', the use of 'neoliberal governmentality' has two discursive effects. It confuses those unfamiliar with this strand of Foucauldian scholarship, and it typically ends up in a discussion of 'what we mean' by 'neoliberal' and governmentality, an arid intradiscursive skirmish that withdraws analytic attention from practice and its effects (which should surely be in line with Foucault's intentions an insights, which I carry and use throughout this article).

[15] A *modus vivendi* is "a working arrangement between contending parties, which enables them to coexist peacefully pending the settlement of those matters in dispute" (*Oxford English Dictionary* [nd]: online). I would add that it is arguably essential that the 'settlement' never comes: competition itself, and the anxieties it raises, are also excellent technologies for governing people. Unsettling is also a form of motivation.

[16] The IRPC has also been called Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) and Immigration Detention Facility. I use IRPC here as a matter of consistency.

[17] The Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

[18] That relieves the symptoms of a disease or condition without dealing with the underlying cause.

[19] Hence, perhaps, the continual iteration 'going forward' or 'moving forward'.

[20] The firm responsible for the design of the purpose-built centre.

[21] The historical analogue is the series of bunkers that cluster around the heads, points, peninsulas and promontories of Australia's coastline, all constructed in readiness for the invading Japanese, whose European cousins formed the focus of Paul Virilio's (1994) *Bunker Archeology*.

[22] The terms 'good circulation' and 'bad circulation' comprise primary point of analysis for Border Protection Command (BPC), as expressed in the 'Guide to Australian Maritime Security Arrangements' (Australian Government Border Protection Command, 2009), the master document that outlines the BPC's role and its governance structure.

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