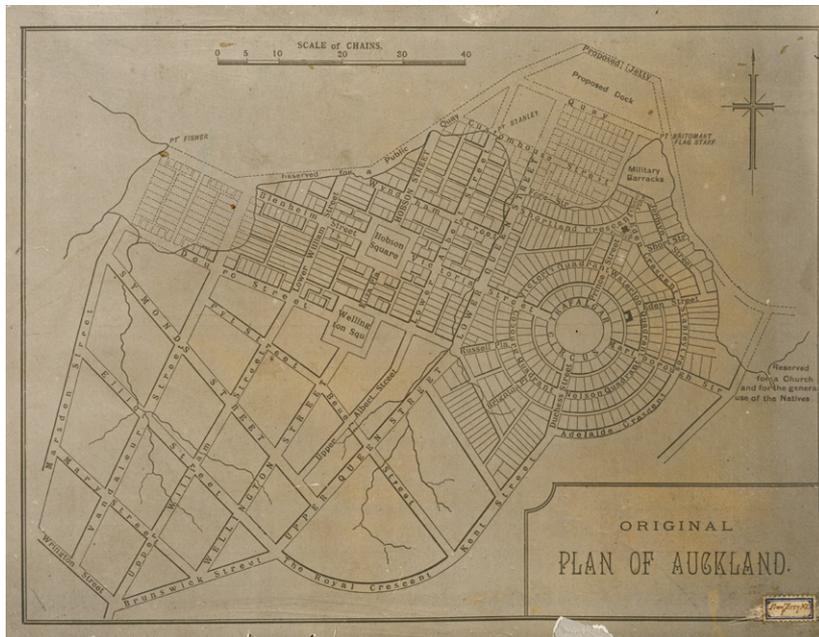


# Plan/ditch

## Topographical inscription in an early colonial capital

Andrew Douglas



**Fig. 01**

(left) Felton Mathew (1841). *Original Plan of Auckland* [NZ Map 2664, Sir George Grey Special Collection, Auckland Libraries.]

**Fig. 02**

(right) James, D. Richardson (1860s). Partial view, Looking north down Queen Street showing east side with the Metropolitan Hotel with a group of men outside on the corner of Fort Street (right) and the Ligar Canal, a large portion of which collapsed after heavy rail [Photograph, image reference 4-400, Sir George Grey Special Collection, Auckland Libraries.]

## Introduction

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This paper considers the contemporaneity of the urban via an ironic route – review of an historical prototype of a town offered at the colonial founding of Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland. To this end a distinction made by Anne Querrien in “The Metropolis and the Capital” (1986) is followed. Urban place, she argued, can be divided between “two different ethical principles” and “two different modes of human distribution” (Querrien 1986: 219). The metropolis exerts a “common measure on the regions”, acting as a conduit bringing different milieux into contact (Querrien 1986: 219). Contrary to the metropolis, whose primary motive is to maintain networks, the capital operates as a nucleus rigorously coordinating and constraining regions. This account shares much with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s (1987) characterisation of State and town solutions. While both striate space, they do so divergently: States utilise resonance and stratification to better police and filter the networks of towns; towns operate principally as conduit-makers polarising value/matter in pursuit of a *phylum* or field of flow (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 432-433). Yet complicating this binary for Deleuze and Guattari, no less than for Querrien, is the assertion that both solutions invariably exist in mixed states.

Spanning 1841-1865, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland exhibited a poignant form of this mixing. As both New Zealand’s capital and its colonial commercial hub, it strikingly melded metropolitan and capital imperatives, a process that can be seen to have decisively fixed its urban nature and the becoming-urban of the country subsequently. If, as historian Richard Stone has argued, Tāmaki-makau-rau (“Tamaki {the maiden contended for} by a hundred lovers” – Stone 2001: 7) was something of a “melting pot of resident people and incomers alike”, even prior to European colonisation, the question arises: what relation might this proto-urbanism (before a European urbanism proper) have with the capital-metropolitan structure taking hold of it?

In answer, this paper intersects two urban artifacts or ‘things’: a plan (commonly referred to as the “Felton Mathew Plan” of 1841, drawn by New Zealand’s first Surveyor General), and a ditch otherwise known as Queen Street’s Ligar canal. Named after New Zealand’s second Surveyor General, Charles Ligar, the canal was designed to drain or restrain what was popularly known as the ‘Queen Street River’, or more properly, the Waihorotiu stream that collected the springs and water flow from various sources in the Queen Street valley – Queen Street being the city’s main commercial strip, a strip otherwise known as the ‘golden mile’. Prior to the canal’s eventual channeling and disappearance from view, it maintained a notorious presence in the township, receiving both the tidal surge rising from Commercial Bay as far as Wyndham Street, runoff waters from further up the valley, and the waste and sewage of the lower valley’s occupants (Platts 1971: 43). Partially fenced off on its sides for protection, the canal literally divided the city with numerous footbridges being necessary for traversing east-west. As such, it emblematised the continual battle the early settlers had with water and weather.

The aim in reading the plan and ditch together is to better understand the city’s founding and to pick up a shift in conducts and governance spanning its early period. Running the two things together also sets up a certain irony, one that alludes to the starkly evident fact that the Felton Mathew Plan, while never implemented, persists as an ongoing provocation and prompt.

(no. I.)



The British flag first hoisted on the shore of the Waitemata  
September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1840.

The Township of Russell proved utterly unsuited for the government so Cap. Hobson entrusted his friend Captain William Cornwallis Symonds of the Scotch Company at Manakau to select a suitable site. The latter recommended the Waitemata. The spot chosen was purchased from the chief Te Kawau of Orakei & named Auckland after the British Prime Minister. A staff came down from Russell in the 'Anna Watson' to take possession & on the 15<sup>th</sup> of ~~October~~ September 1840 the flagstaff was hoisted by Cap. Symonds on what was afterwards called Britomart Point, & saluted with 24 guns from the 'Anna Watson' & 15 from the 'Platina', Cap. Hobson being then saluted with 7 guns. Those also present round the flagstaff were Felton Mathew the Surveyor General, Dr John Johnson, William Mason Superintendent of Works, Charles Logie formerly of India & the Customs at Sydney (Caler at Dunedin), - M<sup>r</sup> Carthy also of

Fig. 03

John Johnston (1840). "The British flag first hoisted on the shore of the Waitemata, September 18th, 1840." [Watercolour, Hocken Pictorial Collections, Otago University Research Heritage.]

