Erewhon: media, ecology, and utopia in the antipodes

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Abstract

On June 22, 2005, an essay by the Association of Freed Time was published in Artforum International. With little contextual information, "El Diaro del Fin del Mundo: A Journey That Wasn't" described environmental damage to the Antarctic ice shelf and the subsequent mutations that were occurring within the Antarctic ecosystem. One of these mutants was rumored to be a solitary albino penguin, living on an uncharted island near Marguerite Bay. The Artforum article tells of French artist Pierre Huyghe's journey with ten others to find the island and its mysterious inhabitant. The article forms the first part of an event that culminated in a musical on the Wollman ice rink in New York's Central Park. The expedition, film, installation, narrative, and performance A journey That Wasn't documents the construction of an antipodean elsewhere, and at the same time suspends long-held distinctions between fiction and reality. Questions remain over whether Huyghe and his team undertook the trip and if so what it was they found there.

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11 Erewhon: Media, Ecology, and Utopia in the Antipodes

Susan Ballard

All paradises, all utopias are designed by who is not there, by the people who are not allowed in.[1]

Now that the cloud was there, I began to doubt my memory, and to be uncertain whether it had been more than a blue line of distant vapour that had filled up the opening.[2]

They discovered that there was another world on this planet, where the cloudy sky produced a milky green light that reflected off an icy ground, uniformly illuminating the air around them as if the landscape were glowing in the dark. It was a landscape without matter, only light. There was neither luminous source nor shadow, only reflection and incidence.[3]

On June 22, 2005, an essay by the Association of Freed Time was published in *Artforum International*. With little contextual information, "El Diaro del Fin del Mundo: A Journey That Wasn't" described environmental damage to the Antarctic ice shelf and the subsequent mutations that were occurring within the Antarctic ecosystem. One of these mutants was rumored to be a solitary albino penguin, living on an uncharted island near Marguerite Bay. The *Artforum* article tells of French artist Pierre Huyghe's journey with ten others to find the island and its mysterious inhabitant. The article forms the first part of an event that culminated in a musical on the Wollman ice rink in New York's Central Park. The expedition, film, installation, narrative, and performance *A Journey That Wasn't* documents the construction of an antipodean elsewhere, and at the same time suspending long-held distinctions between fiction and reality. Questions remain over whether Huyghe and his team undertook the trip and if so what it was they found there.

One year earlier, in 2004 Australian artists David Haines and Joyce Hinterding undertook a residency in Dunedin, New Zealand, where they traveled over the Southern Alps to film source materials for the digital installation *Purple Rain* (figure 11.1). *Purple Rain* documents the destruction of a virtual (yet real) montage of the Southern Alps by analog TV broadcast frequencies. Haines describes the effect as watching a "mountain fall through radio waves"[4] (figure 11.2). In the installation large very-low-frequency antennas hang from the ceiling of a darkened room. Reading the electromagnetic energies

Figure 11.1

David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, *Purple Rain* (2004). Reactive installation. Exhibited 2004 at the 26th Bienal de São Paulo, Image Smugglers in a Free Territory, National Representation Australia, São Paulo, Brazil; 2005 at the Artspace, Sydney, Australia; 2006 at the Waves: The 8th International Festival for New Media Culture ART+COMMUNICATION, Riga, Latvia; 2007 at the (in)visible sounds, Montevideo, The Dutch Institute for Time-based Art, Amsterdam, Netherlands; 2007 at the V2 Zone, Act Interact, The Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, Taiwan; 2008 at the Waves: The Art of the Electromagnetic Society, PHOENIX Halle Dortmund, Germany. Photographed by Michael Myers. Courtesy of the artists and Breenspace, Sydney.

Figure 11.2
David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, *Purple Rain* (2004). Reactive installation.
Photographed by Michael Myers. Courtesy of the artists and Breenspace, Sydney.

passing through the space, the antennas generate waves of sound that motivate a large projection of the mountain seemingly caught in a state of perpetual avalanche. The actual material disintegration of the image is dependent on the off-screen radio energy. In a literal correspondence, the sound causes and prevents the snow to fall. This is no longer a specific mountain but a generated amalgam of digital memories of mountain-like forms. The visual image is nothing more than information made visible and set into motion by the shifting surfaces of the sound waves, which corrupt and control its obedience to gravity. The work then largely occurs off screen in the interstitial spaces of transmission. The sound is tremendous, yet the damage is minimal.

