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On territorial images: *Erewhon, or, chiastic desire*



Fig. 1 Mesopotamia Station,
Canterbury [Photo: Author, 2016]

*Everything is like a door swinging
backwards and forwards.*

—Samuel Butler, 1882

From pattern to territory

This paper considers surface and its patterning by way of territorial images. The amalgamating of image and territory in this context coins a relatively under-considered yet significant notion, with both “territory” and “image” tapping dense worlds of reference. Arguing against their apparent divergence—territory typically associated with ground conditions, and image with representation and/or modes of imagining—the paper argues for their irreducible proximity. Read together, in fact, they point to a foundational task—that of inscribing sufficient distance and difference in the domain of reality to make it experienceable at all. Territoriality is the multileveled action of managing and distancing the unapprehended—for, as Elias Canetti (1988) argued: “There is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown. He wants to *see* what is reaching towards

him, and to be able to recognise or at least classify it” (15; emphasis in original). All territoriality entails distancing of the unascertained and an everyday management of the touch of its surrogates.

Hans Blumenberg (1985), in a different context, suggested an “absolutism of reality” makes imaginable the evolutionary difficulties faced by early humanoids in their shift out of the diminishing forests and onto the expanding savannah. Having acquired a bipedal gait, they faced not just a widened horizon for perception but the absolute limits of *perceivability* as such (4). Outside the old territorial certainties of the forests lay an anxiety-laden world, where the “intentionality of consciousness” was unable to populate with recognisable certainty the open planes running out to distant, and as yet unknown, horizons (4). Borrowing neurological insights from Kurt Goldstein, Blumenberg considered the key adaptive mechanism to be the ability to convert a general, “existential anxiety” into anticipatable and therefore manageable fears, thereby substituting calculable scenarios for the incalculable, and names for the unnameable (5). In short, metaphoric naming builds stories that fill out terrain in an “art of living” that makes a world—at the behest of an existential anxiety testifying, ultimately, to world-uncertainty (6–7). Against this absolutism of reality, registered enduringly in the last horizon, or “mythical ‘edge of the world’”, is pitted not primarily *homo faber*—the maker of tools—but a “*homo pictor*”, the “creature who covers up the lack of reliability of his world by projecting images” (8). By this account, territory was from the beginning image-production, a projective intervention built initially through magic, animalism and wish-fulfilment, a labour repeated in the absolutisms of theology and later science (9–10).

Blumenberg’s absolutism of reality makes imaginable the kind of de-essentialising of territory Andrea Mubi Brighenti (2010) considered necessary to grasp the complexity of territoriality per se: “Territory is not defined by space, rather it defines spaces through patterns of relations” (57). In this, he borrowed Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s tripartite framework underwriting territoriality—itself understood as being composed of infra-assemblages (inscriptions made on and out of underlying qualities or forces), intra-assemblages (interiorising mechanisms manifest not just physically but imaginatively), and inter-assemblages (expressive manifestations that commune or couple with outside domains, 1987: 312). Resonating with Canetti and Blumenberg’s management of the unknown via distancing, Deleuze and Guattari held territory to be “first of all the critical distance between two beings of the same species”, a distance necessarily inscribed or marked out, but which ultimately expresses a need to keep “at a distance the forces of chaos knocking at the door” (319–320). In short, territory builds out of milieus or mid-places between chaos and organisation, transitional states closer to music than geography: “every milieu is vibratory [...], a block of space-time constituted by the periodic repetition of the component” (313). For territory to arise, it must territorialise or “bite into” the milieus, subjecting them to a consistency in which rhythms take on an expressiveness indicating substantive relational meaning and ultimately dimensional stability (315).

Imagining consistent places

This rhythmic patterning underscores the extent to which territory is not merely a “physical-spatial” phenomenon but results from a territoriality making

consistent a highly variable relational and expressive nexus (Brighenti, 2010: 68). Inherent in this consistency is “an act of imagination” that effects “a prolongation of the material into the immaterial” (68). Yet, what precisely is this imaginative import, and how does it prolong?

In answer, Deleuze (1994) suggested that what endures spatially rests in fact on a temporal genesis. For the present to be experienced here and now it must sit within a larger synthesis of instances, themselves organised into recognisable patterns indicative of a before and an after (70). Synthesis is in fact the “difference that the mind draws from repetition”, a mode of recognition and anticipation Deleuze attributed, after Hume, to the imagination (70). More complexly, any synthesis implies a *subjectivity* or point of view, itself an involuntary contemplation and imagining of patterns induced by repetition. Before there is an active subject (human or otherwise), there is the “subjectivity of a passive subject” founded on the sheer repetition of habits. Further, habits, as so many contemplations or souls, enact a certain possessive pleasure in the binding of rhythms, a pleasure indicative of a territorial principle (74). As David Lapoujade has read Deleuze, “Habit creates territorialities”, themselves pleasure complexes (2017: 85).