## A beautiful morning smiles or "winning the world"

"...the first day without showers at least, which we have had for some time, a good omen I hope for the prosperity of the new city which is to rise on this spot."

Sarah Mathew, diary entry Friday, 18 September 1840

Confirming the meteorological felicity identified by Sarah Mathew (Mathew 1940: 193), wife of the Surveyor General, Felton Mathew, is a watercolour attributed to Colonial Surgeon and Health Officer, Dr John Johnston. It depicts the occasion of Auckland's founding at Point Britomart – prominent ground long since given up for foreshore reclamation. The sunny, if wispy, rendering captures the moment when at 1pm, the Flag having been run up on land, and the Colours of the attending barque the Anna Watson raised in response, various gun salutes and cheers by attending officials sounded possession and settlement intent of a wedge of land gifted by the Ngāti Whātua, holders of manu whenua or territorial right over Tāmaki Makaurau.

Alongside the Anna Watson, as Johnston's sketch confirms, was a second barque, the Platina, which had arrived some days before from Wellington, having been chartered by the New Zealand (Land and Colonisation) Company to transfer immigrants from Gravesend to the growing settlement at Port Nicholson. Filling much of the hull was a more unusual cargo – a 16-room, prefabricated, Manning frame house, intended to serve as seat of the governor Captain William Hobson in his chosen capital. Confounding no doubt for the New Zealand Company and its immigrants was the conveying north of this cargo to a site mostly devoid of European settlers, yet at the approximate centre of the greatest Māori population (Stone 2001: 239).

Sarah Mathew, drawn to meteorological propitiousness, noted in her diary the presence on the Platina that day of an array of detractors fleeing Port Nicholson and the promises of the New Zealand Company, a choice underscored by the presence there of incessant “rain and cold winds” and “snow on the hills around” (Mathew 1940: 189). Climatic differences alone, she speculated, ought to prompt “the very superior class of laboring emigrants” lured to Port Nicholson to flock instead to the embryo capital (Mathew 1940: 189). If Mathew's diary – something she shared with her husband in their traversal of the coast in search of a suitable site for the principal town – abounds with meteorological references, it does so in large measure in the context of shipboard life and an ever-tenuous marriage between atmosphere, sea, and land.

Underscoring this land/sea/weather confluence is a long-exercised British alertness to being island-born, and in turn, destined for commerce with water. Characterising land itself as a “Sheer Necessity” running down to the sea, Rudyard Kipling for instance imagined in “The First Sailor” (1918) a topographically-impelling destiny leading from inland forests to the shore and beyond to “World's End”, a drift piloted first by errant logs and then accomplished purposefully with their crafting as vessels. For Hannah Arendt (1976), what Kipling initiated in the poem was a founding myth intended to retroactively justify imperialism. So pictured is the nation's intrepid mastering of the world's maritime expanse, and in turn, the winning of that world by returning from its distant limits (Arendt 1976: 209). The ship, allegorised by Kipling as the marriage of the stick (father of all dug-outs) and the basket (mother of all keeled vessels), underscored for Arendt “the always dangerous alliance with the elements” predicating such a win (Arendt 1976: 209). Celebrated in Kipling's parable is exclusive hold on four elemental gifts – “one for the Sea, one for the Wind, one for the Sun, and one for the Ship that carries you” – but as Arendt added, world-winning comes at a price, the cost of “caring for the law”, attending to “the welfare of the world”, and rising above an indifference to, or ignorance of, “what keeps the world together” (Arendt 1976: 209). Yet freighted by the myth for Arendt was a paternalism rich in simplistic virtues like “chivalry, nobility, bravery”: virtues readily able to justify imperialism as the “white man's burden” (Arendt 1976: 209). Moreover, it played lightly with this burden, rendering it a quixotic adventure in which “boyhood noblesse” is given place abroad imaginatively and actually at a time when the rapid urbanisation of Georgian Britain increasingly demanded colonial expansion, and yet precluded an enactment of such ‘adventuring’, socially and politically at home (Arendt 1976: 211).

Neatly condensed then in the events of Friday 18 September at Tāmaki Makaurau was something of this world-winning, one in which racing and race itself were coopted into an embryo urban body politic. With the din of territorial possession (cannon fire and “cheers long and loud”) sounded over land and sea, a facsimile of holiday play capitalising on the climatic opening ensued (even if rain “threatened frequently” as Mathew noted). Down in the bay the key actors in the territorial drama that would follow

found stratified place: “[...] the gentlemen got up a boat race amongst themselves, another for the sailors, and a canoe race for the natives, which all came off with great *éclat*” (Mathew 1940: 192). So was forged a template for an annual regatta and provincial public holiday that continues the particular territorial refrain established to this day – a refrain Kipling noted in the case of Auckland in “The Song of the Cities”: “on us, on us the unswerving season smiles” (Kipling 1922).

## Between State and company

The presence of the Platina in Johnston's rendering indicates a further complexity in Auckland's founding. The town was to check privately funded, systematic colonisation – an enterprise suspected of treasonous intent (Stone 2001: 238). As a stand-in for the ship of State steered somewhat unevenly from afar, it was to be a vehicle for the orderly distribution of governance ashore. Yet what the embryo capital shared with its southern rival (a similarity emblematised by Government House packed flat in the hull of the Platina) was the economic and ‘civilising’ potency of “instant townships” – a cornerstone of the New Zealand Company's place-making (Belich 2007: 367).