Purple Rain is part sound collected offscreen and made visual and part visual image degraded and frozen by the actions of sound.[5] In *A Journey That Wasn't* Huyghe takes a different approach, distributing the source and impact of the sound across hemispheres (figure 11.3). On a windswept Antarctic island the yellow safety-clad artists

Figure 11.3
Pierre Huyghe, *A Journey That Wasn't* (2005) Super 16mm film and HD video, color, sound; 21 minutes 41 seconds. Exhibited in Celebration Park ARC/Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France (2006), and Whitney Biennial 2006, Tate Modern, London (2006).
Courtesy of the artist and Marian Godman Gallery, New York

are seen unfurling a giant inflatable structure: part weather balloon, part monolith. The "experimental device" . . . translate[d] the island's shape into a complex sequence of sound and light, not unlike a luminous, musical variation of Morse code."[6] In video documentation we see the cautious approach of familiar animals and then for a fleeting second a small white creature circles the device before disappearing into the weather (figure 11.4). "It stood upright, perhaps a few feet tall. It blinked its round eyes, unaware that anyone had been searching for it all these weeks."[7] Later, the captured sounds of the encounter were returned to New York where composer Joshua Cody rendered them into a contemporary gesamtkunstwerk, a live stage performance ultimately based on data derived from the topography of the island. The composition formed the basis for the re-introduction of the albino penguin to an uncanny world of black ice and howling winds.

Together these works offer fascinating documentation of the shifting powers of new media as they map antipodean space. In both the interference of noise is materialized. Offscreen the sources of sound generate shifts within the spaces of the performance or installation. Something else is being formed: a meditation on the relationships between the natural world as located in some elsewhere space of the antipodes and the communications networks that mean that these spaces are neither pure nor innocent. In *A Journey That Wasn't* and *Purple Rain* media are used to reconsider narratives of the natural environment. Haines and Hinterding make visible the magic of sonic forces as radio waves are seen to move mountains. Huyghe seeks an intangible engagement with a mythical creature that is made real by documentation. This essay draws on these resonances of ecology, media, and utopia to narrate an engagement with southern environments disturbed and somehow remade by technologies of sonification, visualization, and exploration.

