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LANDSCAPE, LITERATURE AND IDENTITY

New Zealand Late Colonial Literature as Environmental Text, 1890-1921.

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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New Zealand

ABSTRACT

New Zealand’s ‘late colonial’ period, 1890-1921, was a most significant period of environmental transformation, in particular the removal and burning of the bush and its transformation into pasture. This rapid, widespread and highly visible transformation of the landscape was reflected as a major theme of the period’s literature. This thesis assesses New Zealand late colonial literature as a source for environmental history.

New Zealand late colonial literature, 1890-1921, has been a little-studied, underrated and forgotten period of literature (much of which I have re-evaluated). Using it as an environmental source is a new approach, but one that is extremely rewarding. The literature provides a useful environmental history resource that enhances and provides a useful counterpart to the sometimes fragmentary contemporary sources, offering a wide range of viewpoints as well as a flexibility that cannot be offered by other historical documents. New Zealand literature of the period 1890-1921 can be read as environmental text in a manner which deepens our understanding of responses to landscape transformation and the growth of national identity.

The thesis uses the literature of the period to attempt to understand the complex and often contradictory responses and attitudes to both the natural and transformed New Zealand landscape. Moreover the thesis examines the ways in which the landscape has influenced New Zealanders’ ideologies of self-perception and national identity. The influence of the New Zealand landscape (and its transformation) on the creation of a national identity, as evidenced in late-colonial literature, has been fundamental.

The initial six chapters cover poetry, fiction and non-fiction with examples on the ways they can be used as environmental sources. The theme of the transformation of the landscape is central, revealing a range of common attitudes and responses to both wilderness and transformed landscapes. The other central thread traces an emergent national identity, related to both a New Zealand-born generation’s affinity with the new landscape and pride in environmental transformation.

A chapter on urban landscapes in literature examines the attitudes of New Zealanders to their cities, the adaptation of the imported British ‘rural myth’, the problematic ‘rural-urban paradox’ and identifies acceptable discourses in which writers could portray towns and cities in literature.

The final chapter provides a seldom attempted comparison of New Zealand literature with its contemporary colonial literatures of Australia and Canada, affirming many trends and attitudes, but highlighting certain unique
attitudes to landscape, transformation and identity that arise from different landscapes. Certain geographical, historical and literary factors make New Zealand the ideal study for environmental literature, and a model of global interest.
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INTRODUCTION.
INTRODUCTION:

This thesis is about swift-flowing rivers, cold dark lakes, ridges of golden tussock and frost-cracked slopes of schist, falling up towards towering snow-clad peaks. It is about kauri trees and cool green ferns at their roots, fantails, tuis and bellbirds singing among the kowhai and rata flowers – everything that makes up the great mysterious plethora of living nature we unpretentiously call 'the bush.' It is about settlement on the land, changing the land: homesteads amidst plains of wheat, sheep stations in grassy valleys, little timber and tin settlements along the railway lines, growing cities by the sea and rough settler's huts in smoking paddocks of burnt bush where cattle graze for new green grass among the tree stumps. It is about the people who lived and worked on the land: rugged bushmen felling trees, strong silent mountain men carrying merinos on their shoulders, rabbiters telling tales around their campfire under the stars, fugitives from justice on the gumfields and unscrupulous melodramatic villains seeking to corrupt devastatingly beautiful Maori maidens with flashing eyes and heaving cleavage. It is really about the writers who attempted to describe the New Zealand landscape, searching for words to adequately convey their feelings for the new and sometimes alien place. And, partly as a result, it is about some really bad poetry.

This thesis is an examination of New Zealand late colonial literature in terms of a source for New Zealand's environmental history. At its most basic it is intended to be a much-needed useful reference of literary sources for environmental historians; more complex is the examination of the use of landscape in New Zealand literature as a representation of both national identity and ideologies. The influence of the New Zealand landscape (and again its transformation) on the creation of a national identity, as evidenced in late-colonial literature, has been fundamental. 'Attitudes to Landscape' might have been an alternate title, as the thesis uses the literature of the period to attempt to understand the complex and often contradictory responses and attitudes to both the natural and transformed New Zealand landscape. Moreover the thesis examines the ways in which the landscape has reciprocated in turn by implicitly influencing New Zealanders' ideologies of self-perception and national identity.
Therefore this thesis seeks to evaluate three major points. Firstly, that New Zealand late colonial literature is a valid source for environmental history. Secondly, that an understanding of the period's perceptions and attitudes to the landscape can be gained through a study of the period's literature. And thirdly, that attitudes to the landscape and its transformation were related to emergent national identities. To summarise it in a sentence, my thesis is that New Zealand literature of the period 1890-1921 can be read as environmental text in a manner which deepens our understanding of responses to landscape transformation and the growth of national identities.

Environmental Texts.

An environmental text can be defined as a source that describes or portrays a landscape and the components that make up the landscape (its fauna and flora, geography and geology, climate, etc). As well as written documentary sources, these can be visual images, such as photographs or paintings. Environmental texts can describe or record contemporary or historical transformations the landscape or ecosystem is undergoing through human influence or colonisation (e.g. agricultural transformation, forest clearance, pollution, etc). They can outline human environmental struggles (such as against pests, erosion, desertification, flooding, etc).

In using novels and poems as environmental texts I am combining the fields of literature and environmental history. In New Zealand the two disciplines are fields in which a study of this sort is urgently needed. The late colonial period has for a long time been dismissed as a period contributing little or nothing to a New Zealand national literature – this assumption seriously needed amending. The field of environmental history in New Zealand is a new and developing area of study, but one which has an important contribution to make to the global discipline. Factors such as New Zealand's small yet geographically diverse terrain and the late colonial transformation of the environment, which took place rapidly in a concentrated period of time and historically-recently enough to be well-documented, mean that New Zealand's late-colonial environmental history is a model of considerable interest worldwide.

