

CHAPTER THREE
LANDSCAPE: SYMBOLIC GEOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICS OF
CODING

The present chapter aims to explore the construction of the colonial northeast as landscapes in select colonial texts of travel and expedition. The chapter is informed by the hypothesis that although articulated through multiple sensibilities and narrative channels, the construction of colonial space is often an ideologically determined act. Given (a) that colonial writing is a site of colonial space production and, (b) that landscape is one of the key instruments to facilitate the conversion of space in colonial writings, the chapter tries to explore the politics of landscape production. To this extent, the chapter makes an attempt to explore the possibilities of tracing out the politics of landscape construction as reflected in the given context as well as the transformation of land and landscape into recognizable paradigms.

The body of exploration and expedition narratives is an important area of colonial discourse. Patterned along variegated paradigms, travel and exploration are not only seen as important instruments of colonialism but also as key participants in its politics of space production. It is also important to note that visual appropriation is the foremost conduit of colonising space through exploration. To this extent, landscape is one the foremost forms of the visual appropriation of space in colonial travel and expedition texts.

As suggested above, colonial travel and expedition writing is an important site to explore the colonial politics of appropriating space through its transformation into landscapes. To this end, the chapter picks up four texts that explicitly deal with the theme of travel and interior exploration, namely, Major John Butler's *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (1855), R. G. Woodthorpe's *The Lushai Expedition* (1873), James Johnstone's *Manipur and Naga Hills* (1896), and William Griffith's *Travels in Assam, Burma, Bhutan, Afghanistan and the Neighbouring Countries* (1847).

Butler came to Assam in the year 1837 to serve as an official under the East India Company. His text recounts tours and travels, basically expeditionary in nature that Butler undertook as the Principal Assistant to the Commissioner of Nowgong district in the newly acquired province of Assam. The narrative recounts punitive expeditions led by Butler against the tribes of the Naga Hills as well as North-Cachar and Nowgong. The narrative fits into the familiar pattern of frontier discourse. It will not be inappropriate to view Butler as a vanguard of colonial penetration. Woodthorpe's narrative, on the other hand, is an account of colonial expeditions to the Lushai Hills, at present in the Indian

state of Mizoram, with the stated aim to contain raids on British territory. It should be read primarily as a goal-oriented narrative of conquest, a feature it shares with Butler's work. James Johnstone's *Manipur and Naga Hills* recounts his visits to the royal court of Manipur as resident commissioner for many years. William Griffith came to India in 1832, and was appointed as an assistant-surgeon by the East India Company. In the year 1835, he was attached to the Bengal presidency and was selected to visit and inspect the tea-forests of Assam. His narrative is viewed, in this study, as a transitional text that marks the shift, in terms of the construction of space, of the northeast from series of landscapes to a cluster of territories.

It is important to note that all these texts are written by men in colonial military service. As expected, their narratives revolve around the theme of military expeditions, although in Johnstone's account the focus is not a retaliatory expedition. It is not unusual that these narratives present unequivocal cases of heroism and masculinity, in a way creating a network of what Robert Young in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* terms as "white mythologies" (2). Clearly, these narratives accommodate the parade of colonial heroism. However, the expeditions that these narrative recount, do not restrict their purview to military activities alone. Instead, as evidence in the texts suggests, they appropriate larger cultural roles of domination, serving as strategic colonial apparatuses in a strategic site. Second, in almost all of these texts, the campaign narrative also includes interior exploration of difficult and dangerous tracts. It is these forages that determine the layering of the imperial gaze and eventually influence the organization of space as landscape. In this sense, it is not inappropriate to view Butler and his compatriots as what Mary Louise Pratt terms as "capitalist vanguard" (*Imperial* 146; also see Beinart 7). These texts, it is argued here, not only illustrate the ideological underpinning of colonial economic and military interest but also circulate a new kind of imperial energy. This energy is often derived from the transformation of existing space into a certain kind of landscape. As a result, ideologies that go into the production of landscapes in these narratives proliferate further justification of economic prioritization by, and, of space production.

I

As stated earlier Butler's narrative *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (hereafter referred to as *Travels*), makes use of most of the formal features of frontier

narratives. The principal motif that runs through Butler's narrative of the frontier is that of the wild. In fact, the entire textual trajectory of construction of the region as a natural and cultural landscape is already implicated in the notion of the wild. It is important to note that the idea is used both as a descriptive term as well as a symbolic tool in the text. Once set into motion, this idea cum metaphor turns into an ideological enframing.

Butler calls in the metaphor of the wild in the preface of his narrative while he describes his narrative as an attempt to describe the "habits, customs and manners of the *wild* tribes of the hills" (Preface; emphasis added). It is noteworthy that almost every colonial travel text dealing with the northeast hurriedly introduces the region as a 'wild' space. For instance, almost five decades after Butler writes his narrative, the colonial ethnographer L. A. Waddell begins his narrative *The Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley* (1901), by referring to the northeast as a wild territory: "Few of the *wilder* parts of the world, still left, preserve such a vast variety of *savage tribes* of such great ethnological interest as the mountainous valley of the mighty Brahmaputra" (1; emphasis added). In a similar vein, James Johnstone also begins his narrative by readily referring to the 'wild' ethos of the place (1). R. G Woodthorpe also frames the regions as a hide-out of "fierce and predatory" tribes (2). It is possible to suggest that the metaphor of the wild regularly functions as a trope in these texts of travel and expedition.

In Butler, the trope of the wild is deployed and redeployed to represent the natural landscapes of the northeast. Butler often does this by posing as an imperial picaro, or a self-dramatizing "experiential hero" encountered in frontier discourse (Pratt 77). What is more important in his narrative is the attempt to produce what Mary Louise Pratt terms as "density of meaning", a key colonial strategy of landscape-production (150, 204). It is important to recall that Pratt identifies three strategies that go into the production of landscapes in colonial travel writings. These are- first, "aestheticisation" of the landscape by a constant playing out of binaries where the colonized landscape is always negativized; second, a constant production of "density of meaning" through the use of adjectival modifiers, nominal colour expressions, in short, adding material referents to landscape; third, reproduction of the relationship of mastery between the viewing subject and the landscape, in other words, enticing the landscape in a relationship of domination.

It is important to investigate the ways Butler makes an overpowering use of the trope of the wild to construct the northeast as a landscape. It is also important to recognize that

evoking the 'wild' is not an innocuous especially in light of the predominant use of the idea as a colonizing trope within the cultural imaginaries of European colonialism. It could be suggested that the very foundation of colonialism is the spatial binary between nature and culture. In other words, colonial imaginings regularly identify the colony to nature and an opposite to culture. In other words, nature is always framed as the contrast or threat to culture. While documenting the natural, the colonial gaze makes regular comments on the cultural. The construction of landscapes is also entrenched in this nature-culture dichotomy. It is important to look at the way the text carefully convenes and develops this binary by enframing the frontier landscape into the percept of the wild.

Butler's *Travels* is divided into three parts. The first part deals with his expeditions in the highlands of Assam. Part two contains an account of the hill tribes of the frontier whereas part three offers an account of the Nowgong district. It is important to investigate the imperial sensibilities that determine Butler's encounter with the frontier landscape. It is also important to explore the tropes that go into the transformation of space into a series of landscapes in his text. It is important to recall what Mary Louise Pratt terms as "negative aesthetic" (150), and "anti-aesthetic" (149), in her study of the politics of landscape in imperial travel writings. Pratt argues that the production of landscapes in colonial travel writings operates through these strategies. It is suggested that colonial travel texts design tropes or rhetorical ploys not only to generate a density of meaning but also to create an impression of semantic nullity or emptiness. It is done primarily to back claims of ownership over potentially colonizable space. In his book *The Rhetoric of Empire*, David Spurr refers to acts of "negation" and "insubstantialization" as political tropes that are regularly used to back claims of control over colonized spaces (3). An overpowering use of material referents to landscape is a subtle ploy employed in colonial travel writings to generate a density of meaning. Butler uses it as a regular tactic: "Here, again, *it fell to my lot* to take up my residence with my family at the *desolate* and *remote* station of Saikwah" (1; emphasis added). Again he writes: "A *dreary* trip of six week's tracking up against a *rapid* stream, with *heavy* west-country boats, brought us to our destination. We were fortunate in meeting with a *small* bungalow, made of bamboos, grass, and reed walls; but it was *void of the luxury* of a door" (2; emphasis added). The production of the density of meaning involves what Pratt calls aestheticisation. Interestingly, the colonial politics of landscape construction begins

by creating aesthetic categories through an abundant production of binaries that answer to a system of values alien to the place. For instance, the narrative foregrounds images of a dreary and desolate setting as if it is obligatory for the landscape to be crowded and fully inhabited. In other words, the description of the landscape already foregrounds a kind of deviance and exception in the landscape, especially in the light of chains of adjectives of unwanted attributes.