Machines

Purple Rain and *A Journey That Wasn't* are two distinct works that share antipodean fictions of journey and discovery. But more than this, they suggest a different kind of structuring of our understanding of media that focuses not on the artifact, but on environmental interrelations where machines are found to be aspects of the structure, content, and impact of the environment. In both works the environment is viewed as an operating system in which messages are conducted that have the potential to determine certain ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. This approach revisits relations of transmission and communication in contemporary messaging systems. Haines and Hinterding make us particularly aware of how transmissions flow across and through material forces. By watching the screen and listening to its associated sound system a viewer pieces together offscreen and on-screen. What becomes activated, and in some sense actualized through the energy flows (as captured by the antenna) of
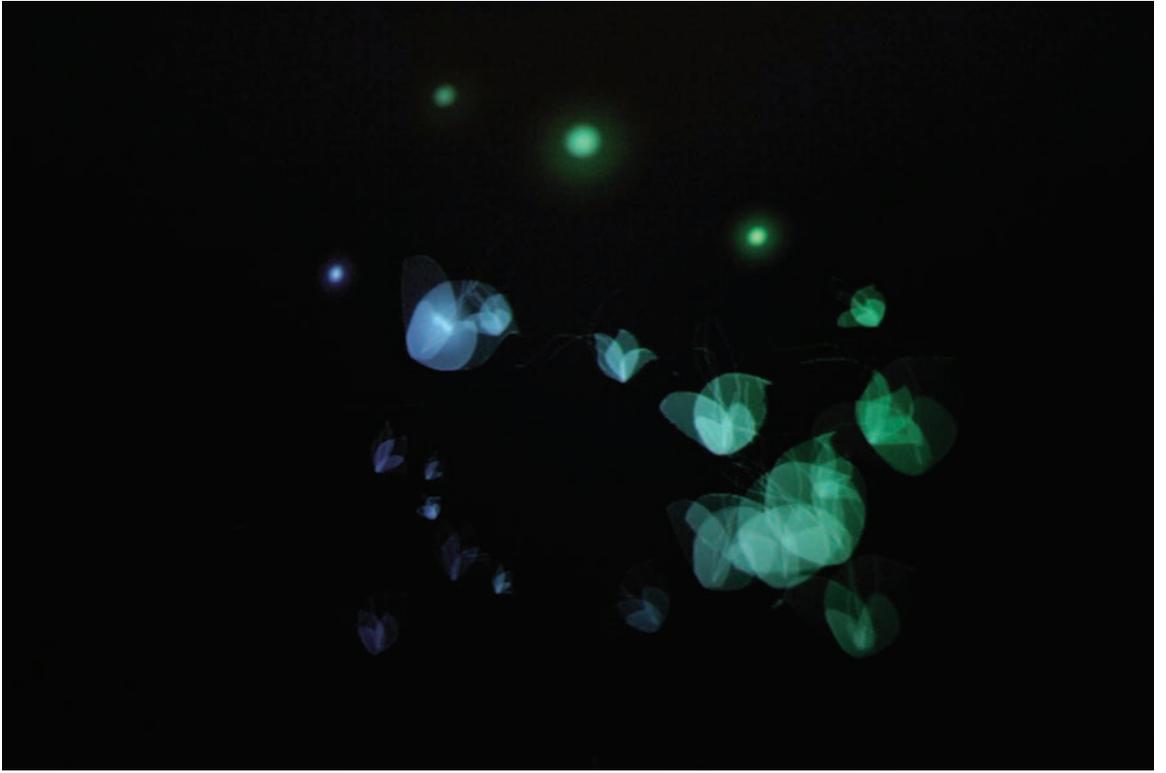
Figure 11.4
Pierre Huyghe, *A Journey That Wasn't* (2005) Super 16mm film and HD video, color, sound; 21 minutes 41 seconds.
Courtesy of the artist and Marian Godman Gallery, New York.

sound visualizing, are the spaces of the interaction themselves. The very medium of energy (vibration) suggests an investment of presence. The close correlations between energy and information mark the presence of listeners.[8]

Huyghe takes a receiving station to Antarctica and uses it to translate the shape of the island into sound. The hum produced sounds that sounded like animal communication, at the least; it seems to be enough to summon the mythical penguin. *Purple Rain* is also a sonic generator, not made solely from antennas but from the convergence of energy and information facilitated by the antennas as they infect and construct the visual image. The transmission waves that seem to disturb the tranquility of the mountain scene do so by mapping fluctuations in communication.[9] Again, this is testament to the unseen forces of nature. Together these sonic machines draw on a history of travels to the south and the forms of media and aesthetics that have long

been located in inhospitable southern locations, where famously machines were imagined to evolve in the underside of the world.

Erewhon

Huyghe writes that his working method involves "invent[ing] fictions and then acquiring the real resources to see if they exist."[10] This desire to turn fiction into fact is written into the history of the southern antipodes and in particular the small island group closest to Antarctica. During the early nineteenth century European settlement in Aotearoa [New Zealand] was predicated on the notion of creating a new society that escaped the class constraints of Britain and was built on hard work, direct engagement with "the land," and the opportunity to control and master an untouched wilderness. Blinkered to the complex trade, artistic, and deeply understood connections to place held by Maori, the history of settlement in New Zealand is one of colonial utopianism. Here was a country where a world dreamt and imagined had the potential to be made real. New Zealand quickly became a country overwritten by exploration and discovery. In 1858 the British author Samuel Butler arrived in New Zealand and began work as a runholder in an area of mid-Canterbury that he named *Mesopotamia*—the mountainous area surrounding it he called *Erewhon.* The farm became the setting for a satirical and dystopic tale of machinic and societal control. Published after his return to London in 1872, Butler's *Erewhon* turned the South Island landscape into a fictional world that held a mirror up to the hypocrisies of Victorian society. As a young traveler journeys over the mountains, he finds a new society of green pastures where all technology is banned and where illness is criminalized. The role of technology here is crucial. Butler had published a number of texts in New Zealand newspapers engaging with the new model of evolution offered by Darwin,[11] which made possible the threat of completely new relations between humans and the world around them. In *Erewhon* we are told that previous to the current age was a time when the machine had evolved so dramatically as to threaten human existence. Butler documents an ecological intensity that marks a terrifying shift in the relations of nature to technology and he located it on an isolated inaccessible island paradise. Butler's machinic ecology is remarkably prescient, a fiction tied to the actual that blurs distinctions of human, machine, and nature.