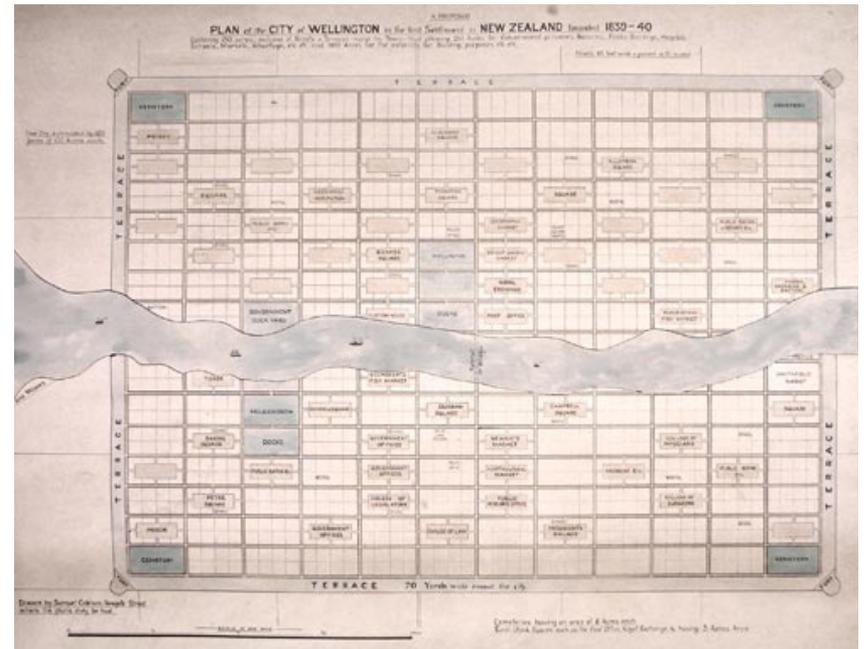
The underpinning intent of such townships, as Wakefield made clear in an article titled “The Art of Colonisation”, was to counter population dispersal, a tendency risked in colonial settlement where cheap, available land could lead settlers to “plant themselves here and there in out-of-the-way spots, [and...] being distant from a market, and from all that pertains to civilisation, they would fall into a state of barbarism” (Wakefield 1968: 982). As political economist J. S. Mill expanded on Wakefield's concern some years later, giving an “infant community” concentrated form was necessary for ensuring that it maintain an ongoing predilection for the constraints and benefits of commerce, rather than adopting “the tastes and inclinations of savage life” (Mill 2015: Book 5, section 14).

Such cautioning fits a long-practiced “Occidental capitalisation” that Michel de Certeau has associated with colonial knowledge production (Certeau 1988: 135). What repeated exploratory circumnavigation effected was a gathering of knowledge in European capitals (archival concentrations), one that sought to imagine a world with no “remainder”, no “elsewhere”, to the narrative of return. At stake was a quest to make “the alterity of the universe conform to [Occidental...] models” (Certeau 1988: 135) but also to resist the lures inherent in indigenous contact and with it a drift from capitalisation (Certeau 1986: 148).

Significantly for Wakefield, and Mills after him, compact township had a parallel intent: to put accumulating capital and the worrying proliferation of unemployed others at home into motion – motion capable of returning a profit. What organised emigration would potentiate, Wakefield and Mill hypothesised, was not only a social safety valve and more equitable opportunities for the laboring class, but also a vehicle for idle capital. Not the “frontier virtues of agrarian republicanism”, as Duncan Bell has put it, but “metropolitan concentration” was the corrective Wakefield applied to seemingly ‘open’ colonial terrain (Bell 2009: 41). If bourgeois modernity has in key senses always been urban (Bell 2009:41), it has not always sought political emancipation. Ameliorating in nature, it had historically set for itself a mediating role between the mob and aristocratic rule on the basis that its economic agenda might find a space that could be expanded between the two (Douglas & Engels-Schwarzpaul 2011). As Arendt similarly noted, the “bourgeoisie [...] had been the first class in history to achieve

economic pre-eminence without aspiring to political rule” (Arendt 1976: 124). Yet with Wakefield and others was recognition that the nation state, as Arendt put it, “proved unfit to be a framework for the further growth of capitalist economy” (Arendt 1976: 124). In a context where economic “expansion is everything”, governments were forced into a game of catch up with business interests, a game that quickly became both a matter of world politics and urban footholds amidst subject peoples (Arendt 1976: 126). Moreover, at stake in the establishment of urban concentration from the State’s perspective was the implementation of resonating structures capable of bringing the mercantile flows of value/matter induced by towns to heel, structures capable of totalising the entirety of value/matter across colonial territory. In short, the capital had to draw a nexus of interests together, passing them into a network of global State concerns.

## Cartage/cartography



**Fig. 4**

New Zealand Company advertisement for the City of Wellington 1839-1840 [Source: John Wilson. “History - British sovereignty and settlement”, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 8-Jul-13 - <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/map/1457/plan-of-wellington-1840>]

The Felton Mathew Plan then was the State's answer to the need for promptly effected, urban form in antipodean place – form countering its competition, the cookie-cutter urbanism advertised by private colonisation (Fig. 4). The plan shows a partly gridded street network punctuated by squares, quadrants, crescents, and a circus – an ambitious sampling of Georgian urbanism. While Bath is routinely seen as the plan's antecedent (Hamer 1990), as a native of London, Mathew would have been entirely familiar with that city's profusion of squares and circuses, themselves critical elements, as John Summerson has noted, “in the economics of estate development” (Summerson 1986: 163). While London squares in Summerson's view owed something to the baroque *place royale* of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they pointedly entailed a dissolve of such formality and with it, “formal architectural control” (Summerson 1986: 164). Yet with Bath, as he noted, is found a provincial, off-season exception, one in which classical urban forms rigorously determine architectural treatments (Summerson 1986: 164). Though even there the square, circus, and crescent were distributed “in a loose, informal way”, one answering to uneven topography (Summerson 1986: 165). While this approach in Bath in the 1750s became a staple of urban development for the remainder of the century in Britain (contributing for instance to the New Town of Edinburgh in 1766), it found exemplary deployment in John Nash's 1811 plans for Regent's Park and Regent Street (Summerson 1986: 166). With the street being completed in 1825, prior to Mathew's departure from England, it too may be considered a precedent for the Auckland plan, one transporting what Henry-Russell Hitchcock (1987) has referred to (via Sigfried Giedion) as a classical romanticism to the shores of the Waitematā, but also a picturesque sensibility melding urban motivations with landscape.

Manfredo Tafuri's (1985) consideration of the role of naturalism in shaping the 18<sup>th</sup>-century city is helpful for understanding this confluence. An early urban adoption of the picturesque is found in Marc-Antoine Laugier's rejection of Baroque formality in favour of cities designed like parks (Tafuri 1985: 4) – a precedent Hitchcock similarly attributed to romantic classicism. Rather than an aristocratically commanded nature expressed through the “episodic continuities of Baroque layouts”, Laugier imagined a naturalism in which “the city is like a forest”, being assembled according to an anti-organic logic where “squares, crossroads, and streets [impart...] regularity and fantasy, relationships and oppositions, and casual, unexpected elements that vary the scene” (as cited in Tafuri 1985: 4). Moreover, seeing in this proposition an anti-perspective tendency paralleling Enlightenment rationalism, Tafuri found a concretisation of Laugier's theories in the ‘urban improvement’ of London by Gwynn and George Dance Jr. known as “The Circus, The Crescent, and America Square” (Tafuri 1985: 4). Built between 1768-1774, but progressively altered through the Victorian period and finally bombed in 1940, the development, drawing on innovations in Bath but also from Dance's Grand Tour to Rome in 1765, was amongst the first enactments of a crescent form in the city and the only occasion where a circus and a square were deployed together (Fig. 5).