Understood this way, territories are indicative of psychic desiring-patterns—where, for instance, the ego as centre of enduring consciousness arises as a hallucinatory *image* secondarily formed by the work of a repetitious habit/time itself imaginable as an *Id* or unconsciousness (Deleuze, 1994: 97): “We speak of our ‘self’ only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who says ‘me’” (75). Here Deleuze rendered something like the genesis by which the repetition of patterns makes available the space-time of the surface-extension we take as territory. Yet this presents a problematic grounding, precisely because place builds, not on or out of ‘ground’ as self-evident foundation, but on an empiricism of time whose ‘soil’ is fundamentally groundless and shifty—only imagination can bind place-consistency (Lapoujade, 2017: 83).

Pattern repeat: Between habit and memory

Source for aspects of Deleuze’s thinking on habit was Samuel Butler (1835–1902). In *Life and Habit* (1878), Butler asserted that all individuation entails a type of contemplative knowing, itself a conceit arising only with habitual action:

...for even the corn in the fields grows upon a superstitious basis as to its own existence, and only turns the earth and moisture into wheat through the conceit of its own ability to do so, without which faith it were powerless. (82; similarly cited in Deleuze, 1994: 75)

Yet, if contemplation arises as the possessive pleasure of an habitual capacity enacted in the here-now (itself always passing), another mode of time must be necessary to consolidate territoriality. In Deleuze’s genesis, what organises habit into a broader continuity and coherence is memory—what he referred to as a past in general, or transcendental conditionality, underpinning the empirical present (81). Hence the paradoxical formula underwriting Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of territoriality is a transcendental empiricism, a world of particularities or actualities sustained by the virtuality of a past in general, itself incapable of manifest placement as such.

Butler, in his rethinking of Darwinian evolution, similarly appealed to an immemorial past, or “unconscious memory”, rich in Platonist implications anticipating Henri Bergson—whose thinking is key to Deleuze’s temporal genesis. So for Butler, the production of the past parallels the present as its reverberation or echo, just as memory accumulates with the present as its very precondition: “Memory is a kind of way (or weight—whichever it should be) that the mind has got upon it, in virtue of which the sensation excited endures a little longer than the cause which excited it” (1917: 58). Similarly, memory is the ground by which the present is thinkable at all: “To live is to continue thinking and to remember having done so. Memory is to mind as viscosity is to protoplasm, it gives a tenacity to thought—a kind of *pied-à-terre* from which it can, and without which it could not, advance” (58). As the French term suggests, memory literally provides a “foot on the ground” amidst the travails of time. Particular or conscious memory provides contingent points of traction in a moving temporal plethora, both intergenerational and inclusive of organic life and inorganic matter.

Descending ground and national rising

Territory, then, is the consequence of surface rhythms finding their ground in the deeper repetitions of memory—a memory nevertheless running all the way into the groundlessness of forgetting. The broader founding of habit in memory, though, rests on recollections themselves always already lost. Memory, calls on more than the desiring-patterns and pleasure formations of habit; it is the domain of recovery, of longing, of lost objects and desired attachments indicative of the ‘good’. Reworking Freud and Lacan, Deleuze took the repetitions of memory as being driven by “Eros-Mnemosyne”, a pleasure-principle that seeks satisfaction and stabilisation of temporal flux in “virtual symbolic objects” themselves repeating displacements masking what cannot be ultimately possessed or recovered (106–108). What Lacan termed the phallus—the thing that “is always missing from its place”—became in Deleuze the “[virtual] object=x”, the phantasm object setting all our loves in motion and is the attracting force that bends the linear trajectory of habituated pleasures into circulating centres (105).

Paradoxically, if habits are the “moving soil” upon which the present is built, their grounding in memory comes from above, from “the summit to the foundations” (79). Binding cosmos to ground, such over-under traffic is the very basis of myth—the transcendent excess orchestrating pattern and adornment no less than territorial regimes. It establishes the appeal of the natal, the native place, the homeland that resists all dissipation and into which one sinks as if into the immemorial earth, itself an ungraspable “Ur-refrain”, generative of all territorial assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 339).

Consider the myth-rich assemblage composing the nation-state. As Benedict Anderson (1991) noted, the intersection of image and territory is key: “[for] it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and Sovereign” (6). With the 18th century lapse of “divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm[s]” (7), territorial delimitation became a precondition for imagining a largely anonymous national citizenry. A “deep, horizontal comradeship”, necessary to nationhood, could only be produced if a literate citizenry shared a territorially-specific language in which it could imagine, via print media such as newspapers and novels, both sameness across single

territories, and divergent fraternities beyond national edges (19–25). National sameness has a temporal correlate: in place of experiences of simultaneity (as an all-at-once-eternality tying destiny to pre-defined, divine providence), nations craft a “simultaneity-along-time” (or, as Anderson borrowed from Walter Benjamin, “homogeneous, empty time”) whose binding patterns are measured by clock and calendar (24). Within bounded horizons, everyday living habits were, and remain, chronologically staged refrains, each satiated in the pleasure of actual and imagined commonality.