The Journey

Butler's hero takes a perilous journey over the mountains, perhaps in part inspired by Descartes who in the *Discourse* writes how customs are uncertain things, "being different on one side of a mountain from the other."[12] Erewhon is a lush green place isolated from outside influences and caught in a time of equilibrium; it is both now

and then. The story of *A Journey That Wasn't* as it is told in *Artforum* has the artists pass through a different temporal equilibrium: a kind of "permanent twilight sleep."[13] Even given the detail of Huyghe's descriptions and the photographic evidence, it remains unclear if the journey was undertaken and, if so, when. Haines and Hinterding traveled from a huge hot continent to the same shaky sliver of land that Butler had farmed and possibly even climbed the same mountains. This crossing of space points to the crucial role of antipodean geography. At one point Butler's hero is stuck, realizing there is only one way forward:

All that I did, I did almost mechanically, for I could not realise my situation to myself, beyond knowing that I was alone, and that return through the chasm which I had just descended would be impossible. It is a dreadful feeling that of being cut off from all one's kind. I was still full of hope, and built golden castles for myself as soon as I was warmed with food and fire; but I do not believe that any man could long retain his reason in such solitude. . . . One begins doubting one's own identity.[14]

There is no going back; the only option is to steer straight toward the storm. Likewise, Huyghe questions the constructions of geography:

At one point, the onboard computer indicated that the boat had made contact with an island. If it was there at all, it must have been immaterial. Precise knowledge of one's GPS coordinates on an incomplete or erroneous map remains elusive.[15]

The certainty of the map is constantly under threat on islands born from ice or geological fault lines, where even solid earth can liquefy overnight. It is necessary in such a location to imagine other ways of being and, as Butler's hero does, to find comfort in invented stories of warmth and life. This is a process of equivalence where a machinic ecology is further extended to encompass virtual creatures as well as the fictions we tell of ourselves. The balance that each work embraces demonstrates what it might mean to maintain this equilibrium between being not yet out of place and no longer in a certain place. Furthermore, any given geography is shown to be an impure space overwritten by historical and territorial desires. The great southern continent was posited long before explorers could prove its nonexistence. It was a necessary balance that held the whole of the world in place. *Terra Australis Incognita,* the unknown land, was known enough to fill the bottom of most European maps up to the seventeenth century. Even after its dragons were replaced, the name lingered as the countries of New Zealand and Australia become defined as *Terra Nullius* (no-man's-land). This fictional definition had extreme and real impact because it became a justification for extermination and land theft up into the twentieth century.[16] In the antipodes there is no authentic ground prior to occupation. It is continually rewritten by journeys undertaken and stories told.

In the contemporary context New Zealand is still being re-created in myth and story. Anyone who has traveled over the Southern Alps recognizes the landscape described in Butler's *Erewhon*. And as the opening scenes of *Prince Caspian* or the *Lord*

of the Rings show, anywhere in New Zealand can easily be imagined to be elsewhere. In this country there is an absurd tension among representations of a place where dreams can come true; continued media constructions of a country through a fictitious national identity, 100 percent pure and full of sheep; and a carte blanche on which fantasies of elsewhere space can be realized. Colonization or, to be more precise, re-colonization is part of the political subtext of Butler's imagery. Although he was one of the few to return to London, Butler's observations of nineteenth-century machinic ecology continue to inform a country that chases the tourist dollar with advertising campaigns focused on immersion in a pure exotic natural environment, mapped by settings for fantasy films. These mythologies entice artists as much as those interested in patting a sheep and occupy a new space where colonial journeys are reworked into contemporary ecotourism. It is the journey from one place to another that marks utopia as an always-hopeless-elsewhere space.