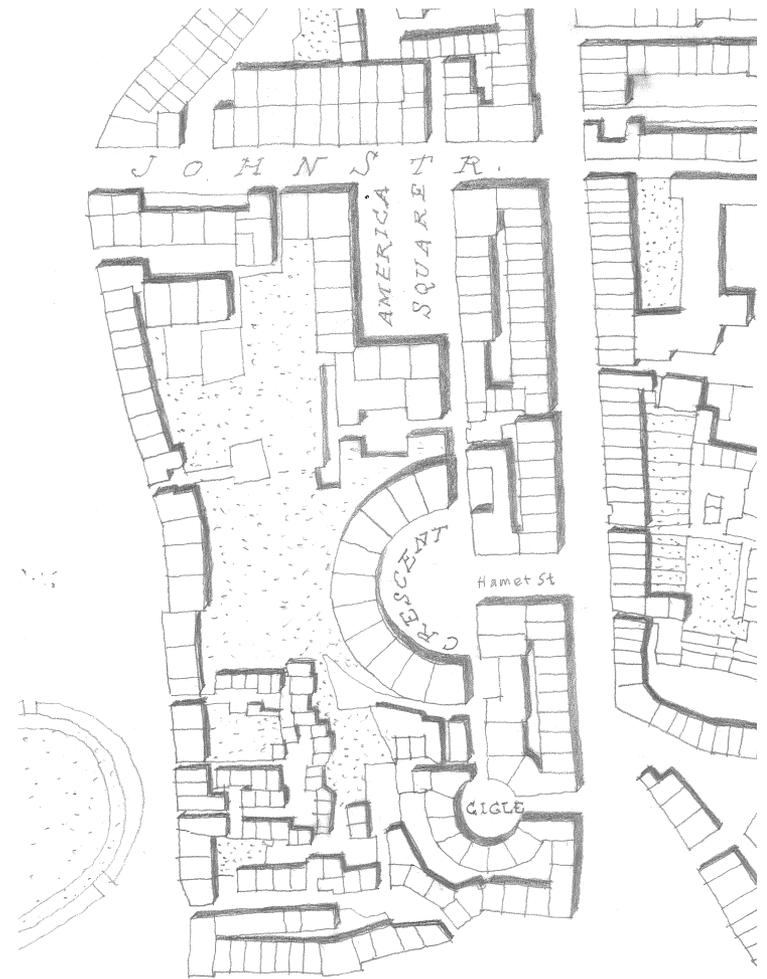


Fig. 5

Author (2015). The Circus, The Crescent, and America Square, by George Dance the Younger (pencil drawing based on Richard Horwood's map of London 1792-99) [Pencil drawing, Source: 100 Minorities: The curious denouement of a 'grand improvement'. L-P: Archaeology 2014-2015 | Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License]

What this “cultivated sensualism” of Laugier and the Dances portended for Tafuri was a political economic changeover; urban naturalism stood in for a waning dependence on the “pre-capitalist exploitation of the soil” of the *ancient régime* (Tafuri 1985: 8). With urban capitalism there is no sustained difference “between urban reality and the reality of the countryside”; each in their way answer to the productive mandate of cities and the new economic and population accumulations they demand (Tafuri 1985: 8).

For Tafuri, Piranesi's *Carceri d'Invenzione* portended these shifts. By testing to destruction baroque totalities (with their "equilibrium of opposites" and "unity in variety"), and by introducing under the guise of a classical framework a vision of centre-less, infinite space, it offered an image of linguistic decay rich in broken-down fragments and emptied symbols (Tafuri 1987: 30). Hitchcock too saw in the *Carceri* a precedent for romantic classicism, classicism less able to be 'revived' as a complete system than eclectically codified in a manner closer to the Burkean sublime than the beautiful (Tafuri 1987: 13 & 22-21). Yet, as Tafuri argued, for Burke the sublime involved finding in nature both the power of immensity, and a certain potency or savagery capable of being represented and therefore utilised (Tafuri 1987: 30). Hence such a view of nature neatly ratified social division and class contest, a vision usefully validating the overturning of an *ancient régime*. At the level of cities, as Tafuri noted drawing on assertions by Francesco Milizia in *Principles of Civil Architecture* (1781), an explicate sensualism was to parallel this political takeover:

[...] moving from one end to the other one [ought to find...] in each quarter something new, unique, and surprising. Order must reign, but in a kind of confusion... and from a multitude of regular parts the whole must give a certain idea of irregularity and chaos, which is so fitting to great cities. (as cited in Tafuri 1985: 21)

Correspondingly in the Felton Mathew Plan is found something of this centrifugal impetus towards irregularity and divergent order (see Fig. 6). From a rigorous, geometrically defined central area, street layouts bend away from principle axes producing irregular and rhombus-shaped blocks until, at the perimeter of the layout, no semblance of the ordering at the core is perceivable. Similarly, street layout increasingly responds to land features such as ridges (themselves spectrally represented as an alternative network doubled with the urban footprint) thereby fusing topographic characteristics with geometric motifs.



**Fig. 06**

Felton Mathew (1841) Partial view of Plan of the Town of Auckland in the Island of New Ulster on Northern Island, New Zealand, By Felton Mathew Esq., 1841 [NZ Map 6631, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries]

To the extent that Mumford attributed the emergence of residential squares in Georgian London to the takeover of feudal estates at the city's perimeter (Mumford 1984: 453), Mathew's squares and circus similarly rehearse a bourgeois displacement of seats of governance. The prefabricated Government House can be seen awkwardly straddling two proposed property lots on Waterloo Crescent, while a note to the east of the city environs indicates that a future Government House will occupy land well beyond the immediately envisaged street structure. Despite the concentric emphasis of the plan, the governmental seat of the capital is absent, leaving instead a scenographic bourgeois playground complete with orderly fronts and lanes for tidying away the operational awkwardness accompanying polite society. If such squares amounted to the new "forum of the fashionable", as Mumford has noted, one where tidied-up nature is selectively brought into the field of the urban, a promptly effected urbanism at Auckland planned a curious inversion with the urban itself progressively divesting itself of an enclosing function, and facing out to a yet-to-be-made-picturesque immensity – a spatial progression not dissimilar to the continuum between town and country Nash planned in the name of the Regent.