This thesis is to some extent intended as a literary companion to the recently-published *The Environmental Histories of New Zealand*. The use of

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literature as a historical source is a more established practice in countries whose landscapes have been intensely researched, such as the UK and North America. My History supervisor Tom Brooking, co-editor of the *Environmental Histories of New Zealand*, has for a long time advocated such a study, and enthusiastically encouraged me to undertake this thesis under the co-supervision of New Zealand literature authority Lawrence Jones.

Literature can offer a variety of sources and viewpoints as well as a flexibility that cannot be provided by other historical documents. For example a historian, researching attitudes to the removal of the New Zealand native bush in the 1890s, could find an article in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* by a scientific forestry advocate presenting one point of view, an address by a botanist to the Royal Society presenting another and a sawmiller's diary giving a third. But looking in William Satchell's or Jane Mander's novels the historian would not only find detailed factual information, geographically and historically accurate and based on the author's first hand experience, but also the vocalised opinions of a wide range of representative characters, presenting not only multiple sides of the debate, but implicitly the author's own attitudes. When the researching historian combines literature with traditional written documentary sources and art and photographic sources, the body of historical knowledge is greatly enriched. In terms of landscape description and depiction of the transformation of the landscape, late colonial literature makes a superb environmental history resource – one that complements and enhances other contemporary sources.

Of course novels and poems are usually (but by no means always) insufficient in themselves to provide the basis for firm historical fact. I am not claiming to do so. Rather, my thesis will use literary sources to evaluate attitudes and responses to the landscape and its transformation, and attempt to define a national consciousness (or several) relating to the environment. Opinions and attitudes are qualities that cannot be quantified in a concrete historical way, neither is such an indefinite subject as a national consciousness. Nevertheless, these are legitimate, significant and highly desirable fields of inquiry for historians to pursue. It is essential to understand the underlying and motivating attitudes of an age if one is to engage historically with that age. It is important to investigate any avenue of research that may give insight into such qualities, and literature provides one such way.
Theory of Landscape, Literature and Identity.

As stated, the purpose of this thesis is to examine descriptions of and attitudes to the New Zealand landscape and its transformation, using literature as a source, with reference to its implications upon the sense of a national identity (or identities). So this thesis is partly environmental history, partly New Zealand literature, but not quite either. What label then, does one impose on such an interdisciplinary study? Studies in similar fields have taken place overseas, and in the future may be retrospectively collected under an expanded definition of 'ecocriticism.' I think 'Environmental Literature' is an appropriate title for this study, or more precisely 'Historical Environmental Literature.'

Here follows an overview of relevant environmental theory, with reference to its application to the New Zealand context and to my thesis. It is merely a synopsis, and is by no means intended to be exhaustive:

Landscape studies are a well-established multidisciplinary field of study overseas, particularly in the UK and North America, where the vast majority of research has taken place, primarily practiced by historical geographers or landscape historians and incorporating other fields such as art history. Currently the discipline has been consolidated under the name 'environmental history.'

The links between environmental history and national identity are widely acknowledged. Historical geographer Richard Muir states:

It is clear that landscapes exist as historical texts. The historical aspects of landscape combine with aesthetic and place-related elements to constitute landscape as heritage. Landscape becomes, therefore, a significant component of the overall heritage which endows communities and nations with their identity.²

Simon Schama reiterates this in Landscape and Memory:

... it is clear that inherited landscape myths and memories share two common characteristics: their surprising endurance through the centuries and their power to shape institutions that we still live with. National identity, just to take the most obvious example, would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland.³

However there are problems in applying generalised overseas theory to New Zealand’s environmental history. New Zealand’s history of settlement is recent compared to that of Britain and Europe, and the landscape lacks a visible human historical heritage. For the colonists there were no associations of people, landscape and history to evoke feelings, generate emotions and provide causes – instead only an inherited British ideal. British landscape history is a litany of the imprint of human occupation. Studies of British rural landscapes are focused on centuries of human exploitation, development and redevelopment. The New Zealand landscape lacks the monuments, constructions, boundaries and human-created reference points of an old and highly-populated environment. In New Zealand national identity became related to the emptiness of the landscape, with metaphors of freedom, purity, youth, peace and silence being common in literature.

Perhaps then New Zealand has more in common with the American situation, where initially early Colonial settlers were appalled by the apparent paucity of human history in the landscape. Later American nationalists came to appreciate the newness, compensating for the country’s missing historical associations with the worship of unspoiled nature and the romanticisation of the indigenous natives⁴ – both these themes are found in New Zealand late colonial literature. New Zealand and America certainly share common environmental histories of large-scale environmental transformation and destruction⁵. New Zealand also shares a frontier landscape culture with America. In 1893 an American historian F. J. Turner published the most celebrated of frontier theories, encapsulating what many contemporary New Zealand novelists and poets were trying to express. As an American patriot, Turner was anxious to emphasise the home-grown origin of American

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New Zealand, Australia and America all appear to share comparative environmental histories of large-scale forest removal for the creation of pasture and timber. All three also practiced overstocking — in America during the 1880s this caused serious soil exhaustion, with the collapse of the ‘cowboy’ era cattle industry and the creation of the ‘great dustbowl.’ Interestingly in all three countries natural climatic disasters led to awareness of the environmental damage caused by overgrazing. In America this was the great snowstorm of 1886. In Australia it was the drought of the 1890s, from which parts of the continent have never yet recovered. The environmental damage in New Zealand, however, was not irreversible — the great snowstorm of 1895 drew attention to the effects of overgrazing and the government acted with protective land legislation [see Julian Kuzma, ‘The 1895 Snowstorm.’ B. A. (Hons) dissertation in History. University of Otago, 1999].
institutions, society and national character. Since it was plain that (white) immigrants had imported their European cultures with them, it was necessary to demonstrate the existence of some process of Americanisation which had transformed the European cultural baggage into new sets of outlooks and values. This role, he argued, had been performed by the frontier, where people from a variety of cultural backgrounds were transformed by the demands imposed by the untamed physical environment. In adapting themselves to meet these challenges, the immigrants shed their old identities and emerged with new, American identities.\(^a\) Turner’s ideas were very popular at the time, although they have been subsequently criticised as romanticised and politically partial. However they were very much an expression of the attitude of the age and were similar to ideas prevalent in New Zealand literature at the time – evidently this was the sort of dialogue to which emerging New Zealand nationalists could relate. A similar frontier perception did occur in New Zealand, however it was paralleled by the complications of the British colonial condition. Therefore an understanding of both British and American landscape discourses are important for the New Zealand context. Studies of other colonial countries such as Australia and Canada are even more relevant, but substantially less research has been made into the environmental literatures of these countries. My thesis concludes with a colonial comparison of New Zealand, Australian and Canadian literatures, as an investigation into the common influences of the colonial condition in writing and differences arising from diverse landscapes.