Interestingly, in Butler's text, the frontier landscape materializes as an unexciting, lifeless ennui-scape. It is important to note how those almost unsettling moments of distress and ennui keep on recurring throughout the narratives to cast a dystopian ambience onto the landscape. For instance, Butler writes:

The forest was of precisely the same character as yesterday, not a vestige of any habitation or a human being was seen between Mohung Dehooa and Dheemahpoor, a distance of thirty miles. A more *dreary* and *desolate* wilderness I seldom traversed in any part of Assam. It seemed totally *devoid of man, beasts, or birds; a death-like stillness everywhere prevailed, broken only by the occasional barking or halloo of the ooluck or ape...* we felt little depressed and all hailed with joy the Dhunseeree river at this season of the year about thirty yards wide, and navigable for small canoes till December, as far as Dheemahpoor. (17; emphasis added)

Desolation and distance emerge as the most predominant trope of transforming the frontier into a series of landscapes. It is important to examine the issue at hand from the perspective of the ideological function the trope of the wild fulfills. It should also be noted that the trope of desolation is only an extension of the archetypal myth of the colony as wild. Perhaps it is imperative to look at a few instances of more direct and passionate enframing of the frontier landscape as a wild space in the text. For instance, Butler writes: "That a soldier should be exposed and suffer privation is a matter of course, but when I saw a lady and child put to these shifts... in what has been truly termed a *howling, desolate wilderness*"(3; emphasis added). On another occasion, he writes: "In these *wild, remote* lands... for once I felt my comforts had been abridged on this occasion" (7; emphasis added). Throughout his narrative Butler keeps on exploiting concrete, material referents to generate aesthetic effect of a certain kind. Expressions like "a howling, desolate wilderness", "perils from the climate, wild beasts and demi- savages

in the hills” (3) convey the frightening face of the colony. The point is further illustrated by the following instance in Woodthorpe: “It was astonishing how soon a *waste, howling wilderness* of jungle was transformed into a pleasant camp” (117; emphasis added). In a similar fashion, recounting the journey to the Naga Hills Johnstone also refers to the difficulties to “get one’s followers to move from a civilized place, where there is a bazaar, into the jungle” (5), into the “wild solitude” of the “boundless forest” that the Naga hills are (10).

It is suggested by Pratt that the foremost strategy to colonize space in travel and expedition writings is “desemancizing” and “resemanticizing” the colonized space (Pratt 31). What Pratt suggests is that the imperial gaze empties pre-colonial space of its semantic substance and invests the same with ideologies of the Empire. In this connection, Pratt mentions that a frequent ploy is to frame the colonized landscape as “empty and depopulated” (186). In Butler attempts to transform the northeast as a blank landscape is illustrated by the following passage:

On leaving Kachooamaree, we had a *dreary* march of fifteen miles through a *dense tree jungle*...the scenery here is *very wild*, and the fall of the river over a ledge of rocks over a narrow gorge of low hills cannot be less than sixty or seventy feet with a noise that can be heard at a great distance, and after its fall, as it dashes over innumerable boulders for a distance of hundred and fifty yards, the *gloomy scenery* around is divested of its *monotony*. (15; emphasis added)

Similarly, he writes.

The whole route was through a *dark, damp, chilly, gloomy* forest with small undulating hills, and *neither the sky nor sun was seen throughout the day*. *Our road was a mere footpath*, and the forest so thick that we could not see ten paces before us. On reaching our camping ground, by the aid of the coolies, we cut down the jungle... we retired to rest, rather disgusted with our position, but glad it was no worse. (16; emphasis added)

What come out very strongly in these instances are layers of sub-texts subtly convened through the regular employment of a negative aesthetic. The tendency to represent the northeast as an aura of perpetual desolation and inertia is best viewed as a prelude to intervention and transformation. If emptying the landscape of human presence, in most

occasions, is an effective tool of colonizing space, so is the constant suggestion of the absence of signs of human effort and industry. For instance, the overwhelming sights of the jungle become a powerful signifier of native indolence. Not merely a wild, unattended landscape, the jungle, despite its challenging ambience, is also a temptation.

Butler's narrative foregrounds the frightening face of the colony. It is possible to suggest that the images of dystopian hardships reiterated throughout the text only complement the trope of unease. The frontier transforms into a space of ordeal; a trial-ground for colonial masculinity. Butler writes: "The Principal Assistant of a district... exposed to many perils from the climate, wild beasts and demi- savages in the hills" (4). Again, he writes:

Never shall we forget what we endured from the heat and mosquitoes, the thermometer had risen to ninety-six degrees and the ill-famed Kullung river [in Nagaon district of Assam]swarmed with mosquitoes; and as we were not able once to put foot on shore, we were well nigh devoured by the voracious and venomous insects.(8)

As a landscape, the frontier primarily emerges through the trope of disruption and hostility in Butler. This is obvious in the construction of the hilly landscapes. The hills in the region are viewed primarily as a safe haven for the forces of disruption and anarchy. Viewed through the dichotomy of civilization and savagery, the hills emerge as the hostile 'other' to civilized territories in the plains. Butler writes:

I had scarcely assumed charge of the division; orders suddenly came enjoining me to be prepared to conduct a military expedition into the Angahmee Nagah country bordering on the territory of Muneepoor and Burmah. The object of the expedition was to meet the Angahmee Nagah chiefs, and by a conciliatory intercourse, to prepare them to co-operate with me in repressing their annual murderous and marauding incursions against our more peaceable subjects; to survey and map the tract of country in question, and to open a regular communication with Muneepoor and Now-Gong, through the Angahmee country via Dheemahpoor, Sumookhoo-Ting, Popleftongmaee, and Yang, which would facilitate trade, improve the condition of the hill tribes, and eventually lead to the abandonment of savage habits, and the peaceable and prosperous settlement of this barbarous tribe. (9)

On this occasion Butler is fascinated by the prospect of economic incentives. In other words, he acts as a capitalist vanguard. In a way, Butler transforms the northeast into a resource frontier of the Empire. In another instance of colonial foray, Butler writes:

In the vicinity of Rajapo-mah [in Nagaland] great numbers of tea-trees were observed growing luxuriantly in the jungle, some twelve or fourteen feet high; but we did not discover that the Nagahs ever drink tea...The afternoon was passed in receiving visits from the chiefs; and accepting their presents of elephant's tusks, spears, and cotton cloths, as tribute, or mark of allegiance to the British Government. (24)

Similarly, Butler writes: "The views yesterday and today, as we crossed over the high range to Mozo-mah, about 5, 250 feet above the level of the sea, were very beautiful. *We were delighted to see numerous villages east of Mozo-mah [in Nagaland], and a good deal of rice cultivation*" (27; emphasis added). What is obvious is the regular inscription of desire and apprehension on the landscape. In other words, the landscape gaze is a shuttlecock between these apparently opposite sentiments.

The unwelcoming and depressing ambience of the frontier landscape is reinforced further by repeatedly invoking the trope of a repelling social landscape, which often manifest in the text as a series of offensive impressions and sights of poverty and destitution. In an attempt to extend the trope of dystopia from the natural to social landscapes in the region, Butler writes:

Our path was *rough, winding, and difficult*, through *thick tree forest and high grass or reeds unvaried by the signs of cultivation or villages*; and the ground in many places being still very miry, the effluvium from the rotten vegetation was most offensive...after wading through a very high *reed jungle*, we at last, came to his dwelling, a *wretched grass hut* situated on the edge of a tank choked with rank weeds, in the middle of an extensive and *poorly cultivated* grass plain. A few *straggling huts*, inhabited by Cacharees and dependants of Senaputtee, formed all that could be called a village; a few pigs, fowls, and ducks, were wandering about, but *there were no signs of comfort* around any of the huts; no gardens or enclosures; all appeared *poverty-stricken*, as well as *sickly*, in this *wilderness of jungle*. (12; emphasis added)

The imperial landscape gaze almost tries to appropriate the surveyed space through claims to settle, order and meaning. Although not obvious like in the previous instances, there is always an agenda of appropriation viably designated by Pratt as ‘imperial fantasy’ (207). Often, a trope of negation is immediately backed by claims of ownership. For instance, Butler writes:

Toleeram [a tribal chief] does not keep up any military or police force, and his power is very limited; his two sons now jointly manage the country, but the time may not be far distant, when the British Government may be under the necessity of taking it under its own protection and pensioning off the two sons, a policy that is in every way to be desired if the welfare of the people is consulted. At present, it is a serious obstacle to the settlement of the Nagah territory, and the extension of our subjects towards the southern frontier. (15)

The narrative continues to employ a negative aesthetic in its description of the ruined city of Dheemahpoor (19-20). “On the west side of the Dhunseeree near the fort, there is a large tank completely choked with grass jungle...there are four large tanks also surrounded by an almost impenetrable jungle” (20). It is evident that Butler transforms the northeast into a ruinscape or scene of decadence. To this extent, landscapes are forced to serve as proof of degeneration and to negate existing claims over space in favour of colonial claims of ownership.