## A lyric-epic capital



**Fig. 07**

Author (2015). Detail of Felton Mathew's "Plan of the Town of Auckland" [pencil drawing based on NZ Map 6631]

Notwithstanding the Georgian cargo freighted by the plan, it remained, with a few exceptions, largely unrealised. A misfit between its ambitious morphology (the crescents specifically) and the settlement's topography is said to be the cause – despite Mathew's claim to the contrary that it was predicated precisely by the roughly falling concentric topography of Rangipuke (Fig. 7), the small volcanic plateau making up Albert Park (Mathew 1940: 197). Nevertheless, under the guise of making the land useful without great expense, Mathew's crescents permitted a graduated relationship with terrain – an unusually subtle site-building by colonial standards. Moreover, the terrace housing the plan intended served to intensify ground relations, for as David Leatherbarrow has suggested, this building type necessarily entailed building into terrain (rather than on it) a visible *substratum* (Leatherbarrow 2004: 19). Noting a series of etymological

links joining terrace with Latin *terra* or earth and synonymous terms like “‘parterre,’ ‘terrestrial,’ ‘territory,’ and ‘terra firma’”, Leatherbarrow read into the action of terracing or leveling a quest for “clean and dry” terrain (Leatherbarrow 2004: 115). Hence if a “terrace is essentially a level, limited, and dry deck”, it takes its meaning from an antithetical condition - subsoil at once “unlimited and wet” (Leatherbarrow 2004: 116).

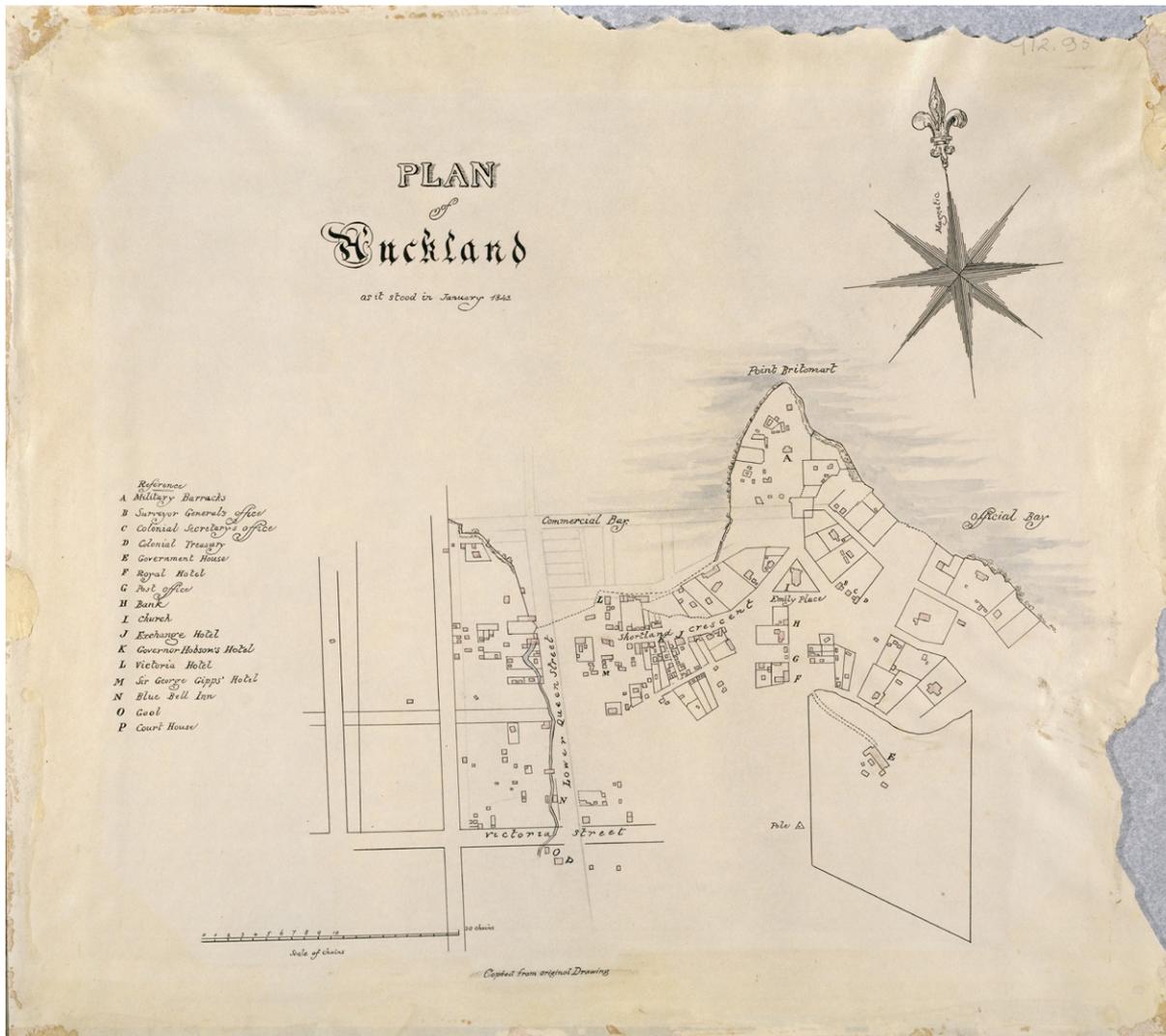
Terracing in Auckland was particularly topical given the prevalence of wet ground and inclement weather at its founding, but also the broader existential concern such conditions invoke. A Greek inheritance in Western building traditions makes an acuity to matter as problematically “wet and formless” especially heightened, and as Leatherbarrow recognised, Aristotle’s designation of form as a desirous marriage “between substance and shape” entailed both a domestication of unruly, unknowable matter (not coincidentally designated female) and a take-up of its “vital and procreative” potency for masculinist world-making (Leatherbarrow 2004: 116). While Mathew’s own marriage of terrain (Rangipuke) and quadrant could be seen to pursue a hegemony of this sort, in fact something other subsists with it. Terrain on the Isthmus was imagined to have unfathomable qualities, and as he wrote, “soil and climate genial and productive almost beyond all conception or calculation” (as cited in Byrnes 2001: 43).