In researching a national consciousness literature is an invaluable source. Lawrence Jones states:

> Literature is an institution within society, and as such it both reflects and projects an image of that society’s cultural identity. It reflects the image that other institutions and forces have helped to form, but it also projects the writer’s own image of his society, and that image may modify or even contradict the image put forth by the society’s dominant class.\(^7\)

Sarah M. Corse writes on national identity and literature in Canada and the United States, stating that national literatures are the cornerstones of national

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cultures: "reflections of the unique character and experiences of the nation." It is understood that the unique experience of national life generates a national collective consciousness (or collective unconscious), marked by a distinctive set of values, tensions, myths and psychological foci, that in turn produces a certain readily identifiable national character – the American cowboy or New Zealand farmer for example. These national characters, and the values, tensions and myths from which they spring, are then discernible in indigenous cultural products. Thus, Corse states: "the distinctiveness of a national literature is seen as the natural embodiment of the distinctive national character."³

National literatures exist not because they arise naturally but because they are an integral part of the process by which nation-states create themselves and distinguish themselves from other nations. Aldous Huxley, among others, remarked on this situation when he wrote: "nations are to a very large extent invented by their poets and novelists."¹⁰ All developing nations at some stage have come under pressure for the production of a distinct national literature. The primary criteria of selection for a national literature becomes its differentiation from other national literatures. In order to proclaim cultural independence a nation-state must produce and identify a literature that differentiates it from other states, particularly the most relevant others (e.g. both England and the U.S. for Canada). Corse concludes:

National literatures are both the product and partial creator of the nation and our collective sense of national identity. National literatures are not passive reflections of naturally occurring phenomena, but integral components in the process of national development, consciously constructed pieces of the national culture, and creators of the world in which we live. The canon is chosen, not born.¹¹

Late colonial New Zealand’s place in this argument is complicated. Although there were calls for a national literature, New Zealand’s national literature did not develop out of an aggressive political need for cultural differentiation as in Australia. Indeed, the poetry of the period reveals that New Zealand writers were concerned with maintaining links with Britain, in sentiment, rhetoric and modes of verse. A developing national literature arose from more subtle national requirements. Jones states: "Literature can act as "the ideal view of society's goals and direction as projected by elements in the society and/or the

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9 Ibid.
11 Corse, Nationalism and Literature, p.9.
New Zealand's aspiration to found a 'Better Britain' was the driving force behind an emerging national identity. The 'social dream' was a preoccupation of New Zealand's history of white settlement, and this has been highly visible within literature. Inextricably connected with this is the other overwhelming theme of New Zealand literature – landscape. In late colonial New Zealand literature, landscape – at first comparative and later appreciative – was the defining symbol of national differentiation.

Perceptions of landscapes are important. A perceived landscape is a selective impression of what a real landscape is like, consisting of sensed and remembered accounts and hypotheses. The impression might be close to reality, or might contain some important misconceptions. Yi-Fu Tuan states: "Landscape... is not to be defined by itemising its parts. The parts are subsidiary clues to an integrated image. Landscape is such an image, a construct of the mind and feeling." Naturally different individuals will have different perceptions of the same landscape. Cultural factors are likely to condition the perception of a landscape to a considerable degree. In the colonisation of unfamiliar environments information will be based upon perception and cultural expectations of what constitutes the important elements in a landscape. This is known as 'cognitive behaviourism.' In New Zealand settlement and the transformation of the landscape was strongly influenced by perceptions of Home (British) environments. Novels and other forms of creative writing can be extremely influential in the formation of vernacular images of less familiar landscapes. Writers and artists perceive landscapes and their reproductions enter into the popular, national and international consciousness. Geographer D. C. D. Pocock explored novelist's images of the North of England which consistently conformed to a strong stereotype, noting the potency of the literary image in affecting popular perceptions of places that would otherwise be little known:

The widespread and persistent circulation of the 'message' of particular major works may mean the literary input to the image of a place is high, providing a literary frame of reference with which to approach or view a particular environment. Moreover, given the nature of the environment of the mind, the literary influence may well increase with time, and even persist when contrary evidence is available to refute the traditional image.

14 Muir, pp.115-122.
Some perceptions can become so deeply rooted and stubbornly retained that information that undermines the stereotype is excluded and discounted until a point arrives where it becomes irrefutable and the image of the place concerned must be comprehensively redesigned to accommodate the new facts. In all processes of colonising little-known territory there will be a gap between the landscapes of the imagination and expectation on the one hand, and the geographical realities on the other.\textsuperscript{16} The popular image of the American continent was an untouched wilderness, but the pristine view was largely the invention of nineteenth century romanticist and primitive writers such as Thoreau and Longfellow. This view ignored visible large scale environmental impact by native American Indians. The construction of this false perception or pristine myth took place not so much during the earliest period of European colonisation, but later when numbers of the native American population had been reduced by ninety percent and Europeans were penetrating the more empty interior.\textsuperscript{17} However there were many striking realities about the new land that could not be masked by illusion. Settlers in North America were surprised by the empty monotony of the interior and shocked by the violence of the landscape with its harsh extremes of climate, the analogy of the landscape as a sea is common – all these discourses occur in New Zealand late colonial literature. In the USA, the most obvious thing writers could invoke to stress their distinction from the mother country was the physical landscape.\textsuperscript{18} Many New Zealand writers were initially reluctant to do this, but the assertion of difference and independence through landscape imagery in literature did gradually take place in New Zealand, naturally without Revolution. During the last four decades of the nineteenth century a strong and most pervasive myth of the romantic American West was invented, centred around the image of the cowboy, even though the heyday of the cowboy lasted only from the close of the Civil War until the severe winter of 1886. Historical geographer J. L. Allen states much of this invented tradition developed from early images of the West based in American interpretation of the European Romantic tradition and grew out of the art and literature that surrounded the American fur trade of the Rocky Mountains. Much of the socio-cultural baggage of the Wild West originated in the Eastern states, and the material culture of the cowboy was borrowed from Mexico – however the image of the Wild West was adopted as