As suggested earlier, it is not possible to keep the idea of landscape confined to what is conventionally viewed as natural landscape and overlook ways the narrative frames the social or cultural landscape of the frontier. The following passage reveals the disparaging register as well as the colonising sub-text that go into the framing of an apparently casual scene of encounter. Butler writes:

In the evening, the chief of Rajapo-mah came into camp and presented a few cotton cloths as a present. *In return I gave him a bottle of brandy and saw him clear out of camp, with which condescension he was quite delighted; but, being still apparently suspicious of his safety, I perceived that he kept turning around every minute to see if anyone was pursuing him.* (23; emphasis added)

The disparaging register that overwhelms the narrative’s construction of the colonized subjects is also seen in the following instance:

I was much amused by the action and gesture made by the chief on his being asked by me to allow his children to go to Now-gong to be taught in our schools. He declined the offer and said that he would rather part with his life than his sons, though I promised good treatment and plenty of handsome cornelian beads, the first consideration with a Nagah. (23-24)

The passage subtly convenes the colonising trope of native dull-headedness and cupidity. Voyeuristic pictures like the following illustrate it further. For instance, in the following passage the colonial voyeur gazes at what is otherwise an important cultural display:

We were much amused by the Nagahs performing their martial exercises for our diversion...and then suddenly throwing it with it considerable precision at an object fifteen or twenty paces distant, *halloing, yelling, and jumping* about with the greatest agility, as if in the presence of a foe.(24; emphasis added)

On a similar occasion, Butler observes: “It was pleasing to notice with what cheerful agility the Nagahs ran off with their *peculiar yelling noise, skipping* over the walls three and four feet high, to the wooded hills, to bring us in a supply of firewood” (27; emphasis added). It is not unusual that the passage is immediately followed by a self-congratulatory note: “We did not feel justified in rejecting the submissive demeanor and proffered tribute of this treacherous, savage clan” (29; emphasis added). Similarly, Butler writes: “The chief of both the villages attended on us, and presented cotton cloths, spears, fowls, and eggs as tribute or token of submission, and in return for their civility a little salt was distributed”(26). What these instances reveal is an attempt to convene what Pratt views as a relationship of mastery over colonized spaces.

It comes out very lucidly that the narrative frames the northeast primarily as a frontier to be opened up, overcome and eventually conquered. Although the insistence is throughout on the dystopian disposition of the landscape, in the text it serves only as a springboard for the parade of imperial valour. Probably the most apparent manifestations of the same are these occasions when the landscape itself is framed as hostile to the colonising self. For instance, the text offers an exhausted and minute account of perils of the thunderstorm, accidents on the Brahmaputra and the traveler’s heroic survival (6-7). The typology of colonial space could broadly be categorized into two- spaces of desire and spaces of fear. In the construction of the region as a frontier, perhaps the ‘other’ was Burma. It constantly features as a threat to the sanctified space of the colonial space.

Apprehensions of a Burmese inroad effectively accommodate the enframing of the region as a frontier space:

The route once opened, would expose central Assam to the cruel ravages of the Burmese, an old and inveterate foe...to send hostile parties to enter into the very heart of the unprotected southern frontier of Assam and centre of the valley, and carry the effeminate people as slaves...and unwise to open roads to admit enemies into the province. (35-36)

Butler writes:

Immediately on leaving camp, we ascended a long high hill, and wound over a precipitous ridge for some distance with many ascents and descents, through heavy grass and tree jungle. We then passed through the village of Lehah-mah, [Nagaland] consisting of thirty-nine houses. The chief came to meet us, and presented to us fowls, eggs, cloths, &c., as tribute, and on receiving a few conch shells, beads, knives, scissors, and handkerchiefs, as a return present, he was quite delighted, and went back to the village and brought us a basket of apples...we saw some fine peach trees close to the village, and met with many oak and fir trees; coffee in full berry was also abundant. (40)

What characterizes the production of landscapes at the site of the colonial encounter is the persistent shuttle of the landscape gaze between the encountered sight (place) and a background (space). In other words, it is a parallel negation of the encountered landscape and simultaneously the imposition of imperial scripts over it.

In colonial situations, landscapes also serve as strategic knowledge. It is probably pertinent to revisit the thesis offered by James Hevia in his *The Imperial Security State* (2012). Hevia suggests that apparently innocuous forms of colonial knowledge such as surveys and route-books are best viewed as tools of strategic military knowledge. It is important to note that the coding of space as military landscape primarily consists of techno-scientific reflection on space as terrain. From this perspective, narratives of colonial travel and expedition are instances of reconnaissance framing landscapes as operational terrain. The following description of an Angahmee Nagah village in Butler's text is an instance of the coding of military space as landscape:

The villages are generally built on the highest and most inaccessible hills, north of the great range of mountains separating Assam from Muneepoor and Burmah. Every side is stockaded, and a ditch generally encircles the most exposed part of the village, which is studded with panjies. The sloping side of the hill is likewise not uncommonly cut down so as to form a perpendicular wall and thus fortified; these villages could offer serious resistance to any force assailing them without firearms. These positions, however, are frequently ill-chosen, being commanded by adjoining heights, from which the internal economy of the village can be viewed, and a well-judged attack with fire-arms would render opposition useless. (105-106)

This instance illustrates how the construction of landscapes in the text derives from a desire to create a cartography of accuracy and exactitude. This desire surfaces more obviously in the eagerness of the traveler to survey and incorporate the region into grids or frame of reference of European science (miles, hours, temperature, and height). This could also be viewed as an attempt to discipline space. Butler writes:

The two first marches to Koteeatoilee and Dubboka, about twenty four miles, were through a level country, studded with flourishing and populous villages and gardens, and intersected by streams and large lakes. We passed through immense sheets of fine-rice cultivation, and here and there small patches of sugar-cane. (10)

Likewise, he writes:

At half past seven A. M, we left Dubboka and crossed the Jummoonah river in small boats to the south bank in Tooleeram Senapittee's[a tribal chief]territory, and at once entered tree jungle, which we traversed for some miles. We then passed the two small, wretched-looking villages of Katkutea and Deohore, situated in extensive plains of high reed jungle, but only a few acres of land were brought under cultivation. Although the distance to Howrah-ghat, our encampment, was only ten miles, we were five hours on the road, as, in many places, we were obliged to cut open a footpath through the dense high reed jungle to enable us to get along at all. (11)

Butler's narrative participates not only in the construction of natural landscapes but also socio-cultural landscapes in the frontier. It is important to explore the ways the imperial gaze frames the domestic spaces of the colonized. Whereas as a natural landscape, the northeast is imprisoned into the trope of the wild in the text, domestic landscapes are incarcerated into the trope of vilification, manifest as recurring images of filth and squalor. In fact, in Butler, domestic landscapes are always framed through tropes of repulsion. Entrenched in hegemonic as well as culturally mediated notions of hygiene, domestic space also made to participate in constructing a geography of fear. It could also be viewed as a prelude to intervention. For instance, Butler's text paints the Naga household as an abominable space. Objects like spirit-tub, huge rice basket induce repelling impressions in the imperial traveler and eventually transform the landscape into a metaphor of 'otherness':

Planks of wood are arranged around the fire on the ground for seats, and fowls, pigs, and children, men and women, seen to have free access, the *filthy state* of their dwelling can, therefore, be imagined. In front of each house large stones are placed, on which the Nagahs delight in mornings and evenings to sit and sip, with a wooden ladle from a bowl, the most *offensive liquor* made of rice. (106; emphasis added)

On another occasion Butler writes:

The houses, though irregularly built, are generally in two lines, the gable ends of each row of houses projecting towards the main street. Into this everything is thrown and is being *the receptacle for the filth of the whole village*, consequently the odour is so *offensive* that it is scarcely possible to remain long in the main road. (106; emphasis added)