Yet, despite the relative newness of nations as a territorial form, they draw their legitimacy out of “an immemorial past” by turning “chance into destiny” (11–12). Appealing to a perennial identity, nations fashion beginnings from “‘up time’” (205) in a “reverse ventriloquism” (198) that relies on “remembered” originators. The natal deepens and grounds the “horizontal-secular” habitation to modern simultaneity (37) and, via narrated and not actual memory, it bends the infra-assemblages of chronological habit around the intra-routines of memorial occasion and scripted desires for (national) lineage.

Time’s third repeat—unfurling patterns

Beyond collective routines and their interiorising within circles of memory, a third temporal mode structures territory. Despite grounding empirical experience in memory, ultimately no masking or making-good covers the abyssal nature of time, for what repeats in and through it is a futuring force. Time in essence “events” by rupturing chronology no less than it unravels the mnemonic circuits shaped by Eros: “It is as though it had unrolled, straightened itself and assumed the ultimate shape of the labyrinth, the straight-line labyrinth [where time is...] empty and out of joint” (Deleuze 1994: 111). What repeats and returns as pattern is the break in all patterning—an eternal return testifying to the chaotic unbinding of Being itself, a temporal refrain forcing the question, “What happened?” (293).

In a pointed reversal of the 19th century hegemony of empire, Anderson offered a correlate to this temporal disjunction relative to national imagining. The notion of the nation-state was a subaltern mode of imagining developed in the Americas long before its adaption in the “age of nationalism” in Europe (itself spanning “1820–1920”) (1991: 69). Yet the “nation” as a pattern of imagined sovereignty, as Anderson identified, was “an invention [with no...] patent” (67). As ‘pirated’ carapace in Europe, it was distinctive, firstly, for “national print languages” and, secondly, a “renewal of antique forms of life” via humanism (68). An “historical perspective in depth” prevailed, one comparatively tuned to autarchic forms of collective life (68). Reconciliation with ‘discovered’ civilisations and peoples enduring beyond and before the West, established awareness of an “irremediable human pluralism”, one flatly “unassimilable to Eden” (69). Yet more readily assimilable was an imagined politic ideality given as print-commodity—in short, “good societies” as “tongue-in-cheek utopias [...] ‘modelled’ on real discoveries [...] not as lost Edens” (69). From Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), a succession of “found”, if estranged utopian places, were remarkable for their presentation as “contemporary societies”, places imaginable within a shared “meanwhile” (69). As satirical vehicles they presented (despite Plato’s *Republic* as precedent), a counter-discourse capable of short-circuiting “vanished antiquity”, a break

itself preparing the ground for the revolutionary deterritorialisation of European political economies and the national reterritorialisation of Europe post-Enlightenment (69–70).

Erewhons

Territory, as “interactional and evental” arises, Brighenti insisted, through inscriptive practices (2010: 61). It emerges in the criss-crossing of multi-layered, multi-intentional patterns that are stabilised by iterative performances implicating actors and audiences (66). Concomitantly, for Anderson, print media are key to rehearsing and tracing out founding, habituating and bounding performances of national place-making. Hence the commonplace presumption that territory provides the “setting” for stories warrants chiastic reversal: stories both ground and sustain place. This is particularly evident where places are patterned by utopian fiction—a significant literary mode not just for reimagining Europe via nationalism, but for colonial settlement and post-colonial settling of accounts (see Ashcroft, 2017).

Rendering geography a thought-experiment and not a spatial given, utopias recalibrate the evident and the possible, as Deleuze and Guattari (1994) argued, by explicating in cults of place-origin their reductive synthesising and veiling of diverse milieus (96). Utopias thus imminently transport a revolutionary potential, if not always this actuality. In particular they named Butler’s satirical utopia, *Erewhon* (1872/2013)—‘no-where’ spelt in close reverse—an exemplary figure for the immanent deterritorialisation underwriting every ‘here-now’ (1994: 100). Further, Deleuze (1994) credited to Butler’s novel the notion that every “now” is but a displacing mask, written over an “originary ‘nowhere’”, an untimely void itself capable of wresting from the present a (better) time to come (xxi). Crossing empirical particulars with the groundlessness of virtual Ideas, “*erewhons*” bridge between “phantasms and simulacra” and actual experience. Against the universal aesthetic categories of space and time, which, so Kant thought, render perception consistent, *erewhons* are “complexes of space and time [that...] impose their own scenery [and...] are therefore the objects of an essential encounter rather than of recognition” (285). That is, *erewhons* participate in “a phantasmagoria of the imagination” imposing in place of *a priori* transcendentals a nomadic synthesis of particulars that undercut the sedentary habits of perceptual recognition (285).