\textsuperscript{16} Muir, pp.130-131.
\textsuperscript{17} W. A. Denevan, 'The Pristine Myth: the Landscape of the Americas in 1492.' \textit{Annals of the Association of American Geographers.} 82, 1992, pp.369-85.
the image of all America. The myth was perpetuated by later nineteenth century writers and artists.\textsuperscript{19} Attempts to create a similar New Zealand frontiersman tradition can be seen in the writings of G. B. Lancaster.

Muir states 'landscapes of the mind' are significant in that they often have an effect in reshaping reality so it more closely matches the vision. Whole histories have been built on false perceptions of what the past involved.\textsuperscript{20}

Not only is research into the perception of landscape relevant and revealing, it also embodies a reassertion of the humanity and individuality of people who might otherwise be regarded in aggregate or mechanistic forms. Moreover, it brings us as close as we may ever get to that elusive yet wonderful entity, the sense of place, which creates an emotional human relationship with landscape from what might otherwise be reduced to a cataloguing of rock, soil and plant types.\textsuperscript{21}

In representing landscapes writers identify and portray symbolic messages and meanings contained in the landscape. Landscape symbols are often monuments, in the way that a picture of the Beehive may evoke certain associations to a New Zealander, while the Sky Tower has come to symbolise Auckland. Historical geographer and landscape symbolist D. W. Meinig states: "Every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared set of ideas and memories and feelings which bind a people together."\textsuperscript{22} Using examples of images of the rural village (a transatlantic icon), Meinig continues: "There are also landscape depictions which may be powerfully evocative because they are understood as being a particular kind of place rather than a precise building or locality." These symbolic scenes are often nostalgic, associated with continuity and providing messages of stability, quiet prosperity, cohesion and intimacy. A nation's symbolic landscapes can be a text, representing attempts to answer questions about the kind of past they seek to reconstruct.\textsuperscript{23} Duncan and Duncan argued: "one of the most important roles that landscape plays in the social process is ideological, supporting a set of ideas and values, unquestioned assumptions about the way a society is, or should be organised."\textsuperscript{24} Geographer D. Cosgrove

\textsuperscript{20} Muir, p.145.
\textsuperscript{21} Muir, p.130.
\textsuperscript{23} R. A. Butlin, \textit{Historical Geography.} London: Edward Arnold, 1993, pp.136-137.
\textsuperscript{24} J. Duncan and N. Duncan, (Re)reading the Landscape. \textit{Environment and Planning D: Society and Space.} 6, 1988, p.123.
believed symbolic landscapes serve the purpose of reproducing cultural norms and establishing the values of dominant groups across all of society. Cosgrove stated "Symbolism is most easily read in highly designed landscapes... and through the representation of landscape in painting, poetry and other arts," but recognised it was also there to be read in rural landscapes and even the most apparently unhumanised of natural environments. The latter images are more applicable to New Zealand, which tends to find its symbolic landscapes in the rural and untouched natural environment. Sometimes a portion of a territory is presented as a symbol of the essence of the territory in its entirety – for example a scene of high country Otago might be used in promotions as images representative of the whole of New Zealand. The symbolism associated with a landscape need not be a true reflection of its personality and characteristics. Cultural historian Edward Said's study of Western perceptions of the Muslim Near East and North Africa showed the existence of a body of texts and shared assumptions, an imagined geography of projected fantasies expressing the values of the cultures which created them, which Said termed 'Orientalism.'

One of the most powerful symbolic landscapes inherited by the Colonial settlers was found in the representations of countryside that were crucial to the British national identity. The icon of English identity became a timeless, stable English countryside representing England in its entirety, and this image "was propagated in all sorts of media: in paintings, like Constable's, but also in novels and poems." This pervasive image was largely obsolete in the British context – as geographer P.J. Taylor states:

The pioneer of industrialisation and the most urbanised country in the world is idealised in rural terms: thatched cottages around a village green is the archetypal English scene. Such anti-urban images are themselves quite common in the natural landscapes of peoples. The difference for the English is that they are not featured in their own landscape. Much has been written on the British anti-urban myth. New Zealand inherited this popular sentiment and during the late colonial period while over half the population lived in the rapidly expanding urban centres, paradoxically


G. Muir, p.225.


representations of the nation were overwhelmingly rural to the extent that urban environments are scarcely mentioned in literature at all, unless in terms of the picturesque and sub-rural park-like. Cosgrove, Roscoe and Rycroft identify the celebration of countryside as the seat of national virtue as stemming from the fear of it being under internal threat from continuous processes of change – the alienating and destructive forces of modern progress, generally identified as originating in the city. In New Zealand fear of the social evils associated with the cities of the old country lead to wide-reaching social and land legislation across virtually all areas of government.

The power of inherited colonial symbolic landscape myths is best summed up by art historian Stephen Daniels in *Fields of Vision*. Daniels discusses how national identities are defined by landscapes, using the work of British and American painters. At the core of any nation’s consciousness is its vision of landscape. Daniels states national identities are co-ordinated, often largely defined by stories and landscapes:

> Landscapes, whether focusing on single monuments or framing stretches of scenery, provide visible shape; they picture the nation. As exemplars of moral order and aesthetic harmony, particular landscapes achieve the status of moral icons. Since the eighteenth century painters and poets have helped narrate and depict national identity, or have had their work commandeered to do so.

Most important for the New Zealand context is Daniels’ discussion of the role of landscape in British imperialism:

> Imperial nationalists, almost by definition, have been intent to annex the home-lands of others in their identity myths. They have projected onto these lands and their inhabitants pictorial codes expressing both an affinity with the colonising country and an estrangement from it. It is often the very ‘otherness’ of these lands which made them appear so compelling...