It is obvious that in the narrative domestic spaces in the northeast are converted not only into a series of pathogenic landscapes but also into a metaphor of civilizational or cultural deviance. For instance, gazing at Naga households Butler subtly employs the trope of vilification. He writes:

The pigs, fowls, wife and children, were *all huddled together*, with the grain in large bamboo baskets five feet high and four in diameter, in the same room. In one corner was a trough filled with some kind of fermented liquor made of rice,

which was thick and white, and most *offensive* to our olfactory nerves. In this trough they dip their wooden cups or gourd bottles, and all the morning the Nagahs lounge about in the sun in their little court-yards, and seated upon a high stone commanding some extensive view, sip this *abominable* beverage...the inside of the houses is exceedingly *filthy*. (31; emphasis added)

However, as suggested earlier, the most overriding trope that goes into the production of the northeast in Butler's text as a landscape is the idea of the wild. Whereas as a natural landscape, the northeast is framed as an untamed, wild space, as a cultural landscape it is constructed as an embodiment of tribal savagery. It is important to note that the hills are transformed into a metaphor of disorder. Recurring metaphors of violent raids and treacherous murders transform the hills of the northeast as a landscape of otherness. For instance, Butler writes:

No regular government can be expected to exist among wild uncivilized tribes, who are ignorant of the use of letters or the art of writing and whose dialects differ and are scarcely intelligible to the tribes on the adjoining hills, and whose leisure time is spent in the diversion of surprising each other in hostile attack, rapine and murder. (107)

Similarly: "When the Angahmees have nothing to do, they sit about on the tombs in groups, and pass the day in drinking spirits and gossiping, and forming plans for hostile inroads on their neighbours"(108). What these instances illustrate is a symbolic debasement and insubstantialization of the place as well as its inhabitants. As will be discussed in the next chapter such landscape-framings function as preludes to the subsequent moves of territory production. To elucidate further, the above passage apparently represents a physical sight of a Naga assemblage. But it could also be viewed as suggesting a moral geography. The headhunting Nagas, meeting at the graveyard, drinking, gossiping, and hatching mindless butcheries in a sportive mood as a leisurely amusement is a recurring image in a whole lot of nineteenth-century colonial representations. It is possible to suggest that the image of the Naga as the blood-thirsty head hunter of the northeastern hills is a product of colonial travel and expedition writings.

Butler's text transforms the northeast into a landscape of dystopia and a cornucopia. His text entices places in the region into metaphors of a cultural otherness. Space, framed

through this politically motivated semiotics of metaphors is transformed in the text into an allegory of otherness. However, such metaphors only act as a prelude to future imperial ambitions.

II

Colonial exploration narratives design even the very journeys from the imperial centre to the northeast frontier as a trope to augment the air of unease that marks the moment of actual encounter with the frontier. In other words, the construction of space in colonial travel writings starts even before the actual moment of encountering it. Often this agenda is pursued through the trope of anticipation or fantasy. It is also important to note that such tropes, in the present instance, are mobilized very often to project the to-be-encountered spaces as dystopias and hence as potential threats.

Johnstone's text frames the Naga Hills in a dystopian light. Even before beginning his voyage to the place the traveler writes: "I knew a large part of the district well, as one of the most malarious in India" (2). This very initial view of the hills, in a way, transforms these spaces into a pathological grid, and, by implication, a differential geography. This instance illustrates the excitement, on the part of the imperial traveler, to impose, in a cartographic manner, of Eurocentric medical and pathological labels on colonized landscapes. It is important to recognize that identifying or marking the Naga Hills as a malarious district is not an innocuous material reference. It also prepares passages for European corrective or remedial intervention and hence a potentially dominated space in those pathogenic hill territories. It is possible to suggest that there is a sustained attempt at prefiguring or foreshadowing of the to-be-encountered space as a to-be-overcome space. To sum up, the transit or in-between passage from the metropole to the fringe is used to reinforce the trope of un-ease that regularly haunts the frontier landscapes in these texts. In fact, the very proposal to visit the frontier evokes a response in them which is only suggestive of the air of unease the frontier as an imagined landscape is associated with. Like Johnstone, Butler also responds to his new assignments with certain disinclination and cynicism: "Here again it fell to my lot to take up my residence with the family at the desolate and remote station of Saikwah" (1). Again he writes: "It was again my fortune to be removed to the permanent charge of the Now-Gong District in Southern Central Assam" (7).

Similar to Butler's "dreary trip" (1) Johnstone's travel is an enduring dystopian riparian trip to the frontier that sets the tone for the enactment of imperial masculinity (2). As suggested by Metcalf, in colonial writings the frontier is often the site for the parading of "imperial masculinity" (106), which adds to the imaginative appeal of the frontier (145). The same trick is used as a preponderant tool to enframe landscapes in the studied texts. Pratt also identifies enacting scenes of heroic survival as a regular trope of constructing landscapes in colonial travel and expedition writing. Exploring the construction of frontier spaces nineteenth century colonial literature in India, Thomas Metcalf in his book observes: "The purely male world of the Frontier evoked for the British, the days of their boyhood where fantasies could be safely indulged, conspiracies imagined, and tribal risings confronted with a display of manly heroism" (147). From the very moment of embarking on his voyage towards the Hills Johnstone's is an attempt to conquer. Of special significance is the triumphant and self-congratulatory tone the scenes of arrival are narrated. Almost in a similar vein that Butler challenges and conquers the "howling," "roaring" and "merciless" Brahmaputra, Johnstone writes: "We halted at Gowhatty for the night, and early in the morning I swam across the river for the second time in my life, a distance of about three miles, as the current carried me in a slanting direction" (3). This could be seen as an attempt at conquering the 'Other'.

A key site of enacting and dramatizing colonial heroism, in travel writings, is the arrival scenes (Pratt 78). Pratt writes: "Arrival scenes are a convention of almost every variety of travel writing and serve as a particularly potent site for framing relations of contact and setting the terms of its representations" (78). It is worth looking at the instance when Johnstone dramatizes the play of his mastery and the submission of the colonized.

As we passed some road coolies, I began a conversation with the old Tekla (overseer) in charge, and asked him if he could get me a few oranges. He said, "Oh, no. They are all over." He then asked me how I came to speak Assamese so well. I said, "I have been in Assam before." He said, "Oh, yes, there have been many sahibs in my time," and he named several; "and then long ago there was a 'Baghe Khooah' sahib, I wonder where he is now?" I looked at him and said, "Ami Baghe Khooah" (I am the Baghe Khooah). The old man gazed equally hard at me for a moment and then ran in front of me and made a most profound obeisance. Having done this, he smilingly said, "I think I can find you some

oranges after all,” and at once ran off, and brought me some for which he refused to take anything. (4)

It is important to observe the preponderance of such episodes of enacting the colonial charisma and framing the northeast as space in essentially colonising terms. For instance, after landing at Nigrating, the traveler retraces his footsteps to the next station of halt, Golaghat, but always foregrounding the acts of benevolence done by him to the place and its people twelve years ago. The primary objects that fascinate the imperial traveler are the marks of imperial glories printed in the landscape. He writes:

We did not get to Golaghat till long after dark and pitched our tent on the site of the lines of my old detachment, which I had commanded twelve years before. What a change! Trees that I had remembered as small, had grown large, and some that were planted since I left, already a fair size. (5)

Similarly, he writes: “In the morning we received, a perfect ovation. People, who had known me before, crowded to see me and pay their respects, many of them bringing their children born since I had left. All this was pleasant enough and greatly delighted my wife” (5). This is another instance of self-valorization by imperial traveler. This kind of self-valorization is followed by classifying the space into civilized and otherwise. Johnstone writes: “It is always difficult to get one’s followers to move from a civilized place, where there is a bazaar, into the jungle, and henceforth our road lay through the jungle, the Nambor forest beginning about five miles from Golaghat”(5). In this instance, the anti-esthetic of neglect is performed through the trope of the jungle as an absence.

As the traveler approaches the hills, gradually a different landscape emerges. It is tropes of ruin and desertion that are immediately brought into service. Johnstone narrates: “However, off I started, and I hurried on to ... so as not to keep my wife waiting, but when I reached the spot, I found to my amazement that the village had ceased to exist, having, as I subsequently learned, been abandoned for the fear of the Nagas” (5).