This appeal to a sublimely bounteous substratum (a richness resting on its volcanic origin) resonates with a classical hue given to colonial Auckland by its early citizens, in particular its depiction by John Logan Campbell (Campbell 2012: 109) as an improved double of Corinth and Bishop Selwyn’s often-repeated reference in 1848 to the town as “the Corinth of the South” (Selwyn 1848). While the towns of the New World were, in Hamer’s account, commonly characterised by a “‘future city’ atmosphere” – a tendency to read into modest and largely incomplete present circumstances the prospect of a greatness to come – the spatial and temporal frontierism inherent in this newness is oddly refolded with Auckland’s classical doubling (Hamer 1990: 163, 177). Reference to ideal classical origins offered a new *epic* return, one where the colonialist, having wandered from home shores and their divisive sociality, plots an analogous route back by filling in with historical/mythological reference what Certeau has referred to as the “chasm effects” of distance (Certeau 1986: 142). While occidental capitalisation aimed to cut off drift induced by indigenous others, efficacious return instead is waylaid by a kind of Odyssean dreamland summonsed up here by terrain!

How did romanticism look to classic places for its grounding? If the 18<sup>th</sup>-century vision of the social contract envisaged, in parallel with a certain natural savagery, an “asocial subject”, as Celeste Langan has argued, romanticism was marked by the desire to restore the atomised “subject to a social setting”, a synthesising locale where people, things and place assume a “natural association” (Langan 1995: 15-18). Deleuze and Guattari similarly assert: “What romanticism lacks most is a people” and a ground through which they might resonate (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 340). For Jacques Rancière, poets like William Wordsworth early sought, in the context of a lapse of liberty and social cohesiveness ushered in by industrialisation and rural enclosure in Britain, a merging of poetry and utopian politics through countryside wandering. Yet post the French revolution an aesthetic solidarity with rural others in Britain became increasingly unimaginable (Rancière 2004: 21). Romantic sensibility (via Byron and Shelley particularly, but John Keats too, the close friend of Sarah Mathew’s older brother could be counted!) instead sought a new route for a restorative intersecting of poetic language with social setting. The romantic imagination turned, as Rancière noted, to the “ancient Mediterranean” as a source of ‘unsullied’ idealism, re-forging the “lyric ‘I’” via a “simulacra of the epic journey” in pursuit of a “lyric-epic speaker”, a self inherently divided between first-

person experience and an identification with a journeying other – a fictional self – called on to suture divergent places and times (Rancière 2004: 22-24).

Early accounts of Auckland’s similitude with Corinth likewise suggest that urban place can be thought to have passed through a lyric-epic speaker. Necessarily underpinning colonial pragmatics are projects of meaning-making, and Mathew, in appropriating the little acropolis at the town’s centre as a fulcrum for settlement, can be thought to have contributed to rising up on the mute speech of the (volcanic) earth here English-filtered, mythic discourse. For Leatherbarrow, surfacing meaning this way takes as source a founding contest between earth and sky, with Zeus for instance subduing chthonic forces by *drooping-over* the earth a matrimonial veil (Leatherbarrow 2004: 120). Map-making, like a textile layered across the world, invokes the Greek notion of *techné* - the “knowledge, energy, or work whereby something comes into appearance” (Leatherbarrow 2004: 120). Yet such labour implies bringing out of the domain of the unknown coordinating, perceivable characteristics - voice in fact - even if, as Leatherbarrow noted, beneath appearances “‘things themselves’ are always (and finally) inaccessible” (Leatherbarrow 2004: 119). Orientating, if not overcoming, inaccessible knowledge is given force with Zeus’ sending from the far ends of the earth two eagles in search of the world’s centre. With Delphi found and founded as this pivotal place, a place of oracles and chthonic-inspired voices, the marker of this marriage – of all subsequent summoning of earth and sky in union – is the *omphalos*, “a protuberance in the ground or an ovoid stone” whose bulging pregnancy is inscribed with the coils of an encircling python, that symbol of life perpetual rising from the treasury or storehouse of death (Vernant 2006: 179, Leatherbarrow 2004: 124).



**Fig. 08**  
Anonymous (1842). Plan of Auckland as it Stood in January, 1842 (traced from the original) [Detail, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZ Map 4601]

Mathew, even before the 1841 plan was completed, inscribed for the city to come such a navel or marker point about which his circus and quadrants were to be inscribed. An early plan of the settlement in 1842 shows a protean street layout and buildings, including the assembled Government House, but in an unassigned space axial to Victoria Street and what would become Princes Street, a small triangle labeled “Pole” marks the residual centre from which the whole territorial ensemble would have been spun (Fig. 8). As Dr S. M. D. Martin, the editor of the *New Zealand Herald and Gazette*, wrote:

On the top of that range the Surveyor planted a pole, and from that pole, as a centre, he described a number of circles to which he gave the names of quadrants, circuses and crescents, which he still further distinguished by calling each of them after some particular friend or favourite. With the exception of the spot on the top of the ridge, there was not an inch of level ground occupied by those circles, or cobwebs, as they were properly termed. (as cited in Platts 1971: 28)

The cobweb reference Diane Brand (2011: 430) has read as concern over a “sinister evocation of nature” in the plan. In line with the classicism implicit in a lyric-epic sensibility at work in the protean capital, it warrants considering this unnatural naturalism further. Certainly a Greek correlate is easily enough found in Arachne – a renowned young weaver who challenged Athena, the patron of Athens, to a contest and who, on winning, was turned into a spider forced to weave interminably. In this doubling of weavers and weave-types (mortal versus immortal, human betrayal versus godly heroism) is found a dichotomous relation between light and dark. If Athena, the goddess without a mother – who therefore was never “nursed on a shaded lap” – is only ever turned to the sky, Arachne – never nurtured elsewhere than in the shaded halls of women – can be thought to denote the underside of what Zeus veils in his marriage of (textile) meaning and terrain. In other words, she denotes the unruly forces of the subsoil or the sheltering inner hollow of the *omphalos* itself understood as the generative hearth or oven – an association aptly resonating with Rangipuke’s volcanic origin and, as the Māori place-name suggests, an inhabited, fertile mound bulging skyward.