> The very global reach of English imperialism, into alien lands, was accompanied by a countervailing sentiment for cosy home scenery, for thatched cottages and gardens in pastoral countryside. Inside Great Britain lurked Little England. At the same time in the 1880s as Greenwich was taken as the Prime Meridian, as the British public gazed at global maps centred mathematically on Britain, with dominions coloured red to show an empire on which the sun never set, and margins illustrated with exotic human figures, fauna and flora, so the very picture of rustic England, Constable’s *Hay-Wain*, entered into the National Gallery and, through reproduction, the national...
imagination. By the First World War, the *Hay-Wain* was upheld as an epitome of the country it was worth dying to defend.31

The imposition of British ideals of rural beauty was to have an enormous effect on the colonist's attitudes to the New Zealand landscape and their transformation of it.

Perceptions of landscape, symbolic landscapes of national identity and inherited colonial landscape ideals are fascinating to study, but when using literature as a source of environmental history depictions of realistic landscapes are desirable. These should ideally be geographically identifiable, place-specific and time-specific. As Pocock has described, the novel was a late arrival on the cultural scene, but when it did arrive it offered new dimensions to the relations between people and settings. "Medieval stories had traditionally recounted unchanged moral truths in timeless settings, the plots themselves being freely borrowed between different countries and cultures."32 At first the settings of novels were generalised, place-specificity taking over a century to emerge. The generalised worlds of Fielding or Richardson gave way to detailed sketches of locations in the novels of Scott and Austen, and "During the second quarter of the nineteenth century the novelist's pen began to more fully to depict particular localities, thereby giving rise to the genre of the English regional novel."33 Pocock considered that the novelist articulates the geographer's inarticulations, providing an insight into place, so that imaginative literature offers a valuable storehouse within which the central theme of human-environment relationships can be explored.34 Historical geographer L. J. Jay concurs:

The art of describing areal differentiation within Britain during the last hundred years has been practised as much by novelists as by geographers. Drawing upon the great variety of landscape and modes of living to be found within the confines of a comparatively small island, many British writers have chosen to emphasise the influence of real localities upon the life and action of their fictitious characters.35

English literature is especially noted for its evocation of places. Certain novels have been centred around such strong regional senses of place that the regions have come to be famous for their association with the novels, such as Thomas

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31 Daniels, *Fields of Vision*, pp.5-6.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid, p.345.
Hardy's Dorset or Wessex. Keith states Hardy's novels "clearly constitute the most important comprehensive presentation in the literature of nineteenth century countryside." Keith defines Hardy's novels as being characterised by local concentration and biographical detail – he knew the countryside he wrote about from all viewpoints. Hardy understood his readers were outsiders eager to explore his countryside as tourists, hence the topographical detail. A common theme is the relationship between humans and their environment, in particular change. These novels may also be free to some extent from the idealising rural myth which distorts and falsifies the darker rural reality. The first American novelist to enjoy success with books based on American landscape settings was James Fenimore Cooper, with The Spy in 1821. The best late colonial New Zealand examples of regional novels are Jane Mander's Kaipara and William Satchell's Hokianga. Satchell, in particular, has been compared with Hardy.

Geographer E. Relph's Place and Placelessness (1976) provides a useful model that is implicit within most cultural approaches to landscape. Places, according to Relph, are important sources of individual and community identity and expressions of deeply felt commitments to particular environments. Placelessness relates to the eradication of diverse and unique landscapes, and the creation of indistinguishable mass-cultural environments. This theory can be readily applied to the late colonial New Zealand situation and the ideologies of Home and nationality related to the landscape explored by my thesis. The development of a sense of Place can be seen in literature, through the differing responses to landscape – from the alienation and homesickness of colonists, through to an acceptance of the landscape and finally a strong affinity and identification as a New Zealander. The question arises, how can you apply the concept of Place, something historically rooted that develops organically, to a colony founded on a scheme of planned settlement? Relph states North American colonists were making a decisive break with their place:

Those who carved their own new home out of the bush were in effect reestablishing their roots — they were making a place authentically through their own labour and through a commitment to a new way of life. the log cabin in the clearing was an expression of hope, of total

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37 Muir, p.125.
involvement and of responsibility for the decision to emigrate. 39

Relph acknowledges this is a romanticised picture, and that in creating their authentic places the settlers were often destroying the authentic places of indigenous peoples. The drive of New Zealand settlers to create a productive commercial landscape on a idealised British pastoral model leads me to think that perhaps New Zealand would be more aptly classified as an experiment in Placelessness. But one of the characterisations of the literature is a conflict between natural and transformed landscapes, between progress and preservation, over which a compromise of sorts was achieved across the period. If late colonial New Zealand was an experiment in Placelessness, it was a failed experiment. Relph’s approach to environment works best on a localised and regionalised model. The notion of Place is especially applicable to and evident within the high country station verse by writers such as David McKee Wright.

Relph’s approach to identity is useful as it consolidates geographical and cultural discourses. Understanding the ways that nature and culture constantly influence and construct each other is important, as William Cronon’s collection of essays Uncommon Ground: Towards Reinventing Nature (1995) 40 illustrates for the fields of environmental and cultural history. Cronon’s Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England (1983) 41 melds ecology and history, examining cultural attitudes to explain environmental transformation. Kent Ryden’s Landscapes with Figures: Nature and Culture in New England (2001) 42 similarly dissolves the border between culture and nature by demonstrating how nature and history are inseparably linked. Cronon’s article ‘A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative’ 43 brilliantly explores the use of narrative and stories in environmental history. Cronon, to some extent rejects theoretical approaches to environmental history such as postmodernism because they deconstruct narrative. Narratives of historical storytelling can convey environmental awareness and keep readers morally engaged with the world:

39 Relph, Place and Placelessness, pp.76.
But if environmental history is successful in its project, the story of how different peoples have lived in and used the natural world will become one of the most basic and fundamental narratives in all of history, without which no understanding of the past could be complete. Despite the tensions that inevitably exist between nature and our narrative discourse, we cannot help but embrace storytelling if we hope to persuade readers of the importance of our subject.44

The ecocriticism movement is one approach of environmentally-orientated reading with some relevance. In The Ecocriticism Reader, Cheryl Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment... an earth-centred approach to literary studies"45, and compares it with other activist methodologies such as Marxist and feminist criticisms. Ecocriticism is a new field, and one that is still being defined. William Rueckert coined the term "ecocriticism" in a 1978 article.46 In 1992 the Association for Literature and the Study of the Environment (ASLE) was formed, and in 1993 a journal ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment was established by Patrick Murphy. In 1996, with the appearance of Glotfelty and Fromm's The Ecocriticism Reader (which consolidated a number of essays from various fields under the umbrella of ecocriticism) and Lawrence Buell's The Environmental Imagination, the term and the school began to receive serious attention among scholars.

Currently ecocriticism publications are dominated by critical analyses of American nature writing and the literature of wilderness. Nature writing can be defined as a form of the personal reflective essay, grounded in attentiveness to the natural world and an appreciation of science, but also open to the spiritual meaning and intrinsic value of nature. Ecocriticism also has a strong 'green' ethic – a commitment to the preservation of nature and ecological issues. The focus of ecocriticism to date has been non-fiction writing. As such, ecocriticism is not applicable to the greater part of my thesis; neither is its major offshoot, ecofeminism. However, the theoretical boundaries of the discipline are still being defined, and questions of what constitutes ecocriticism are being hotly debated. Ecocriticism is rapidly evolving, and several authors have called for an expansion of boundaries for research possibilities in other forms of literature. A significant work is Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace's

Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism (2001) – a twenty-essay collection that calls for the application of ecocriticism to literary works outside nature writing and the study of more human environments outside natural or wilderness areas. The latter could include the transformed, pastoral, cultivated or even urban landscapes that my thesis focuses on. Armbruster and Wallace draw attention to the limits of confining ecocriticism to the personal narratives of the Anglo-American nature writing tradition or to one physical landscape: "the ostensibly untrammeled American wilderness." Likewise Patrick D. Murphy's Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature (2000) argues a case for the use of the novel in ecocriticism against the 'nonfiction prejudice.' If these farsighted and compelling arguments for the necessity of fiction within ecocriticism are carried into practice, it may well be that studies of environmental literature, such as my thesis, will be retrospectively labeled ecocriticism, as much scholarship has already been by the developing discipline. I am in accord with ecocriticism in several ways: that is, a recognition of the importance of studying literature in nature, the interdisciplinary nature of the genre and the rejection of some theorised positions by certain ecocriticism writers. Useful explorations and explanations of ecocriticism can also be found in Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells' collection of essays Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature (1998) and Simon Estok's article 'A Report Card on Ecocriticism' (2001). My approach is historically descriptive, rather than an activist one. Despite my personal empathy for the 'green ethic', I am not approaching the texts explicitly from that position.

As this overview shows, the amount of material on landscape, literature and environmental theory is extensive. The fact is because environmental theory is either broadly generalised across enormous geographical regions and historical timeframes or more commonly made up of selective regional case studies, there is much that is non-applicable or controversial. As Muir tactfully puts it: "The ideas about symbolism and

landscape now current are heavily influenced by the work of post-modernist scholars (whose writings employ terminology which may be incomprehensible and alienating to outsiders). Much of the theory is simply not applicable to the late colonial New Zealand context, its landscape or literature, and it is these gaps that my thesis seeks to fill. For this reason I am assuming the reader to have a certain amount of background knowledge. Some important contemporary key texts in international theory of literature and environmental studies follow: for America, Lawrence Buell's *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (2001), Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) and Alfred Kazin's *A Writer's America: Landscape in Literature* (1988). For British case studies, Margaret Drabble's *A Writer's Britain: Landscape in Literature* (1979) and Jonathon Bate's *The Song of the Earth* (2000) are excellent. Chris Fitter's *Poetry, Space, Landscape: Towards a New Theory* (1995) traces nature sensibility from ancient times to the English Renaissance, and is continued by Pauline Fletcher's *Gardens and Grim Ravines: The Language of Landscape in Victorian Poetry* (1983). John Rennie Short's *Imagined Country: Environment, Culture and Society* (1991) examines ideals of wilderness, countryside and the city, and landscape within the mediums of English novels, the Western film and Australian landscape painting. Suzanne Falkiner's two volumes *The Writer's Landscape: Wilderness and Settlement* (1992) are excellent studies of Australian literature and landscape. Margaret Atwood's *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (1995) is a good explanation of Canadian attitudes to landscape. Patrick D. Murphy's *Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook* (1998) is a collection of essays on environment and literature from around the globe, showing the diversity of the discipline. Post-structuralist theory of landscape is found in the essays in Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan (eds), *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (1992).

**Precedents Towards a New Zealand Study of Environmental Literature.**

There have long been calls for a study of environmental history and literature in New Zealand. As far back as 1946, Alan Mulgan's article 'Literature and Landscape in New Zealand' in the second volume of the *New Zealand Geographer* outlined the regional landscape descriptions that an Englishman, reading about New Zealand in England, might obtain through literature. Mulgan quoted examples of 'landscape painting' in literature, praised Guthrie-

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52 Muir, p.214.
Smith's *Tutira* as 'A great book of landscape' and discussed both indigenous and transformed landscapes, with reference to the influence of the bush upon New Zealanders.\(^{53}\)

In his 1956 lecture to the Wellington branch of the New Zealand Geographical Society, prominent geographer George Jobberns stated the "making over of the accessible parts of the North Island forest was the outstanding achievement of our people in the making of the present grassland landscape." Jobberns continued by observing that although "the achievements of all these struggling people make the really significant history of the North Island" he knew of "no adequate historical account of what was involved in its doing."\(^{54}\) Other writers have since commented on the anonymous character of bush settlements, on a notable lack of records left by the settlers, and on the difficulties of giving an adequate account of the nineteenth century virgin forest sawmilling industry.\(^{55}\) G. C. Petersen made a particular contribution in 1965, when he concurred with Jobberns, stating:

It may be that the lack of personal records left by the bush settlers is responsible for the scant attention given by our historians to this phase of our country's development. The settlers of the open sunlit grassland had in many cases the time, the money, the opportunity and the ability to set down their stories for succeeding generations. They bequeathed to us a rich literature covering the story of pastoral farming in New Zealand. The bush settlers were of a different sort. They were not capitalists, but ordinary people drawn from a different environment and mostly from a different stratum of society. In breaking their bush sections they were engaged in a continuous physical struggle for existence that left them little leisure, and they were mostly inarticulate. Many of the earliest settlers had no English. The gloomy bush produced no diarist or scribe to record the daily lives of the forest settlers, their experiences during the transformation of the bush to grassland and the price they paid in human values. The bush settlements had no attraction for a Samuel Butler or a Lady Barker.\(^{56}\)

\(^{53}\) Alan Mulgan, 'Literature and Landscape in New Zealand.' *New Zealand Geographer*. II, 1, 1946, pp.189-206.

\(^{54}\) G. Jobberns, 'Life and Landscape in New Zealand' in *New Zealand: Inventory and Prospect. The 1956 Lecture to the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand Geographic Society*. Wellington: New Zealand Geographic Society, 1956.


This is certainly not true, for the historical geographers had completely overlooked the rich source of New Zealand late colonial literature, wherein writers such as Jane Mander and William Satchell left detailed, factual, historically and geographically accurate accounts of the bush settlements in their novels, often based on first hand experience. I include these discourses since they have been often repeated and are thereby influential. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the historical record relating to the transformation of the landscape has been expanded with the publication of personal records, school jubilee booklets, local, church and family chronicles, district histories, memoirs and reminiscences. Even the Scandinavian bush settlers left personal records, as evident in Henning Bender and Bridget Larsen’s *Danish Migration to New Zealand* (1990).57 There are still considerable gaps in the historical record, however, and literary sources have remained neglected. This is hardly surprising, since late colonial New Zealand literature was so overwhelmingly dismissed by the literary critics of the 1940s-1960s as poor, and this perception has persisted. More recently the literature has been examined from a gender perspective, but there is still much research to be done in this field. Jane Mander’s *The Passionate Puritan* (1921), for example, contains excellent descriptions of life and work in a Northland sawmilling community, but has only been analysed from a gender point of view and generally overlooked in favour of Mander’s more well-known novels. As this thesis will show, New Zealand late colonial literature provides a comprehensive environmental history text, especially in regard to the North Island bush settlements.

The first refutation of the axiom that there are no adequate historical sources relating to the late colonial transformation of the landscape came from geographer Peter Holland.58 His two-page article identifies poetry as an important historical source: “At base, poetry is about images, and poets’ images can tell us much that is fresh and informative about society’s changing concerns, aspirations and achievements.”59 Poetry, like novels, can provide answers to questions about the transformation of the New Zealand landscape that cannot be answered within the fragmentary historical record:

All geographers have their short lists of topics which they would like to see studied. Here are some of mine, all involving poetry as the medium for illustration, exploration, and elucidation. How did

European settlers respond to what must have seemed novel to them in the New Zealand environment? What impressed them, and what did they find unsettling? What names did they give to native plants and animals, and what did they miss most in the country's landscapes? When did the sense of geographic isolation impinge upon their consciousness? It seems reasonable to suggest that isolation has a spatial as well as temporal component: the feelings of an individual living out of easy reach of neighbours, the sense that one may never again see family members in distant lands, or the more cosmic notion of separation from fellow human beings. Feelings like these were almost certainly extreme in settlers with shallower roots in the country. What did individuals feel as forests were cleared away, swamps drained, and tussock lands depleted? We may experience a sense of awe in the open lands of interior New Zealand, but what did our ancestors feel when they first caught sight of a deep mountain valley or a lake surrounded by high forest? Did anyone express regret at, or even notice, the passing of the old ecology? Did they see environmental problems for their children and, most intriguing of all, are there generational and ethical differences in all these respects?  

I have addressed many of these questions in my poetry chapters. Poetry, concludes Holland, marks the steps which New Zealand society has taken in its evolution from colony to nation. "In a few deftly chosen words, the poet may give us profound insights into people's hopes and dreams, and, by addressing basic human motives, help us to understand why our landscapes look the way they now do."  

There are a couple of recent collections of literature on the New Zealand landscape: Trudie McNaughton's *Countless Signs: The New Zealand Landscape in Literature* (1986) and David Eggleton and Craig Potton's *Here on Earth: The Landscape in New Zealand Literature* (1999) – both are selections of extracts on landscapes from novels, poetry and non-fiction across a broad period, tending towards the contemporary. Eggleton's introduction is worthy of quotation:

> Every landscape is a museum of extracts, an anthology of fragments, an album of glimpses, feelings about places haunt us and inspire us. We seek clues in the landscape for answers to the riddle, the secret of where we are, who we are, here on earth. Landscapes are skeins of connections and recollections, of inklings and murmurs. There is some deep, personal distillation of concept and emotion in our favourite landscapes, those places to which we often return, even if only in memory.

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60 Holland, 'Poetry and Landscape in New Zealand,' NZJG, p.8.  
Manawhenua is that sense of belonging that connects people and land. The landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand is our cultural centre of gravity, our leading literary theme, our dominant metaphor. We inscribe it with our hopes and dreams; the land is our waka, our location beacon, a site of layered history. Landscape is a state of mind; the environment that determines the character of a people; it is a map of our assumptions, desires, projections – the tricky jigsaw of a coastline, the long, thin, windswept shape of islands, the totemic mountains, the ‘sharp and sudden contrasts’...