In Johnstone, the foraying gaze of the capitalist vanguard is obvious. For instance, he writes: “The Nampoong is situated in a lovely spot amidst fine forest” (6). Again, he writes: The Nambor forest is noted for its Nahor or Nagessur trees, a handsome tree, the heart of which is a fine redwood, very hard and very heavy...it is very plentiful in parts of the forest between the Noonpoong and Golaghat”(6). In another instance of enframing

the landscape into imperial visions of incentives, the parading of imperial gallantry and the trope of ruin-scape, Butler writes:

The next morning, we set out for Borpathar, a village with a fine sheet of cultivation on the banks of the Dunseree...Here again, we received a perfect ovation, the people, headed by my old friend Hova Ram, now promoted to a Mouzadar, coming in a body, with fruits and eggs to pay their respects. The population had sadly diminished since my early days, the people having in many cases fled the country for fear of Naga raids. (7)

The traveller continues to look for and succeeds in discovering marks of Naga atrocity written on the deserted landscape. Reaching Dimapur, ruminating on a fine tank Johnstone represents the Nagah as a usurper: “This with many others near it, spoke of the days of civilization that had long since passed away before the Naga drove the Cacharee from the hills he now inhabits”(8). It is followed by an observation on the dilapidated, abandoned state of Dimapur: “It is a strange sight to see the relics of a forgotten civilization, in the midst of a pathless forest” (9). The relics of the old city wall acts as another evidence of Naga ruthlessness: “History tells us little about the origin of Dimapur, but probably it was once a centre of Cacharee [a tribe in Assam] civilization, and as the Angami Nagas advanced, the city wall was built, so as to afford a place of refuge against sudden raids”(9). Thus, in the text landscapes often enable conjectures and inferences.

An important aspect of the colonial landscape is the rendition of space in highly instrumental terms, almost with cartography like precision and exactitude. Like Butler, Johnstone also appropriates landscapes into a cartographic grid of time table and distance. For instance, he writes: “At last we reached Nigrating, and were landed on a dry sandbank five or six miles from the celebrated tea gardens of that name, and the nearest habitations” (3). It bears more significance in the light of the typical colonial imperative of reconnaissance or military intelligence. The following is an instance of constructing the landscape as a strategic terrain:

For the first eight miles our road was through a level forest country, with the exception of a piece of low-lying grassland, and at a place called Nichu Guard the ascent of the hill commenced. This entrance of the George through which the Diphoo Panee river enters the low lands is very beautiful, the stream rushing out

from the hills over a pebbly bottom, and it was a favorite encamping ground for us in our later marches...the road up the hill was in fair condition for men and elephants but did not admit of wheeled traffic. We accomplished the ascent, a distance of four miles, in about two hours, obtaining several lovely views of the boundless forest, on our way.(10)

The instrumental rationality which is the key instrument of the colonial politics of space-production continues to be employed and the traveler continues to transform spaces into administrative cartographies. For instance, the landscape of Samagudting is framed thus:

My first impressions of Samagudting were anything but favourable. It was eminently a “make-shift” place. It had been occupied by us a small outpost, from time to time, between 1846 and 1851, but it was never fit for a permanent post of more than twenty-five men, as the water supply was bad, there being no springs and only a few water holes which were entirely dependent on the uncertain rainfall...All articles of food were scarce, dear and bad, wood was enormously dear, and to crown all, the place was unhealthy and constantly enveloped in fog. (12)

What is noticeable here is the eagerness on the part of the traveller to itemize and eventually reduce a fully alive social place to the colonial designation of a post. The passage provides an instance of the panoptic landscape the colonial state perpetually pursues where the landscape is appropriated into the hegemonic grid of colonial logistics. In short, it illustrates how the imperial eyes gaze at the colonized landscape predominantly as terrain or strategic space with military suitability. A landscape, in these narratives, usually is nothing more than either an obstacle or prospect but it is always a logistical occasion. A landscape is always cast in terms of its suitability or unsuitability to be converted into colonial utilities, either as a ‘post’ or ‘station’. For instance assuming what Pratt terms as ‘monarch of all I survey’ vantage Johnstone gazes at Samagudting (in Nagaland) as a military station:

First, though never so cold in winter, as the plains, the temperature was never so high in the hot and rainy seasons; and when the weather was fine, it was very enjoyable. The views from the hills were magnificent. To the south, the Burreil range, from which a broad and undulating valley divided us. To the West, a long stretch of hills and forests. To the east, the valley of Dunseree, bordered by the

Rengma and Lotha Naga Hills, a vast forest, stretching as far as the eye could reach with here and there a large patch of high grassland, one of which many miles in extent, was the Rengma Naga hills, a grand elephant catching ground in old times, where many a noble elephant became a victim to the untiring energy of the Bengali elephant Phandits. (14)

Johnstone's is a land-scanning gaze of the capitalist vanguard foraging for opportunities to utilize colonized landscapes. The following passage is an instance of the employment of the monarchic trope by the traveler:

To the north, the view extended over a pathless forest, the first break being the Doboka Hills. Behind these, a long bank of mist showed the line of the Burhampooter, while on clear days in the cold weather, we might see the dark line of the Bhootan Hills, with the snowy peaks of the Himalayas towering above them. Altogether, it was a sight once seen, never to be forgotten. (14)

Another important component of colonial landscapes in the northeast is the construction of the region as a cartography battling ethnicities. Johnstone constructs the ethnoscape of the Naga Hills with some of the popular modalities of colonial ethnography. He often begins framing an ethnoscape by referring to the vagueness of origin of a tribe, an emphasis on their wandering and martial spirit, their utility as imperial utilities and inter-tribal feud. For instance, he writes: "The Cacharees were governed formerly by a race of despotic chiefs" (25). Not only the Cacharees (24-25), Johnson also transforms the Kukis into an ethnoscape (25-26). Here also the emphasis is on their bloodthirsty nature and despotic chiefs. "The Kuki chiefs are absolutely despotic and may murder or sell their subjects without a murmur of dissent" (27). Inter-tribal blood feud is the most visible frame of writing the frontier as an ethnoscape. Johnstone writes: "Blood feuds are common among all the hill tribes, but the system was carried to excess among the Angamis. Life for life was the rule, and until each of the opposing parties had lost an equal number, peace was impossible, and whenever members of one village met any belonging to the others, hostilities were sure to result" (29). This is a case of judging before checking.

As suggested earlier, colonial space is essentially the production of political and social space out of what is viewed as natural space. The construction of landscape, from that perspective, essentially involves the construction of cultural landscapes. Discussing the

construction of cultural landscapes Metcalf elucidates the “ordering principles” that determined the construction of space by the Empire in nineteenth century India. He argues that along with the political right of conquest, another narrative used to legitimize the colonial project was the invention of the colonized as the savage other by constructing the colony as a deviant space (2) through “a range of taxonomies” (5). In other words, colonial discourse created an array of polarities by mobilizing succinct political tropes. Such tropes range from those of “savagery” to those of laziness and “deceit” (6). The reference to the ‘indolence’ and ‘envy’ of people implied a measure of environmental determinism (32). One such preponderant trope to be employed was “oriental despotism” (7), ‘barbarism’ (35), deception (41) etc. For instance, Johnstone describes the food of the Nagahs derogatorily:

All kinds of animals are readily eaten by the Angamis, and those dying a natural death are not rejected. Dog’s flesh is highly esteemed. When a man wants to have a delicate dish, he starves the dog for a day to make him voracious, and then cooks a huge dish of rice on which he feeds the hungry beast. As soon as the dog has eaten his fill, he is knocked on the head and roasted, cut up and divided (32).

The traveler often uses far-fetched conjectures to reinforce the myth of the head-hunting proclivity of the Nagas: “To kill a baby in arms, or a woman, was accounted a greater feat than killing a man, as it implied having penetrated to the innermost recesses of an enemy’s country, whereas a man might be killed anywhere by a successful ambush” (30). It is reiterated again: “Every Naga who was able to murder an enemy did so and received great commendation for it by all his friends” (30). It is the savage temperament of the Nagah that makes him assert: “I attended Kutcherry and heard cases, often with a loaded revolver in my hand, in case of any wild savage attempting to dispute my authority” (19). This shows the extent to which colonial traveler participates in myth-making.

In *Postmodern Geographies*, Edward Soja highlights the instrumentality of space in projects of domination. Interestingly he argues that a particular type of territorial consciousness is engendered and endorsed by Eurocentric modernity (34). Soja’s observations hold significance for studying colonial space construction especially in the light of the possible collation between Eurocentric modernity and European colonialism. The hypothesis enabling such an observation is that certain metaphors sponsored by

Enlightenment-born Eurocentric modernity are regularly made to assist colonialist designs of space-production. It is suggested that colonial clichés like “tropical miasmata”, “oriental indolence” or despotism are illustrative of the ways geographies or imagined landscapes are often mobilized as a tool of othering, hiding beneath the text of “improvement” (Metcalf 17) the will of mastery over it. But whatsoever, it is an overpowering sense of “difference” that marks colonial imagining of the colonized territory (24). The creation of difference served the ideological “needs of the Raj” (67). Metcalf comments: “What gave thagi its distinctive appeal was the way it enabled the British to give voice to their own enduring fears and anxieties...Thagi thus became a metaphor for the representation of what they feared in India, the inability to know and control their colonial subjects” (41).