Nature

Aaron and Hannah Beehre live in Lyttleton, a five-hour drive from Erewhon. In their installation (2006) digital fireflies flit around a small cave that might be found at the bottom of the South Island where the Southern Alps meet the Tasman Sea and disappear into fiords (figures 11.5 and 11.6). In the center of *DeArmond* is a gleaming ball that slowly rotates reflecting a shimmer of precious stones onto the walls of the enclosed black space. Amid the reflected light are floating creatures generated in real time and reactive to any sound in the room. Move in the environment too loudly and the fireflies vanish. Hush and be still and they emerge from the gloom and dance around. Blurring the line between nature and material these lights are generative data that reflect the eccentricities of animal rather than digital matter. And as with any generative material, the internal workings of the computer determine real-time relationships. The harder the computer is made to work as it produces the creatures, the slower the processing time, which of course slows the computer's ability to measure the sound levels, with the result that the creatures become less shy as they emerge in groups.[17] In listening carefully they appear to have learned something about their environment. In *DeArmond* sound operates as an interactive determinant as well as a record of audience contribution. There is an oneiric dimension to the mini-installation, at once a map of the night sky and of the animals that inhabit it. Viewers, who become visitors from another place, displace the invisible immersive relationship of a small animal community to its environment.

In *Erewhon* "The Book of the Machine" details the complex relationships between nature and culture and the environment that surrounds the city of Erewhon. At one point Butler describes an intimate relationship between bees and clover. French writers Deleuze and Guattari, in their description of the machinic assemblage, translated Butler's bees and clover into the wasp and orchid of a warmer climate.[18] The wasp and orchid are bound together; "the wasp becomes part of the reproductive apparatus of

Figure 11.5
Hannah and Aaron Beehre, *DeArmond* (2006). Mixed media and digital projection. Exhibited in *Out of Erewhon: New Directions* in Canterbury Art, November 24, 2006, to February 4, 2007. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu.
Reproduced with permission of the artists.

the orchid, at the same time that the orchid becomes a sexual organ for the wasp."[19] The orchid becoming a wasp substitutes for the wasp's partner so well that there is no need for another wasp, and vice versa, the wasp becoming an orchid secures the relationship. The fireflies in the Beehres' installation share this intimate relationship, a relationship that is conducted across species, genetic codes, and bodies.[20] The generative data does not turn into or imitate an insect but remains data-becoming-insect. Wasp and orchid or data and firefly are no longer simply what they appear to be; they are also part of a process that extends and questions the distinctions that we make between different material forms intensified by multiple machinic ecologies.

In the country of the Erewhonians, Butler documents a fear of this immense capacity of machines. No machines are allowed in the city of Erewhon because it is believed

Figure 11.6
Hannah and Aaron Beehre, *DeArmond* (2006). Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu.
Reproduced with permission of the artists.

they harbor the potential to rapidly evolve, reproduce, and take over the world. The Erewhonians, fearful of the tyranny of the machines, have risen in revolt and destroyed all such evidences of civilization. Our traveler's watch, for instance, is regarded with extreme horror. This attitude to machines is born from fear of their potential consciousness:

We have come to such a pass that, even now, man must suffer terribly on ceasing to benefit the machines. . . . Man's very soul is due to the machines; it is a machine-made thing: he thinks as he thinks, and feels as he feels, through the work that machines have wrought upon him, and their existences is quite as much a *sine qua non* for his, as his for theirs. This fact precludes us from proposing the complete annihilation of machinery, but surely it indicates that we should destroy as many of them as we can possibly dispense with, lest they should tyrannise over us even more completely.[21]