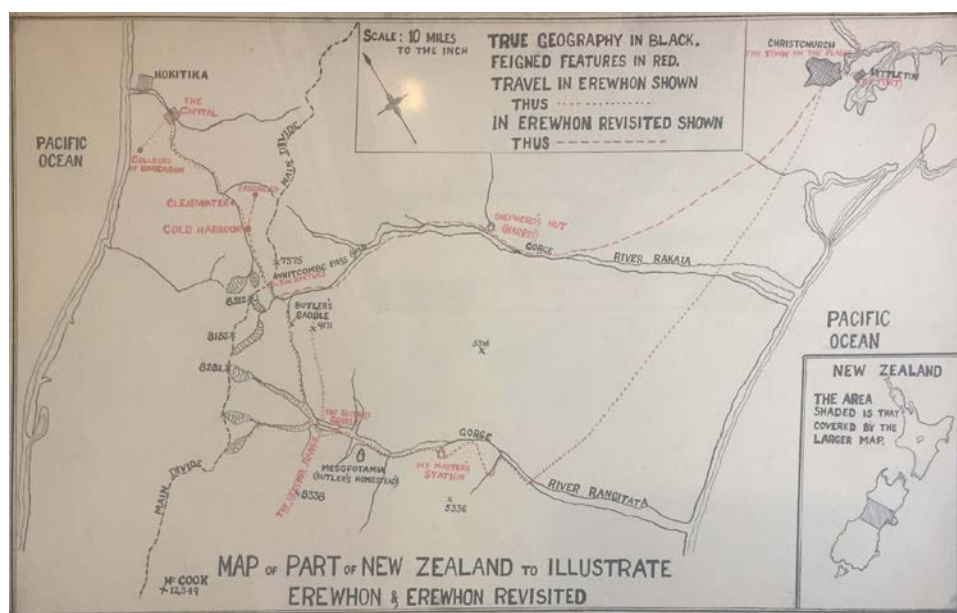
The turn of terrain, or, Butler’s empiricism

Paralleling this mobilisation of Butler’s title, though, is a critical topographic reference—*Erewhon, Or, Over the Range*. The novel, in fact, is a satirical utopia set in Aotearoa/New Zealand’s Southern Alps, amongst the tributaries of the Rangitata River. It resulted from Butler’s 1859 immigration to Christchurch, where he made claim to a series of land runs beyond the regulated properties established by the Canterbury Association—land thought to be of minimal economic utility, and referred to as “waste lands”. Exercising a classical education, Butler promptly named the sheep station he established “Mesopotamia”, thereby calling up the fertile cradling of the Tigris-Euphrates river system—and a similitude (literally the middle, *meso*, between rivers, *potamos*) with high country ground at the intersection of the Rangitata River and Forest Creek. Hence, Mesopotamia founded a leaping off point for *Erewhon* the fiction—itself an *a-topical* vacancy, or as

J. Hillis-Miller characterised it, “a place you cannot get to from here”, other than through words (1995: 7).

Erewhon is, after all, a traversal of “nowhere”—a chiastic reversal of Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516/2012), from the Greek no (*ou*) and place (*topos*). Reversed, too, is the setting, a perilous crossing of mountains, rather than water, giving spatial discontinuity. In a complex mirroring, the book counters New Zealand’s rudimentary colonial settlement and refigures its indigenous others, simultaneously satirising Victorian manners and its technological fetishism. The intractability and isolation of colonial place-making is animated via an imaginative resurfacing of distant vistas. In place of an alpine passage to the West Coast (attempted and abandoned by Butler, Ansley & Bush, 2012: 38), Butler substitutes a fictional world. As a minor explorer and cartographer of note in New Zealand (Shaffer 2012), he bluntly indicated where “utopia” could be found. Surrounding his utopia, actual places carry a rich toponymic legacy—Mount Butler, the Butler Range, Butler’s Saddle—and then there’s a map merging “true geography” and “feigned features” (Fig. 2), all within a contemporaneous “meanwhile”.

Fig. 2 Samuel Butler (n.d.). A Map of Part of New Zealand to Illustrate *Erewhon* & *Erewhon Revisited*. [Samuel Butler Collection, by permission of the Master and Fellows of St John’s College, Cambridge; photo of original, Author, 2017]



Consistent with Butler’s primarily inclination towards painting, *Erewhon* offers a pictorially reconfigured terrain, utilising the *Range* as both a disruptor of routine perception and as a means of reworking substantive ground in favour of “landscape”. As John Sallis has noted, if “landscape” emerged in the early 17th century, (relative to a minor painting genre depicting “natural inland scenery”, 2015: 18), by the 18th, the word described natural places without “reference to pictures or painting” (19). Consequently, for Sallis, “there is no pure perception of landscape”; it always already carries a sense of the withdrawing and displacing of nature into “a place that is no place”, in other words—like landscape painting itself—a place that “is inescapably utopian” (20–21).