While classicism implies a “form-substance relationship” that attempts to draw universals out of matter, romanticism’s identification with the subsoil and territorial setting induces an insistent questioning of founding and foundation. This is because territorial assemblages (the weave) and the earth remain irrevocably disjoined. As Deleuze and Guattari argued, romanticism is attenuated to hear a deeper utterance, “the deep, eternal breathing of the earth” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 339) – a breathing that

renders matter more than a substance amenable to formation; it is found to be expressive in its own right (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 340). Concomitantly, in its mobilisation of the picturesque garden, romantic classical urbanism rests on questions of character and cultivation and the forming power of settings and situation. Hence if classicism held to a system of universal ideals informing phenomena, landscape cultivation understood inner form and the figures it engendered as instances of variation and relation with a vital principle implicate in nature itself (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 340 & Leatherbarrow 2004: 162). As Leatherbarrow found in the Third Earl of Shaftsbury's dialogue "The Moralists", the picturesque saw nature itself as the unity of all forms, an order in other words "hidden beneath or behind the changing and chaotic appearance of the figures in the *uncultivated* landscape" (Leatherbarrow 2004: 165; emphasis added). As such, picturesque cultivation entails drawing from nature as "a pure self", purified figures corresponding to the variations it fosters (Leatherbarrow 2004: 165 & 167).

Yet on the shores of the Waitematā, rather than the vegetal cultivation, at stake was something closer to geological character, or to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's phrase, a nature of "the matter-flow of the subsoil" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 412). A classical-romantic alloy then is catalysed at the interface of terrain, bringing the smooth folds and fluid ejections of the earth – its deep, slow rhythms – into contact with abruptly striated, built space – a relation Deleuze and Guattari, in the context of alchemy, metallurgy, and metalwork, termed "holey space" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 413-414).

## Cutting out a town

Plainly enough, the territoriality at work in the new capital's founding was strikingly interval-producing and intercalated in nature. Take for instance the original gift of 3000 acres Ngāti Whātua made to the colonial government. Triangular in form, the undulating terrain itself constituted something like a deep surface densely covered in regenerating bush and tree ferns. Nested behind the northern-most coastal edge of the gift, the plan itself amounted to something like an image refuge cut into a broader territorial hospitality, a lyric-epic image repertoire regularly 'Georgian' at its centre but giving way to curiously angled geometries and marriage with existing Māori walking tracks at its perimeter.

More broadly, Tāmaki, severely depopulated and vacated from about the 1820s due to inter-tribal conflict, was cautiously being re-settled and occupied by Ngāti Whātua. Through alliances and *tuku rangatira*, or the chiefly gift of use rights, old hurts and scores were gradually being settled. In parallel with these intercalated gestures, missionary interventions similarly sought to bridge divisions in pursuit of souls but also land, and prior to the capital's arrival, Tāmaki was being competitively divided up by what amounted to missionary-merchants pressed into service by various denominational missions (Stone 2001: 154). It was this territorial flux that prompted Ngāti Whātua to gift land to the new Governor, partly to summons a potentially protective agent, but also to share, in line with *tuku rangatira*, the resourcing advantages of the pakeha (Kawharu 2001). Yet what Hobson charged his deputy William Symonds with acquiring were indefeasible title to the gifted land and additional packets promised by Ngāti Whātua, an action that turned gifts into purchases, purchases that rendered its foreign guest an interloper without bound. As such, territory was made a field capable of being speculatively mined, first by the State and then private owners.

If capitalist rivalry, as Deleuze and Guattari noted, in fact gets played out at the level of a contest between towns and States themselves, the proclamation of Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland as capital precisely served to head off the action of instant townships initiated by private investors and settlers. Far from anti-capitalist, it was the State itself that propagated and perpetuated a capitalist solution in New Zealand, by overcoding, capturing, and orchestrating the flows of property and extractive production – production Belich (2007) saw as comprising a three-legged stool comprised of wool supply, gold rushing, and colonial "progress industries". The latter – amounting to public works ("roads, bridges, railways, postal and telegraphic communications, and port facilities": Belich 2007: 349) intended to overcome distance and obstacles to progress via military action – bear on the fate of the Felton Mathew Plan. In accordance with the edict of Lord Russell, Secretary of the Colonial Office in London, that frugality rule in the new capital (Stone 2001: 268) the plan failed to originate urban form precisely because it was that superfluous gesture necessarily remitted to the future, a future deferred on the basis that bare land speculation was itself designed to fund the infrastructural needs of the town and its axiomatic connections nationally and globally. If the plan can be thought to ambition a certain civilising of its impending citizenry, its abandonment nevertheless hangs over the city as defunct promise and prompt still.

Colliding on the Tāmaki Isthmus in the 1840s then are three territorial regimes or ideas of settlement, each, if Deleuze and Guattari (2000) are followed, anticipating and countering the other: the first amounted to a pre-European proto-urbanism, a territoriality defined by an ongoing tribal weave of filiation and alliance that never stabilises in the manner of property ownership but which maintains the earth as a body in common; the second amounted to the remnants of despotic regime enacted in the name of a sovereign and under whom all meaning and indeed territoriality are indexed as infinite debt; and thirdly, a mercantile/capitalist impetus (or "civilizing regime") that induces flows of commerce with only a minimum territoriality – that of towns to better switch, accelerate or concentrate flows.