British artists Jane and Louise Wilson's video installation *Erewhon* (2004) picks up on Butler's suggestion of power struggles between machine and human. Made during a residency with the Ilam Art School in Christchurch and as a result of their journeys to Hanmer Springs (in the Southern Alps), *Erewhon* is a document of the kinds of information that we can easily invent and generate as we travel to unknown locations. In Butler's *Erewhon* illness is considered a crime and sick people are thrown in jail. The Wilson's *Erewhon* picks up on this moral value system and the very real slip that occurred in New Zealand when state concerns for health and control became policies of eugenics.[22] Butler's ideas on crime and disease were echoed in New Zealand's post–World War I policies that sought to control and consolidate a small population that had suffered a loss of nearly a third of its young men. Not unique to New Zealand the efforts of the government to counterbalance this loss included the building of structures to house disabled veterans and the institution of specific policies to strengthen young women in order to foster healthy procreation.

The Wilsons' installation of five cantilevered screens creates perpendicular enclaves, spaces within which viewers find their bodies distorted and reflected (figure 11.7). On screen are documentary images of wards at Queen Mary Hospital at Hanmer Springs (a hot springs and spa retreat built to house single women and their illegitimate babies) and choreographed callisthenic performances by young women in gym attire inspired by archival photographs.[23] Mirrors, suspended at angles over the screens, further duplicate the projections resulting in a kind of kaleidoscopic effect, echoed in the roving steady-cam footage that circulates around and through the building surfaces. The dilapidated wards include two shaped after Jeremy Bentham's panopticon that housed returning soldiers recuperating from their war experiences. In the installation the performances begin to address a misguided and polemic sense of institutionalized morality, and the hospital architecture focuses the effects of social control.

Similar to *Purple Rain* and *DeArmond*, the Wilsons' *Erewhon* blurs distinctions of real and virtual by drawing on a literature of the future. It does not translate the sociopolitical ecosystem of an antipodean elsewhere and simply present it to us but otherwise narrates it. *Purple Rain, Erewhon,* and *DeArmond* all use communications media to reconsider narratives of media, ecology, and utopia. In each case something else is being formed: what we might call a meditation on the relationships between the natural world as located in some elsewhere space of the antipodes and the data that take us there and contribute to its formation.

Utopia

In very different ways these works map the uncanny experience of revisiting the antipodes as a historical construct. Three of the works discussed here engage specific journeys into mid-Canterbury and the fourth enacts a journey to a mythical yet real

Figure 11.7
Jane and Louise Wilson, *Erewhon* (2004). Five channel-screen video installation with sound.
Exhibited in 303 Gallery New York (2004) and Lisson Gallery, London (2005).
Reproduced courtesy of the artists and 303 Gallery, New York.

place not so far from here. Each reflects the concerns and histories of centuries of colonization immersed in shifting relations among nature, place, technology, and people. Focused on machinic connectivities as well as the morals, social constructions, and economic models described in various fictional incarnations, these works suggest an ongoing commitment to a potential future elsewhere and to the recognition of media histories that are embedded in concrete locations. They begin to trace connections between utopia and ecology. The shifting powers of communications media remap Erewhon, which is at once utopian and antipodean space, nowhere and elsewhere.

Antipodean ecosystems are not separate from the communications technologies they are embodied within. Butler traveled over the Southern Alps to find a verdant green place where it appeared all technology had been eliminated. Haines and Hinterding travel to record a real space that could be reconstructed as virtual. The Beehres condense their familiarity with the Southern Alps into miniature, and the Wilsons as visitors themselves enable a different kind of journey that conflates historical truths with imagined fictions. The surprise with which the Wilsons greeted the revelation of New Zealand's eugenic policies must in part be due to the still-held belief that such things can't or won't happen here. Despite its leading role in the rise of global neoliberal capitalist agendas in the 1990s, there is an ongoing myth that because of its isolation, New Zealand has escaped the degeneracy of other Western countries. Could such sociopolitical extremism really occur in a place of purity? This is the question that Huyghe also asks in *The Journey That Wasn't.* The crossing of space points to the key role of media as it marks out blurred lines between nature and culture, here and there, aesthetics and utopia.