If landscape fronts as image, it necessarily rests on topography, itself the horizon of horizons exceeding all description and presence. As David Leatherbarrow put it: “Topography continually gives itself otherwise” (2004: 249). Similarly, if perception is an intentional focus drawn off ambient horizons always already in

excess of what can be perceived, and forms recognisable patterns by synthesising the shifting frontal profiles given by objects and settings—otherwise known in phenomenology as sensible monstration—landscape takes the viewer and/or reader one step closer to monstration and the bringing-forth of diverse lateral horizons and larval impressions overlooked in the routines of recognising—a bringing-forth Sallis called “sensible shinning” (2000: 122), and a foundational experiencing Deleuze and Guattari called “haeccity” (1987: 282). Beyond representation, imagination rendered poetic presences by “hovering between opposites in such a way” that what is exorbitant in perceiving as such is evidenced (Sallis, 2000: 218). Rather than Blumenberg’s distant horizon as surrogate for unknowing, shinning, like haeccity, calls up a horizontal disarticulation managed imaginatively within every act of perception.

Ambilateral motion, or, Butler’s palladianism

If Butler’s landscape fiction intends to undercut the normative ground of perception, the term “Or” in the book’s title acts as a logical operator rendering the operands on either side equivalent. In other words, place and non-place turn indeterminately about each other, in a virtualising paradox consistent with Deleuze’s *erewhons* and Deleuze and Guattari’s utopia of immanence. In short, the title stages the irresolvable “hovering between opposites” Sallis found perturbing the surface routines of perception.

Not coincidentally, Ralf Norrman considered Butler a compulsive, indeed psycho-pathologically-inclined user of chiasmus (1986: 3–4). Arguing against a “‘decorativist’ [understanding...] of rhetorical figures”, Norrman asserted that chiasmus is “structured into” the language practices of certain authors, eras, and cultures (5). The nature of chiasmus—“to order in the shape of an X”—favours dualisms antithetically doubled to produce troubled, irresolvable symmetries—a vacillation he termed ambilateralism (5 & 11). Parrying without resolve, ambilateralism has a characteristic pattern: “two bilaterally symmetrical halves (2), with a dividing line between them (+1)” (21). With Butler in mind, Norrman pictured an architectural analogue: “a pattern in which a central entity is flanked by two symmetrical wings, as in Palladian architecture” (20). Yet, in Butler’s case, this three-part model (*aba*) harbours a malfunction: the middle does not balance and stabilise paired components. Instead, his “‘palladian’ thinking” throws the whole picture into alternating seriality: “the *aba*-structure is the beginning (the minimal unit) of *alteration*”, producing an “extended form *abababab* ... (ad infinitum)” (21–22).

Here, David Leatherbarrow’s (2004) recognition of a drive in 18th century landscape discourse and practices associated with British Palladianism towards topographical synthesis, in excess of its classical antecedents, is suggestive. The irregularity of situation in the setting and form of classically modelled buildings was affirmed, so that the varying of topography coursing through its natal structuring could instil the potential for an unfurling of the canon itself—rather than the edifice projecting a centring dynamic over place (174–177). In short, a circling sensibility uncoiled in favour of linear traversals called up by varying terrains.

Dis-locating utopia, or, Butler's satire

Given the echoes of Moore's *Utopia* in *Erewhon*'s title, what spatial-topographic resonances might the two fictions sustain? Moore leaves the location of the island, somewhere between Old and New Worlds, open. Louis Marin, reflecting on Moore's construction of an indeterminate, middle place, notes that "Utopia" is itself a middle locale between the Greek term *outopia* (no place) and *eutopia* (good place) (1984: xvi).



Fig. 3 Unknown (1516). Title woodcut for *Utopia* written by Thomas More. [Source: Wikimedia Commons]

Butler's *Erewhon*—an undiscovered, country of towns and cities, arrayed on a gentle plain hidden beyond mountains—stands as an imaginative dividend to Butler's quest for further commodifiable land. Yet, this is utopian satire, and the novel plainly parodies a commodifying will, as the conclusion demonstrates. Here, an advertisement seeks public subscriptions to fund the conversion of Erewhonians—not only into good Christians but indentured labour for Queensland's sugar-growers (2013: 147–148). In fact, parodied here was a *Times* article of 1871, describing "indentured Polynessians in Queensland sugar plantations" (Robinson, 2006).

Discovery, rather than the desire for closure in *Utopia*, ostensibly shapes *Erewhon*'s narrative, but there is a broader working out. The English imagination, as Peter Ackroyd has argued, transmits a "territorial imperative" that routinely merges "landscape and dreamscape" (2013: 463). While Ackroyd groups Moore's *Utopia* and Butler's *Erewhon* within the same oneiric tradition, it is clear that they foster divergent topographical languages.