Johnstone’s text replicates most of the strategies framing the northeast into a series of landscapes, seen in operation in Butler. His text, in a way, could be seen as an extension of the aesthetics of negativization that informs the framing of landscapes in Butler. To this extent, Johnson’s narrative is not only entrenched in but also participates in the colonial politics of reducing landscapes into a metaphor of otherness.

III

R G Woodthorpe’s *The Lushai Expedition* is another nineteenth-century colonial campaign narrative in the northeast. Like Butler’s *Travels*, it is also a narrative of goal-oriented military travel and expedition. In keeping with the regularity and organized pattern that characterize a military campaign, the construction of landscapes in the text moves along regular patterns. It is perhaps explained by the fact that the account is by a person specifically attached to the campaign as a surveyor. It is not unusual that like the previous narratives, Woodthorpe also approaches the landscapes through certain ideologically shaped tropes.

It is only usual in a surveyor’s narrative that landscapes are essentially represented as terrain which is a foremost way to appropriate space as a strategic utility. Perhaps it explains the preponderance of logistics in the formulation of landscapes in the text. For instance: “Here crossing a *beautiful* stream of *clear* water, the *ascent* commenced, and a *stiff climb* it proved; a *sheer ascent of eighteen hundred feet*, with a *slope of three hundred and thirty two feet* the whole way. Arrived at the top, we had a *long five miles* to go over a *very uneven path*, ascending and descending alternately, never level” (62;

emphasis added). Similarly, he writes: “The path, as is the case along most of the ridges, runs through a *very open jungle*, till it reaches the site of the village, a large *bare gravelly spot*” (179; emphasis added). Or “The road onwards of Mynadhur was similar in character to that up to it, *precipitous and jungly*” (115; emphasis added). Likewise, he writes:

The road running along the Sonai is *very level* as far as Nagakhal, a stream at the foot of the hills *three miles* beyond Monierkhel. It first runs through a *very flat open country*, but below Nudigram it passes through *a large patch of a very high grass jungle*, beyond which it enters a forest, and so to Nagakhal, passing two clearances for gardens, Durmiakhal and Monierkhal. (64; emphasis added)

The passage points towards obvious attempts by the traveller to generate a density of meaning in the landscape. However, these seem to fit into the imperatives of military-strategic knowledge. To illustrate this, one could refer to phrases like ‘level’, ‘very level’, ‘very flat open country’ etc. The text also presents other similar instances wherein strategic precision knowledge is concealed as landscape. For instance, the following passage on the construction of military camps during the campaign illustrates the appropriation of landscapes as strategic knowledge:

All these stations were situated *close to the river’s edge*; a position by which an ample survey of water was secured, and the Commissariat’s boats were able to provide the troops with the necessary provisions every evening—the coolies being thus set-free for road-making. The rapids proved *passable* for boats up to two hundred mounds, though they were dragged through these with difficulty. (117; emphasis added)

Similarly, he writes: “The road as far as the Senvong range, followed a *tolerably easy* gradient, and lay through a slightly less difficult jungle that had been previously encountered. The principal difficulties which impeded its construction arose from the very rocky character of the hills. Water was met with in several places” (125; emphasis added) or “The Senvong range is a *long, lofty spur*...it is *tolerably open*” (131; emphasis added).

In fact, it is the “military-strategic imagination” that essentially defines the production of landscapes in texts like that of Butler, Johnstone and Woodthorpe (Hevia 9). In

Woodthorpe's text, there is a proliferation of both apparent and oblique military clues. For instance, he identifies potential passages: "The latter, now famous by reason of the frequent raids made upon it, is a *tolerable huge clearance*" (65; emphasis added). The traveler also forays for water sources, sojourn and other strategic positions:

On the highest point of the mountains we found, to our surprise, a large native bedstead by the path...It now serves as a convenient resting place on which the weary travelers may recline after their fatiguing climb, and from which *they may survey the smiling plains of Cachar spread out like a map* some three thousand feet below. (67; emphasis added)

This passage could be viewed as an instance of the enactment of the monarchic trope. There are other similar instances in the text. "Old Kholel, most admirably situated beneath one of the highest peaks of the range, where the narrow ridge, widening as it gradually rises to the hill, affords a site of half a mile in length and about three hundred yards in width, commanding a magnificent view of the Manipur"(130). Similarly, Woodthorpe writes:

From the higher points of this range, the first extensive view of the Lushai country was obtained. Far away, to the north-east, stretched the Munipur ranges; to the east, the distant Lushai Hills, rising above the lower and nearer ranges; some clothed in every variety of green, while in others the forest was broken.(132)

Insofar as the construction of landscapes, it is evident that the traveler-campaigner regularly employs the strategies of a negative aesthetic, generation of a density of meaning and the relationship of mastery. In the text, the convening of a negative aesthetic is the most apparent in the construction of a symbolic landscape often employing the trope of the wild.

The text, as a rule, sets up and plays through a binary, although sometimes through different conduits. The following passage illustrates the attempts at transforming the northeast as a landscape of danger, fear, and otherness. Woodthorpe writes: "It was astonishing how soon a *waste, howling wilderness of jungle* was transformed into a pleasant camp" (117). It is important to note that the landscape gaze of the traveler in this instance implicates both economic as well as civilizational imports. On another occasion,

the capitalist vanguard gaze reflects over the “jungly hills” of the Lushais and imagines their transformation as “cultivated tracts”(173). This is an instance of the conversion of space into imperial assets. Similarly, while returning homewards after subjugating the Lushais, Woodthorpe apprehends that the hills will recluse to perpetual slumber with the departure of the imperial self. He writes:

By the 10th of March, in accordance with the orders of the Government before quoted, all the troops and coolies had bidden farewell to Tipai Mukh; and the Tuivai itself, flowing past ruined huts and deserted godowns, once more greeted the Barak with its ceaseless babble, undisturbed by the cries of coolies and the trumpeting of elephants, while the surrounding jungles relapsed into their former silence, resounding no more to the blows of the invaders’ axe. (320).

These instances illustrate how in the narrative, landscapes are more of an enthusiastic postulation of spaces than a disinterested gaze. In other words, inherent in these landscapes is the proposal in favour of a new spatiality. From that perspective, the production of landscapes in the narrative could be viewed as what Lefebvre views the transformation of space into the grids of abstraction and conceptualization. It is often by subjecting colonized spaces to anticipations and assumptions that the colonial traveler ensures ideological mastery over these.

It is obvious that landscapes in the text do not only stem from, but regularly initiate and reinforce a relationship of mastery of the imperial traveler-campaigner over the colonized space. Such projects are not always explicable in terms of a negative aesthetic. It is usual that the density of meaning is also produced through such strategies. For instance, Woodthorpe observes:

On the 17th, leaving behind a guard of fifty men of the 22nd under Lieutenant Gordon, the General and staff, with Mr. Edgar and Col. Nuthall’s wing of the 44th, marched from Pachui, and descended to the Tuivai, here still a fine stream-clear and cold, flowing between huge boulders, past shingly reaches, and bubbling over pebbly shallows, ever and anon widening out into still pools, in the clear depths of which were reflected the varied hues of the wooded hill-sides. A small bamboo bridge had been thrown across at a spot where a large stretch of shingle on the left bank narrowed the stream considerably. (187)

Instances like these illustrate the preponderance of visual trope in the text. It is interesting to observe that the aura of gloom and apprehension that perennially haunts the landscape gaze while moving into the enemy's space suddenly disappears and is replaced by an enthusiastic and admiring one, almost like a voyeur. The same hill-scape emerges not as a strategic terrain. Instead of assuming repulsive and ghostly proportions the landscape emerges as an inviting host. It is only at this point that flowers and foliage in the landscape invite the imperial eyes. For instance, amidst people's greetings a home-bound campaigner writes: "Beneath nestled a small village, and beyond lay the broad and smiling valley, through which far below, like a silver thread, the Teo wound its way. High hills of dark green, on the slopes of which the jooms shone like gold in the bright sunshine, rose in the background"(276). The same mood continues:

The beauty of the scene was heightened by the rhododendrons which clothed the hill-side on either side of the road and were then in all their glory of brilliant blossoms, and helmets and turbans became gaily decorated. Even the guns were not forgotten; their prosaic steel forms being also adorned with the bright flowers, with almost loving care...shortly after we passed through a magnificent pine forest; a gentle breeze sighting through the tall pines wafted their sweet perfume across our onward path. (276)

Similarly, Woodthorpe writes: "The scenery, both on the river and by the road, between Tipai Mukh and Cachar, was very fine; the autumnal-like tint of the foliage in the dense jungle, at this season, were most varied and beautiful; orchids and other wild flowers abounded, and the forest was sweet with their many-scented blossoms"(325). The passage gives the impression that all un-ease have receded. But the edenic vision does not continue for long and is immediately overtaken by the apocalyptic note that constantly underwrites the text. Woodthorpe writes almost in a note of alarm:

But an *invisible foe haunted these fair scenes*-and cholera, that fatal pestilence, *stalked along the river, or lurked in the jungle, striking down* the Sepoys joyously looking forward to a speedy meeting with friends, but numbering most of its victims among the poor coolies...a more dreaded enemy than any we had to encounter in Lushai land. (326; emphasis added)

It is important to note that the extension of the motif of ambuscade is the central trope or founding motif informing the construction of landscape within the text, to even an

otherwise non-military context. A backward critical gaze reveals how the metaphor of an *invisible foe*, the passage so transparently construct, actually is a regular phenomenon going into the production of landscapes from the very beginning of the campaign. For instance, recounting the very preparatory arrangements of the march, at Mynadhur, the base of the expedition, Woodthorpe writes: “The boatmen in these districts had the most intense horror of this part of the country, and it was with great difficulty that they were induced to go with their boats; many preferring to sink them, while they themselves disappeared in some place of concealment till the danger was past” (112). In fact, the foe, in the text is more suggested than explicitly painted and the invisible, ambuscading foe is framed through landscapes which validate their presence.

In several places, the Lushais had put up some symbols, intended as a warning to the troops not to advance. One was a small model of a gallows made of bamboos, with rough pieces of wood intended to represent men hanging from it, and another consisted of small strips of a bamboo stuck into the trunk of a felled tree, from the wounds of which, a deep red sap, strongly resembling blood, exuded—indicating to the troops the fate that awaited them if they persisted in the advance. (134)

Throughout the campaign, the Lushais keep on dissuading the colonizer by such “threatening demonstrations” (134). Almost as a rule, the enemy is always lurching behind the veil, sometimes their harvest—the Joom fields or heavy jungle and escaping into it. For instance: “shortly after their arrival the Lushais commenced firing into the camp from the forest which surrounded it closely” (138). Similarly, he writes:

This Tuibhum encampment was surrounded on all sides by steep hills, as usual covered with forest, and the Lushais, concealed among the trees, continued to annoy us by firing into it, and at the working parties. The casualties, however, were not numerous, only a coolie and a sapper being wounded. (147)

As soon as the detachment leaves the camp, it is fired from all sides (148). Thus, the landscapes within the text are both actual and symbolic. It is obvious in the way the campaign is entirely framed as a confrontation between the torch-bearers of European modernity and an unfriendly ‘other’ suggested through the trope an invisible enemy. Probably the trope of a howling and roaring wilderness, as discussed initially reinforces this stereotype of an invisible foe.

Although the above-cited instances reveal the deployment of a negative aesthetic in the formulation of landscapes within the text, there are other occasions in the narrative which illustrate a more radical use of the same. In terms of motif and symbolism, these also draw from the same ideological repertoire. As stated earlier, what distinguishes these is the extremity and translucence to which the apparatus of negative aesthetic is stretched. As later instances suggest, the negative aesthetic is often instrumental in the construction of landscapes in the text. It frequently draws on the twin tropes of negativization and insubstantialization. For instance, Woodthorpe reports, how traversing through “obscure paths”, “tall and tangled grass jungle” and pestilential swamps they come across a “stone god and goddess” (61). It is interesting to look at the sarcastic way Woodthorpe comments at the sight:

Beneath these rocks, we found the *rudely carved* figures of the god and goddess, about three feet high, with strips of red and white cloth adorning their *shapeless bodies*. The *former was sitting cross-legged on some broken stones*, on which were some attempts at ornamentation, and which were apparently remains of a kind of canopy, or at any rate, of a throne. The goddess was standing in a small low-walled enclosure and at the foot of a bamboo bedstead. (63; emphasis added)

The landscape gaze almost reduces an indigenous sacrosanct landscape to derogatory proportions. Although it is more of an attempt at insubstantialization of the local space, what follows is an instance of more radical subversion of the same. In what could be as an instance of negativization this sacrosanct space as cast as a hoary-scary, nocturnal landscape:

Having lighted a fire, and killed, cooked and eaten a fowl, we made our beds, and were speedily asleep under the shelter of the goddess near whose shrine we were lying, though to acknowledge the truth, she was a *somewhat fear-inspiring object*, as seen dimly through the mosquito curtains by the pale moonlight, to a nervous imagination in moments of half-wakefulness. (63; emphasis added)

This passage illustrates the way the trope of the northeast as an oriental enigma participates in the production of landscapes in the text. For example, the use of shapeless figures as a metaphor in this passage could be viewed as an attempt to find an imaginary parallel of the obscure path, tall and tangled jungle. Woodthorpe conveys the perplexing aura in the landscape: “I was unable to make out anything about these figures, how long

they had been there, whom they represented”. This could be viewed as an attempt to complement the already popular view of the northeast as a landscape of impenetrable jungles.

The most obvious instances of the way the imperial eyes enframes landscapes in the northeast through a negative aesthetic is could be seen while following the backward gaze of the imperial eyes. In other words, it is while gazing back at the left behind trail that the landscape aesthetic of the text could be seen performing the most violent execution of the colonized subject as well as his native space. Returning homewards Woodthorpe writes:

At one of the camps, a quantity of empty ghi-casks were thrown into the fires as the troops were about to march. Having been well saturated with the greasy contents, they blazed up merrily...and exciting the cupidity of the Lushais, who as usual, had collected to pick up anything the troops left behind...as the rear guard marched off, they saw the Lushais *dancing and gesticulating like demons* round the flames, red hot hoops being whisked out in all directions. (315; emphasis added)

Framing the Lushais as dancing demons accomplishes the appropriation of the colonized landscape by fixating it into ideologically conditioned discursive frames of negation or in this instance what Spurr views as “vilification” (Rhetoric 79). In keeping with the focus of the study this instance also reveals the ideological investment that go into the construction of landscapes within the text.

Woodthorpe’s narrative tries to transform the northeast into a landscape of savagery and anarchy. The trope as well as the rhetoric of danger that marks the production of landscapes in the narratives of Butler and Johnstone continues to determine the landscape gaze in his narrative as well. To this extent, Woodthorpe’s text is another at to transform the northeast as a colonial dystopia.

IV

William Griffith’s *Travels in Assam, Burma, Bhutan, Affghanistan and the Neighbouring Countries* (1847), could be viewed as an instance of how colonial travel and expedition narratives not only transform the northeast from a pre-colonial space to a frontier landscape but also to a set of territories. In other words, Griffith’s travel narrative

illustrates the transformation of the northeast from a perceived space to a conceived space. It could also be seen as a conversion of space from a metaphor to an acquisition.

Under the directions of Capt. Jenkins, the commissioner, Griffith pursues his botanizing mission to the utmost eastern limits of the Company's territory, traversing the hitherto unexplored tracts in the neighborhood of the Mishmee Mountains which lie between Suddiya and Ava. He begins his expedition from Assam, travels to Ava (Present day Myanmar), and Rangoon. From there Griffith returns to the northeast to survey the flora and fauna of the Khasi hills, Goalpara as well Bhutan.

It is important to note that Griffith is commissioned by the Empire to explore and map the existing tea-tracts in the region as well as the possibilities of expansion. Therefore it is not unusual that, throughout his travel, Griffith looks out for opportunities to transform the northeast into an economic territory or a remunerative geography. From this perspective, Griffith's narrative could be viewed as a resource inventory.

Griffith's expeditions appropriate the northeast into the grids of imperial botany. For instance, mapping the flora of the region, Griffith writes. "Among the Jheels...we noticed in abundance the *Tamarizdiocia*... we noticed *Alpiniaallughas*" (1). Similarly, he writes: "The country through which we passed yesterday presented no change whatever. *Andropogon Muricatus* has now nearly left us, but the *Saccharum* reaches to a large size, and is incredibly abundant. The natives use it for thatching their huts" (2). The project of herborizing involves detailed mapping of topographies of the northeast. However, the emphasis is always on the flora of the region. For instance, he finds the Brahmaputra unremarkable and almost overlooks its presence: "We left the cantonment about 11 Am and proceeded down the Burrompooter, *which is a very uninteresting river, and appears more like a network of water and sand-banks*" (2; emphasis added).