In his discussion of media ecologies Matthew Fuller broadly defines ecology as "the modes or dynamics that properly form or make sensible an object or process."[24] Fuller's emphasis is on the formation and dynamics of media systems. His use of the term *ecology* draws on Guattari's formulation of ecosophy that examines dynamic systems "in which any one part is always multiply connected, acting by virtue of those connections, and always variable, such that it can be regarded as a pattern rather than simply as an object."[25] Guattari's definition of ecology includes human subjectivity and social concerns. This does not mean that everyone operates together to shared ends but that a social ecology is one born from dissonance, including the wider tensions of different material forces as they operate alongside each other, be these human, spatial, cultural, or linguistic.[26] Furthermore, as specific manifestations of systems, ecologies cannot be dissected and individual segments cannot be analyzed in isolation. Whether closed or open, the borders of such systems are constantly in flux because they are durational. Media ecologies thus involve the movements of time and space, through the mediations of communications technology. Utopia is often portrayed as bordered and isolated in some way from other social structures. It is out of time and space. Does this mean utopia is the antithesis of ecology?

Not necessarily. Utopia isn't just about space; it also houses objects that are usually inaccessible to our direct experience. This means it is possible to place ecology—which is about being in the present, implicated in the actions of the here and now—alongside a notion of utopia—which is about being here and now but dreaming of elsewhere. Butler found elsewhere in the present of his New Zealand experience. Pierre Huyghe constructed utopia in the body of the penguin relocated to New York.[27] By engaging with elsewhere spaces and highlighting the means through which data perform, the antipodean journey reflects our current mediated location that cannot be thought without acknowledging the multiple ways that we have mapped the world and our habitations of it. In this sense Erewhon as a place and text continues to inhabit the simultaneous timescales of ecology and utopia.[28]

Nowhere

Brian Massumi makes an important distinction between hope and utopia, saying that utopia will always be hopeless because it is forever in the future.[29] Hope, he suggests, is about where we are now and the kinds of actions we can perform within contemporary art. In each work discussed here sound and movement map simultaneous spaces of encounter that are hopeful and transformative. *DeArmond* relies on viewers to mediate their bodies to control the noise they make. Those who behave gain access to a haunted space of exotic flickering beauty. *DeArmond* seeks an intangible engagement with mythical creatures made visible by data. It encourages stillness. Similar to the strengthening exercises the Wilsons document, bodies are subjected to the control of their environment. In the Wilsons' *Erewhon* bodies quiver as they attempt to hold acrobatic poses. These frozen and controlled young women are responding to the physical intensifications of state and occupy kaleidoscopic screens of visual control. In *Purple Rain* noise constructs a visual object and simultaneously puts into place the destruction of that very same object. The viewer is helplessly encased in sound, a passive voyeur of the effects of generations of sound waves as they become image and move mountains. In each work there is a complex mixture of frozen movement. Not only can space dictate behavior but the visceral experience of the work positions and implicates viewers in ambiguous vantage points. The process of equilibrium enables a translation of form from one state to another. *Purple Rain* undertakes a particular form of data bending that allows us not only to hear raw data but also to see that data actively transform an apparently physical object. *DeArmond* detects sound activity in the room; the animal data forms repeatedly shy away from viewers and rebloom elsewhere. The Wilsons' *Erewhon* maps the increasing data modeling of the human body as statistics and fitness are imposed on it in the name of the greater good of a country. None of these works are dramatic, grand statements. The utopian ecologies found here—nature, matter, and culture—are dynamic, open, and ultimately machinic aggregates.

Guattari called for the necessity to create new paradigms, to turn technologies toward humans, to reconstruct singular and collective processes of subjectivation.[30] Media relationships are never one way; in one location radio transmissions move mountains and in another they summon mysterious creatures.[31] Because of the immensely variegated landscape in which they are grounded, the antipodes, and Aotearoa New Zealand within them, are multiple. In placing the long-term concerns of ecology alongside the hopelessness of utopia, this chapter suggests that Erewhon the place and *Erewhon* the book continue to offer a critical map for the histories of media aesthetics, machines, and humans at the bottom of the world. In each of the works discussed here we find a history, an account of things that have happened, blurred with a contemporary machinic ecology. These are stories of fiction made visible and set in motion by shifting ecological encounters. Butler used the relationships of technology and the body to highlight the absurdity of Victorian social values. His vision results from experiences of an island settler location where ecology and aesthetics are overwritten by social and political desire. This desire to turn fiction into fact is written into the ongoing media histories of the southern antipodes. The ecological fictions highlighted in these works include the virtualized time and space of the antipodean journey. And similar to any utopian work, paying attention to them reflects our current location and allows a glimpse of nowhere.