Utopia, as Michèle Le Doeuff recognised, gives an account of the island as if in a daydream-like "afternoon discourse" occurring in a private garden (2002: 21)—the kind of space, Ackroyd claimed, that has long modelled the "secrecy and enchantment" critical to the English imagination (2013: 426–427). *Erewhon* offers an entirely other oneiric trigger, whose centrifugation flips enclosure and

intimacy on its head. Preceding the mountain crossing that would lead to the discovery of *Erewhon*, the novel's nameless narrator recounts:

I dreamed that there was an organ placed in my master's wool-shed: the wool-shed faded away, and the organ seemed to grow and grow amid a blaze of brilliant light, till it became like a golden city upon the side of a mountain, with rows upon rows of pipes set in cliffs and precipices, one above the other, and in mysterious caverns like that of Fingal, within whose depths I could see the burnished pillars glowing. (2013: 15)

"In the garden, there cannot be any landscape", Jean Luc Nancy wrote (2005: 52), and *Erewhon* plainly eschews appropriative territorial imperatives of the garden type. Instead, playing up the musicality of terrain offers a satirical nod to the "One-Alone" sonority romanticism attributed to the subterranean and its celebration of the "hero of the earth" whose task was to summons up a new peopling, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, in the manner of an "orchestral-instrumental whole" (1987: 340–341).

Reflecting newlands, or, Butler's mirror

Contrary then to the centripetal dynamic of *Utopia*, *Erewhon* is patently centrifugal, riding the outward impetus of an *anticipatory consciousness* Ernst Bloch (1986) centred in European utopianism. Butler's "discovery" in the Antipodean Alps foregrounds a starkly gendering, cultural anticipation of this sort—compounding, as Bloch put it, "hiding-places", breaking away, and wonder at indistinct, faraway places (23). To daydream is not to stay rooted to the spot; it is to put a dream of betterment into motion and to achieve, against the odds and against others, the "glittering bowl" as Bloch put it (1986: 26)—a prize bluntly parodied in *Erewhon* (see 2013: 14).

Evidenced, in fact, is a division Fredric Jameson (2005) drew between *utopian programmes* and *utopian impulses* in modernity—both stemming from More's *Utopia* (2–4). While *Erewhon* telegraphs programmatic references (texts, demarcated spaces, and radically contrary communities), on the impulse side—a strand of utopianism Jameson linked to Bloch—it questions "existential experience" and immediate ties with temporality and futurity (6–7). Colonial New Zealand was famously rich in such impulses, as John Lucas noted, the country being seemingly "like Britain [but...] without the corruptions of modernity" (2012: 216).

Expanding on this ground-up utopianism, James Belich (2009) has argued that the settler movements sweeping the Anglophone world from the first half of the 19th century rode a wave of "booster literature"—promotional pamphlets, news stories, advertisements, etc.—that advocated a climate of abundance (fertile land, financial reward, work and societal autonomy, 153–154). Drawn on was a "paradise complex" in which newlands were imbued with an Edenic character spanning from "virtuous rural Arcadia [to...] more organised and urbanised Utopia proper"—a character in fact, not matched by colonial conditions on the ground (154). The result was little tolerance of "'high ups'", a longing for justice, and a world of everyday plenty (Patrick Joyce cited in Belich, 2009: 159). Butler, the disenfranchised son of a clergyman, who emigrated to Canterbury refusing entry to the clergy himself, likely found in the disingenuousness of populist booster literature a "ground-up" prompt for his satirical vision.

An inside-out world, or, Butler's fancy

Responding to these anticipatory hopes, *Erewhon* amalgamates two literary modes—a narrative of imaginary travel and utopian fiction (Mudford, 1985: 11). The “World-improving” impetus of the latter (Bloch, 1986: 91) never quite dissociates itself from dream. Once at the summit of the discombobulating ranges, *Erewhon's* narrator finds himself above a genteel plain announced through an “exquisite and tranquillising” twilight sunburst (2013: 22). Subsequently revealed is an Arcadian, “quasi-European” world (25). Beyond this initial descriptive framing, the interlude in *Erewhon* centres on the cultural and social mores of inhabitants who appear to turn on their head Victorian prejudices, values, common names, beliefs, and ideas. Literalising its antipodean siting—*anti* (opposite) + *pous* (foot) as the Greek etymology indicates—*Erewhon* composes a place of opposite footing, or upside-downness consistent with Gilbert Highet's notion of the “distorting mirror” of satire, which, in *Erewhon*, reaches its heights once well over the range (1972: 161).