It is not unusual that minute reflections on the flora, especially new species and fordability of the river follow. It is important to note the eagerness with which certain plants are looked for. For instance, while looking for a species, namely, *Andropogon Muricatus* he writes with a sense of disappointment: "The banks consist *hitherto of nothing but sand* covered with *Saccharum Spontaneum* .*Andropogon Muricatus* scarcely to be met with" (2; emphasis added). Further investigations explain the desperation with which it is hunted for. It is noteworthy that *Andropogon Muricatus* is

the scientific name of Vetiver, a particular species of grass used extensively in the manufacturing of perfumes and soaps and was in great demand.

Griffith continues to botanize at localities around Cherrapunji in the Khasi Hills and continues to frame landscapes paying particular attention to strategic aspects of the topography such as its height, planes etc. It is possible that such detailed profiling of topography involves serious colonial military or economic designs. But what is more important is that the traveler eagerly constructs a cartography of available as well as potential resources. For instance, mapping mineral resources such as coal and sandstone, he writes:

The coal mines are to the Westward, and close to Churra. These I have not yet seen; the *coal is of the best description*, it does not splinter, gives remarkably few ashes...Water courses are plenty about Churra, but the body of water is at this season small, although it becomes considerable after a few hours of rain. (5)

The traveler continues his foray for resources. It is important to note that that places that fail to offer resources desired by the traveler are often framed as uninteresting. For instance, with a note of disappointment, Griffith writes: “To the Westward, there is a very deep and beautiful valley, the west side of which in particular is densely covered with jungle, *but this does not contain any large trees*” (4; emphasis added). This has to be viewed in light of the fact that Griffith travels with the aim of mapping potential economic incentives for the Empire. Like the other travelers discussed in the chapter, Griffith also regularly looks at natural spaces such as rivers as passageways and minutely observes dimensions of rivers such as depth, clarity of water and suitability for facilitating conveyance.

It is noteworthy that Griffith looks for affinities between places in the region in terms of types of vegetation. For instance, he refers to the affinities between the botany of Cherrapunji and China by citing the occurrence of trees in both places. It needs to be seen in the light of larger imperial designs to transform the northeast into a major tea producing area. Even while metaphorising landscapes, the focus in Griffith is always resources. For instance, he writes: “Moflong [in Khasi Hills] is a *bleak* exposed village... as the place is *bleak*, we were miserable enough...the only woods that occur are of fir, but the *trees are of no great size*; their frequent occurrence, however, stamps a peculiar

feature on the scenery (8; emphasis added). The rhetoric of otherness and the rhetoric of utility co-opt to create a vision of transformation in this instance.

Whether a place is represented in favorable or unfavorable lights is determined by the availability of resources. Landscapes are viewed as interesting only when they offer incentives. Griffith writes: “At Mumbree, however, there is a decided improvement, and the scenery is very good. *One here notices the occurrence of woods of oaks*, etc., and their form reminded me somewhat of the woods of Buckinghamshire. No woods of fir occur” (8; emphasis added). Griffith forays for resources bypassing other aspects of the landscape as uninteresting and insignificant. For instance, while exploring tea localities in Upper Assam, he writes: “Our route thither lay through first a rather extensive grass jungle, then through a deep jungle. We crossed the Deboru once on our route; it is a *mean stream*” (14; emphasis added). It is noteworthy that the traveler fails to find anything remarkable in the landscape. He writes: “Nothing particular presents itself in the jungle until you approach the tea, on which you come very suddenly” (14). Such instances of selective valorization and negativization of space are found throughout the narrative. These instances corroborate the argument that for the colonial traveler the landscape is often a clue to assets. In other words, in colonial travel and expedition writing, landscapes are preludes to projects of wealth-generation.

Griffith also marks out places as potential hill stations in Khasi hills. He writes:

A few pines occur, but scarcely above the middle of the hills. To the north very high ground is visible, as likewise from Myrung [Khasi Hills], and between this and Chillung [Shillong] is an elevated plateau which appears to me likewise very eligible for the sites of European residences. (169).

Similarly, he writes: “But many places about Moleem [Khasi Hills] are so, especially towards Nonkreem [Khasi Hills]; and it is much to be regretted that some situation in this part of the range had not been selected for the site of a sanitarium instead of Churra [Cherrapunji]” (169). These instances add to the thesis that the narrative regularly pushes for the transformation of space into territories and assets.

The keenness with which the traveler looks out for places growing timbers is noteworthy. Griffith writes: “It is in this valley or on its walls that the *finest pines* we have seen occur, but even here they do not attain a greater height than 60 feet, and

perhaps a diameter of a foot and a half” (10; emphasis added). The narrative also gives clues to explain the desperateness with which the imperial traveler Griffith constantly looks out for areas growing pine trees of substantial size and maturity. Griffith writes: “As Mr. Brown of the Sylhet light infantry informed me most correctly, *many would make fine spars*” (10; emphasis added). Similarly, he writes: “Beyond Nowgong, Saul first comes to view, and many trees attain a considerable size” (11). It is not difficult to discern that visions of wealth-generation prompt the imperial gaze and framing of landscapes in these instances.

The argument that Griffith’s text suggests a movement away from metaphoric to both rhetoric and visions of utility could be more clearly illustrated by looking at the ways he maps out an extensive cartography of tea localities in Upper Assam. For instance: “This morning we crossed the small streamlet Maumoo, ascended its rather high bank, and within a few yards from it came upon it: which as we advanced farther into the jungle increased in abundance; in fact within a very few yards, several plants might be observed” (16). It is important to note the minute ways topographical features are surveyed: “The plant was both in flower and ripe fruit, in one instance the seeds had germinated while attached to the present shrub. No large trees are found... the leaves upon the whole were smaller than those of the Kujoo plants” (11). Similarly, he writes:

The space on which we found it may be said to be an elbow of the land, nearly surrounded by the Manmoo river, on the opposite side of which, where we were encamped, it is reported not to grow. Within this space the greater part consists of a gentle elevation or rather large mound. On this it is very abundant, as likewise along its sides, where the soil is looser, less sandy, and yellow... to the south and eastward of the elbow of land it is most common...the greatest diameter of the stem of any plant that I saw in this place, might be two or three inches, certainly not more. (17)

It is obvious that Griffith’s narrative transforms the northeast into a grid of botanical classification. But more importantly, it eagerly participates in the transformation of spaces from metaphorically framed landscapes to specific geographies of resources. In other words, it marks the transition from coding or visualization of space as a possibility to the politics of space as a reality.

V

The framing of pre-colonial spaces as or into a certain kind of landscape, as seen in the texts under investigation, does not remain confined to observations of and on space. In fact, the landscape gazers that go into the framing of space in these narratives are informed by a strong desire to transform space. However, the exercise does not always result in clearly visualized formal spaces. In other words, the transformation of space, in these texts is presented more as a possible agenda than as a strategic instrument with all aspects covered. These texts partake of a discourse where what is not articulated adds up to produce the grand project in a paradoxical manner.

Suggestions for the transformation of space are made, in these texts, primarily by means of a negative aesthetic. In other words, appropriation of space and conversion thereof into landscapes are pursued through a rhetoric of darkness and dystopia. This is a case of metaphorising space. The politics of metaphorization, in the studied texts, is directed towards transforming the colony into a series of dystopian landscapes. In a way, these metaphors are used by the imperial traveler to draw the attention of the Empire to empty spaces or places without rightful claimants, thereby enhancing the possibilities of expansion.

The texts also construct the landscape of the northeastern frontier region as a cornucopia with abundant but unutilized resources. This is a more direct form of suggesting alternative uses of space. In a way, it complements the objectives which drive the more obvious negativization of landscapes in colonial landscape discourse. Either way, travel and expedition texts are precursors of the transformation of landscapes into possession or territorialization. The eagerness with which the travelers convert landscapes into imagined confrontation zones bears testimony to this.

Finally, the construction of space involves the politics of self-fashioning. The most obvious way to carry this out is to foreground—whether real or imagined—the participation of the local population in the making the Empire. From this perspective, the colonial travel writer is an agent of transformation. Their texts not only anticipate and often precede the occupation of territories in the northeast frontier region but also participate in the production of the colonial northeast.