To the extent, as Arendt has argued, bourgeois and State interests merge according to an imperialist "law of expansion", they do so on Hobbes' terms, with "the private interest [made...] the same with the publique" – in short, the only measure of success is the bridging everywhere of sites of resistance to a profit system taken in its narrowest, most atomised sense (Arendt 1976: 139). Topography, once the engine of artisan production in the medieval cities (through the percolating and macerating effects of 'wet technologies') and the key imprinter of (high-low) urban form, historically gets emptied of all telluric capacity under these conditions. Like the *glacis militaire* (or sloping field of fire accompanying city fortifications) and surrounding rural 'marchland' of the *ancien régime*, terrain is ideally evacuated of all frictional impedance. As Didier Gille has put it, the militarised countryside aspired to by the prince or lord was made to merge with the merchants' "furrowing of the world" in the interests of commerce (Gille 1986: 254-255). Everything is boiled down to commerce and its enabler, the conduits of transfer. Moreover, all conduct is measured by its appropriateness to the regulated flow of persons, commodities, and capital. As Nick Land succinctly expresses the colonial marriage of racism and commerce: the metropolis is crafted as an apparatus for commodification, but on the basis that "the primordial anthropological bond between marriage and trade is dissolved" thereby dislocating filiation and alliance in favour of the radically truncated alliances of monetary exchange (Land 2011: 72). At stake in the shift from sovereign societies to capitalist ones is the freeing of wealth from forms of arrest or stagnation – things like palaces – and the

metamorphosis of gold – as the bearer of an irrevocable citizenry filiation with the sovereign – into freer forms of monetary value. As Gille described, money is made “the means of measuring [all] human relationships”, with producers – separated from topography and the older telluric processes – becoming wage earners floated across urbanised places without root (Gille 1986: 273).

## Undergrounding

If the gift of hospitality then in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland resolved itself in extraordinary speculative land profits, what benefited the town was an infrastructural furnishing of the city, a furnishing that was territorially expansive in nature. Opening up fronts in many directions – against disease, against insufficient water, against rising resistance from Māori to further land annexation, against tide and weather, etc. – programmes of public work in service of a progress economy can be thought of as overwriting and overcoming a topographical order with an abstract, topological one. At stake in this model is the idea of uniform, regulated motion, and towns across the 19<sup>th</sup> century became subject to this circulatory mandate at every level. Mathew, not entirely immune to the smoothing of topography for mercantile ends, nevertheless left open a telluric potency in terrain, one whose underside surfaced lyrically. On the other hand, such dream-work was fated to travel against the flow of an expansionist mythology, an outward streaming towards Kipling’s world’s end, a totality in fact refurbished for world politics and given the form, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, of a “single City, megalopolis, or ‘megamachine’ of which States are parts, or neighborhoods” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 434-435). The consequence at a local level, as Gille noted, is that streets start to look like pipes, and they function like pipes too, putting traffic of every hue into infinite circulation (Gille 1986: 274-275).

The closing in of the Ligar Canal is paradigmatic in this regard, for it allowed the street to transport unimpeded by the inclemency of weather and tide. But with its closing over too came a foreclosure of Mathew’s particular vision for Auckland. Further, canalisation and a topological transformation of territory aligned with what Gille saw as the merchant’s “ideal of displacement as instantaneous transfer” – an ideal necessitating the refurbishment of topography in favour of a profit motive (Gille 1986: 257). Queen Street’s eventual makeover as the city’s ‘golden mile’ stands as something like an alchemistic transformation of the ditch it once was, and in turn models a capitalisation and metropolitan becoming not only of Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, but in key ways, the country itself. As a consequence, the early collective planning-in of a lyric-epic sensibility took a private turn; the ‘nature’ of the Isthmus as a holey space capable of being brought to the surface in service of a revised peopling was buried in a (land) rush, leading not to condensed place but a fiscal savagery parceling out settlement, lot by lot. With Dr Martin’s cobweb quip in mind, this shift can be understood as something like a new distribution of domestic shade. For where Mathew’s plan shows a subtle shadowing of ground topography by parted together buildings - terraced construction manifesting ground as a substratum in concert – the abstract parceling out of lot boundaries rendered settlement a matter of private ‘platforming’ and incremental shadowing, dwelling by dwelling.

A politics is at work in this alternate distribution of shadow too, for if, as Mumford depicted it, the relative uniformity of the Georgian terraces facing London’s burgeoning residential squares testified to a certain “unified attitude towards life” and with it a “class cloak” designed to cover over the

“emerging disparities, rivalries, and enmities” of a merchant class on the rise (Mumford 1984: 453), such class cohesiveness was precisely Martin’s target when referring to Mathew’s naming of streets according to ‘friends and favourites’. And while the cobweb reference rests on the radial tracery of Mathew’s crescents, it might also be regarded as a sort of knowing, gothic reference – in fact that version of the picturesque (gothic revival) already calling time on romantic classicism at ‘home’ in the 1830s. The rustically remade villa – one end of the town-country continuum Nash established for the Regent – is what won the day in the intersecting of aristocratic models and “the disorderly competitive enterprise” remaking cities (Mumford 1984: 458). The detached dwelling – as popularised cottages for the middle classes – ambioned its own purchase on ‘nature’ with a plethora of prospect-gathering features like verandahs, loggias, bay-windows, turrets, etc. (Hitchcock 1987: 353-355). Yet it also ‘bent’ nature away from its initial romantic framing as a vast counter-reservoir to enlightenment knowing: an unconscious of sorts, or, as Paul Bishop has put it, a domain of “reason beyond reason” (Bishop 2010: 28). Pocketed and privately owned, sub-urban nature anticipates and parallels a rendering personal of the unconscious itself – a desiring-production entirely consistent with Deleuze and Guattari’s “civilising regime”. As such, the shaded domestic lap becomes a second order image of the social in total, an image where, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, the (nuclear) family is made a simulacra of the entire capitalist enterprise: “‘Mister Capital, Madame Earth’ and their child the Worker” (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 264). By these terms the territorial inscription apposite to colonisation runs all the way into private persons where paternal despotic signs and maternal territorial ones settle on a “divided, split, castrated ego” (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 265). If in Deleuze and Guattari’s account it is “Oedipus that colonises us” all, it is so on the basis that the filiations and alliances defining social production are radically truncated and instead funneled through the family – itself planted outside the social field but set up as a *subaggregate* modeling the social in miniature (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 265). As such it becomes the focal point for capturing the ever-proliferating commercial flows, ‘grounding them’, but also for further proliferating them through the production of desires incubated by images of despotic, territorial, and subjective lack (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 266). Surfaced lot by lot at Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland - not coincidentally as its defining territorial image - are ever-expanding, picturesque property deployments, themselves reading like so much gold dust coveted by a suburban *petite bourgeoisie*. Of the ‘cobwebs’ comprising Mathew’s proposed epic-lyric inscription, while they failed to impress themselves on the Isthmus directly, they were fated instead to persist in that place between the earth and dwelling, in other words, in that hollowed space of the Victorian subfloor where the social and the soil are perpetually undercut.

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## Endnotes

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1           Keats' narrative poem *Lamia* (1819) set in Corinth offers pointed example

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