The satirising of footing and foot traffic in Butler's travel narrative can be read against Bloch's linking of anticipatory consciousness, as he argued in relation to Karl Marx, with a world set on its feet and marching. In this context, Marx wasn't indifferent to New Zealand and its colonisation, drawn as he was to Edward Gibbon Wakefield's “The Art of Colonization”—a contributing 1849 blueprint for the New Zealand Company's proposed systematic colonization of Aotearoa/New Zealand. As Gabriel Piterberg and Lorenzo Veracini have noted, Wakefield's answer to the revolutionary crisis building in Britain was the replication of non-revolutionary “Englands” elsewhere (2015: 459). Whereas Marx called for the critique of, and anticipatory solution to, the contradictions of capitalism, in a revolutionary “world-turned-upside-down”, Wakefield's response to capitalism's crisis entailed a “world-turned-inside-out”—in other words, “settler colonialism” as displacement pre-empting revolution (1968: 460). Butler's topographical language responds in large measure, to this vacillation between upside-down and inside-out worlds, opening utopian closure to the centrifugal vectors of colonial landscape, in line with serialising, chiasmic desire.

Accordingly, *Erewhon's* narrator escapes back over the range, via a makeshift hot air balloon for a chance rescue well out at sea to the east. Symmetrically doubling the earlier arrival, the return voyage is pictured as “dream-like and delirious” (2013: 142). Outstanding is the motive power of the crossing itself, with the Tasman Sea's prevailing westerly (“Trade”) winds rendering the return possible. Thus, “no-where” resists any semblance of enclosed space; it is a place turned inside out with the course of the narrative running between two ocean-facing plains, themselves conjoined by the earth's vertical upthrust—itsself a surrogate, natal pivot.

A Leibnizian turn, or, Butler's chiasm

Concluding this necessarily brief encounter with *Erewhon's* chiasmic labour, the notion of territorial image can be more fully elucidated. If the coordinating conjunction “Or” of Butler's title is a logical operator at one level, establishing vacillating equivalences, at another, its etymology suggests a trail of disjunctive terms (“either, or”, “nor”, “neither”, and “not of two”)¹ written under or behind equivalence. While the mirror has its dark back or tain making doubles observable,

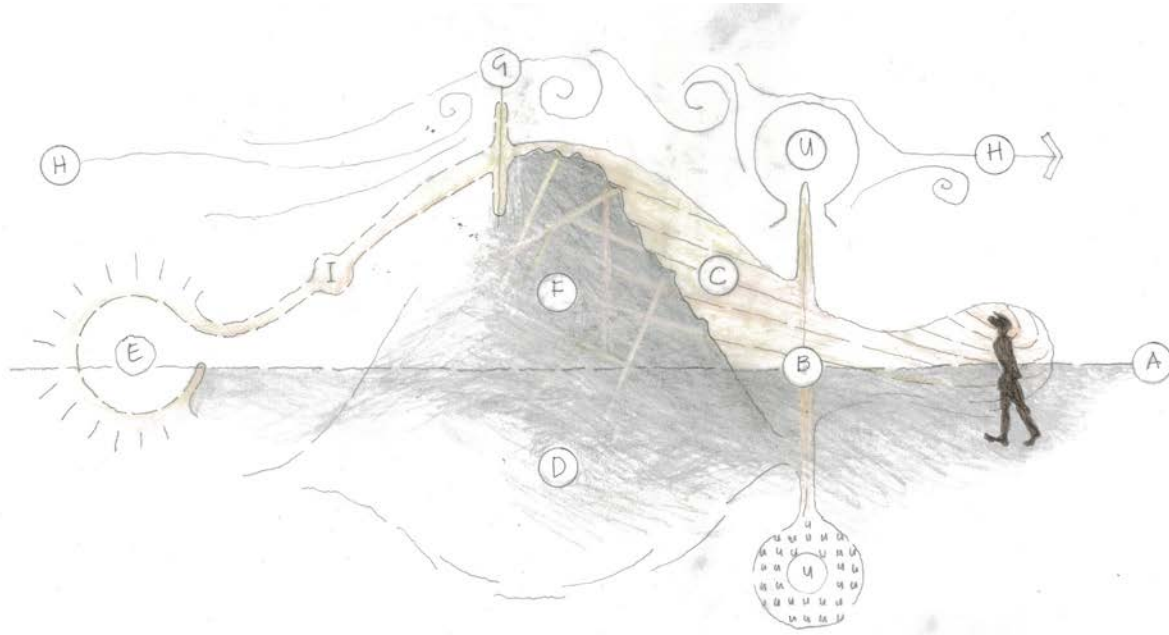
landscape arises on the back of topography as a manifestation of the earth, itself, as Sallis described it, “the primal ark”, resistant to penetration, yet the grounding support of all things (2015, 4). Moreover, to the extent that the earth shows itself, it does so as a “surface over a closed-off depth”, a showing insistently compounded non-showing with the “light of manifestness” (4). Hence:

The darkness of earth is not, like that of the night, a darkness that with the coming of day will give way to the light. Earth remains ever dark, and only its surface is open to the light of day. (4)

Concomitantly, territory cannot be other than surface-work picturing a possessive domain brought to light on an otherwise “sealed-off-depth”, the patterning of which accrues via habits, memory, and modes of rupture. Rather than a thing to look out from, the range in fact displaces the horizon of unknowing *inwards*, firstly via the imagined fancy it harbours, but secondly as a horizon opened to an exorbitant imagining in excess of subjective fantasy. As Sallis has said of place, it does not contain in the manner Aristotle assumed, but is rather drawn up and out of a *matrix* in the ancient sense of *mater*, a womb or “place before place” through which something complexly develops (224). *Erewhon*, as a parody of place-fancy, calls on the complex grounding topography sustains; one, as Deleuze recognised, indicative of a “more profound origin than a single [scripted] beginning” (2015: 175).

This looking-in is suggestive of Gottfried Leibniz’s (1646–1716) monad, a philosophical similitude Le Doeuff credits to Moore’s *Utopia*—a closed world where the outside is inside, but as a restricted viewpoint on an obscure whole (2002: 23). *Erewhon* also exhibits a Leibnizian variant. Its territorial image constructs divided worlds without window onto each other, save for the curtaining range. In this, it mirrors the baroque house Deleuze (1993) associated with Leibniz. Drawing on Butler again, Deleuze recognised how a wild, neo-Platonic variant of empiricism renovates the monad according to an emerging discordant Baroque (78). Having lost its vertically securing (theological) pivot, the monad persists, but now as a thing turned inside out. Deleuze used the analogue of a car speeding along a dark highway at night for this neo-Leibnizian world. Its windscreen posits a viewpoint on a landscape narrowly called out by headlights flashing up serialised images in transit (136–137).

While Butler had no such analogue at his disposal in the 1860s, the conjoining of habit and memory is amongst the rejoinders addressed at Darwin’s evolutionary thesis (1917: 39–55)—a satirical theme driving *Erewhon*. Here monadic darkness would correspond with Butler’s own musings on phenomenalization. As Robert Rattray has argued, Butler was earliest amongst 19th century thinkers to consider the crossing between consciousness and the unconscious (1914: 371). In a monad-like formulation, Butler “finds an inside to the Universe, which is one and continuous with the ‘inside’ in us” (373). However, this universe arises as an unconscious surfaced by habits, themselves indicative of a submerging domain of memories running all the way into archaic, pre-human history and “invertebrate ancestry” (371–374). Consciousness is that component of phenomenalization that arises with a perturbation in environment sufficient to force awareness from habit. Concomitantly, place as expression given in and through the action of territorial images must necessarily proceed by phenomenalization, understood to rest on a temporal domain far deeper than subjectivity (see Fig. 4).



KEY

- A) here-now as time-horizon mediating consciousness/unconsciousness & bridged by the body
- B) territorial image assembled at a picturing plane
- C) consciousness rising above habit & echoing back as shimmering horizons of perception
- D) the sealed-off depth and perpetual darkness of the earth
- E) Erewhon
- F) the 'range' as upsurge of horizon of unknowing and natal narrative pivot
- G) limit of territorial passage and leaping off point for an image-world
- H) prevailing 'Trade Winds' as animating grain
- I) imaginative sheathing extending the gathering of conscious
- U) More's Utopia over
- u) rising utopic, colonial ground

Facing the ancient mobility of the “Main Divide”, *Erewhon* emerges then as a landscape opened up by the suspension of passage—a crossover not permitted by the terrain. Recast in a satiric mirror, it shows up as a populous place ready for the taking; taken, that is, for a ride. In line with a chiasmic desire for an ambilateralism in all things, the mirror mimes darkly, more than England over there. Equally at stake is the *here-now* of a colony itself charged with making a world turned inside out via systematic colonialism and land remade as primitive accumulation. Yet such systematism does not occur without cycles of transfer and dispossession, dispossession and alienation of the indigenous particularly. While Butler staged a parody of primitive accumulation across the dividing range (one he was plainly a beneficiary of), on show in fact is a deeper accumulative draft—that which hovers exorbitantly as horizon in every perception. Chiasmic desire, with its incessant criss-crossing of the middle, was, in Butler’s case, a means for unsettling the now-here of his time—an immanence contrarily conditioned by colonial capitalism and imagination. Call this Butler’s chiasmic gathering, or no-where here, a nowhere made out of topography.

Fig. 4 Author (2017). *Erewhon* as Topographical Chiasm. [Pencil sketch]

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Endnotes

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¹Etymology of the conjunction “Or” runs to “Old English *opbe* ‘either, or,’” and is itself linked to “nor”, a contraction in Middle English *nauther* or “neither” (Or, n.d.).