Notes

1. Toni Morrison, "Conversation: Toni Morrison," *Online NewsHour* interview with Elizabeth Farnsworth (March 9, 1998), http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june98/morrison_3-9.html.

2. Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (London: Penguin, 1985), 56. (Originally published in 1872.)

3. Pierre Huyghe and The Association of Freed Time, "El Diario del Fin del Mundo: A Journey That Wasn't," *Artforum International* 43 (June 2005): 299.

4. David Haines, personal communication, 14 July 2009.

5. David Haines, *Purple Rain* (2009), http://www.sunvalleyresearch.net/701/purple-rain.

6. Huyghe "El Diario del Fin del Mundo," 300.

7. Ibid., 301.

8. Bruce Clarke, "Introduction," *From Energy to Information: Representation in Science and Technology, Art, and Literature*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Linda Dalrymple Henderson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 9.

9. It is worth noting that when all TV is reduced to digital these waves will no longer be present.

10. Richard Leydier, "Pierre Huyghe: A Sentimental Journey [Interview]," *Art Press* 322 (April 2006): 26–33.

11. Samuel Butler, "Darwin among the Machines," in *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement and Other Early Essays. Shrewsbury Edition of the Works of Samuel Butler*, ed. H. F. Jones and A. T. Bartholomew (London: Jonathan Cape, 1923). See also Bruce Mazlish, "Butler's Brainstorm," in *Prefiguring Cyberculture: An Intellectual History*, ed. Darren Tofts, Annemarie Jonson, and Alessio Cavallaro (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 228–239.

12. Mazlish, "Butler's Brainstorm," 232.

13. Huyghe "El Diario del Fin del Mundo," 298.

14. Butler, *Erewhon,* 58–59.

15. Huyghe "El Diario del Fin del Mundo," 298–299.

16. Drawn from a sense that because no European had laid claim to the land it was available and free (no-man's-land). For discussions of the Mabo case in Australia see Justice Gerard Brennan, "Mabo and Others v. Queensland (No 2)," High Court of Australia, Canberra (1992), http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/cth/high_ct/175clr1.html?stem=0&synonyms=0&query=~mabo. See also Screen Australia Digital Learning, *Mabo the Native Title Revolution: Terra Nullius Defined* (Canberra: Film Australia, Tantamount Productions, 1996), http://www.mabonativetitle.com/tn_01.shtml.

17. Su Ballard, "Distraction and Feedback: Sound, Noise and Movement in Aotearoa New Zealand," *Mesh* 19 (2006), np.

18. Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 285.

19. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: The Athlone Press, 1996), 10.

20. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 234–236.

21. Butler, *Erewhon,* 207.

22. Hilary Stace, "Gene Dreaming: New Zealanders and Eugenics," *Professional Historians' Association of New Zealand/Aotearoa e-Journal* (July 8, 2008), http://www.phanza.org.nz/content/gene-dreaming-new-zealanders-and-eugenics.

23. Each still shot lasts twenty to thirty seconds—the very amount of time people had to remain still in order to have their photograph taken in the nineteenth century.

24. Matthew Fuller, *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 2.

25. Ibid., 4.

26. Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: Continuum, 2000), 33–35.

27. As an aside this process mimics very clearly the practice of traveling to the South Seas and returning with captive people as trophies.

28. Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 119.

29. Mary Zournazi, "Navigating Moments: An Interview with Brian Massumi," *21C Magazine,* no. 2 (2008), http://www.brianmassumi.com/interviews/NAVIGATING%20MOVEMENTS.pdf.

30. Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, 36.

31. Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 119.