Writers name places into existence, offering ways of seeing, ways of understanding, presenting responses to various landscapes with various microclimates.64

A few books are essential background reading for anyone interested in New Zealand late colonial environmental literature: The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, and Environmental Histories of New Zealand. Herbert Guthrie-Smith’s Tutira (1921) has been internationally recognised as an environmental classic. Just as significant is William Pember Reeves’ The Long White Cloud: Ao Te Aroa (1898 and later editions), a work that is remarkable in that it is one of the world’s first environmental histories as understood in modern terms, and for the unique attitudes to transformation and conservation it displays. For the novels and poetry I have assumed readers to have a knowledge of the more popular works, but hopefully the thesis will inspire further reading and research from the fascinating and engaging literature of this period.

Sources.

My primary source material is New Zealand late colonial literature, published in book form between 1890 to c.1921, comprising over one hundred volumes of verse and over fifty novels, collections of short fiction and non-fiction writings. In comparison with today it was not a prolific era for New Zealand literature, with typically between one to four novels published each year (James Burn’s Bibliography65 provides the most complete chronological list of the novels). However the volume of material across the thirty-year period is enormous, in particular the poetry: anyone who was anyone in late colonial New Zealand, it seemed, had to publish at least one volume of verse. I felt no need to draw on less-popular poets whose material was repetitive of common themes, except to

64 Eggleton and Potton, Here on Earth, pp.7-8.
comment where they displayed a unique departure, perspective or point of view.

Frustratingly far more poetry exists than has been catalogued. T. M. Hocken’s Bibliography and addenda\footnote{T. M. Hocken, A Bibliography of the Literature Relating to New Zealand. Wellington: John Mackay, Government Printer, 1909. A. H. Johnstone, Supplement to Hocken’s Bibliography of New Zealand Literature. Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, 1927.} contain the most complete records of books of poetry published up to 1909, many of which cannot be found in library collections. There are many more unrecorded – whilst writing my thesis I kept discovering more books of verse, often by accident. Paul Hunt’s research on the literature in the Otago Witness newspaper shows the enormous quantity of verse produced during the period.\footnote{Paul Hunt, ‘Literature in the Otago Witness 1851-1906.’ Ph.D. thesis in English, University of Otago (forthcoming 2003).} From the body of books of verse produced during these years I would conservatively estimate that there is another undiscovered uncatalogued third – collected together from poems published by the authors in newspapers and privately printed in limited numbers of slim paperback books or pamphlets. Luckily almost all the novels can be found in the Hocken and Alexander Turnbull libraries.

For an introduction to the literature of the period, the Oxford History of New Zealand Literature is an invaluable starting point along with The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature; further literary criticism can be found in E. H. McCormick’s Letters and Art in New Zealand, his New Zealand Literature: A Survey and in Allen Curnow’s Look Back Harder. The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography also contains many biographies of authors. For those not wishing to suffer through reading numerous volumes of late colonial poetry, some of the best verse of the period can be found in collections such as Alexander and Currie’s 1906 anthology, Curnow and Vincent O’Sullivan’s anthologies of New Zealand verse, Harvey McQueen’s The New Place and A. E. Woodhouse’s New Zealand Farm and Station Verse. A. G. Bagnall’s five volume New Zealand National Bibliography contains detailed information on fiction publications, but I found it useful to use it alongside Hocken’s earlier Bibliography, which is arranged by year rather than alphabetically by author.

It is widely accepted that literature has a vital role in defining and shaping national identity, but questions of readership and popularity are bound to be asked – especially since the late colonial period of New Zealand literature is popularly unknown within its own country. There is a public misconception that New Zealand literature began with Katherine Mansfield, and academic
critics have dismissed the period beforehand as producing little original work or contributing little to a national literature. This is not to say that critics have not recognised there is material of value to be found in New Zealand late colonial literature, it is just that it has been eclipsed by the spectacular dawn of national literature in the Provincial period of the 1930s. In their quest to create a national literature the often self-promoting Provincial writers overlooked much material of worth in the rungs of the ladder of New Zealand literature. However the Provincial period could not have occurred without the groundwork of its Late Colonial predecessors. The late colonial period was a vital phase of self discovery – but one that saw a gradual transition towards a movement of writing in response to the New Zealand landscape, producing a distinct rural literature that was the predecessor of the cultural nationalism that emerged in the 1930s. The station verse in particular (a popular genre not included in the anthologies of New Zealand poetry) established the icon of the stereotypical Kiwi farming man and his relation to the landscape.

The writers of late colonial literature often were the first to admit that their work was not great, but this does not mean that it was unread. The enormous amount of poetry and short or serial fiction printed in newspapers and journals of the time proves that it was read and popularly in demand. The 'lowbrow' melodramatic tendencies of many of the novels meant that they would have been consumed by a wide range of the public, and therefore be all the more influential. Much of the poetry lacked literary merit, but all gave enjoyment to readers. A regressive imitation of the styles and themes of an earlier generation of British Victorian Romantic poets, and a prevalent theme of nostalgia for Home, suggests that New Zealand late colonial poetry also had a definite social function.

Determining actual readership numbers is difficult. Reviews can be a useful tool, and also the number of editions as a measure of a book’s popularity, but this information is difficult to obtain. Thomas Bracken’s collection of poems Not Understood (1905) went through an astounding seven editions between 1905-1923, and a further four editions up until 1956. Most books made only one printing, but this does not mean they went unread. A limited edition book of verse, Castle Gay and Other Poems (1912) by Dugald Ferguson, contains a list of subscribers who bought the poems at five shillings per volume. The list contains 580 names (of whom many brought more than one copy), organised by location of purchase, all mainly from Southland and South Otago, with ninety copies sold in Dunedin. Ferguson, however, probably drew on his subscribers from members of the Gaelic Society, of which he was Bard. Ferguson also took his books on the road from Bluff to Auckland
to sell them from door to door. In 1884 George Scott, 'The Mornington Bard' boasted in a court case in the *Otago Daily Times* that he had got £100 from the sale of a single poem, sold as a broadsheet for one shilling a copy: the profits of the sales of another single poem donated to charity was £20, representing the sale of at least 200 copies.

Publishing records as a source for readership of New Zealand books prove to be a disappointing dead end. Many of the primary sources for an investigation of the Australasian book trade in the nineteenth century have been irreparably lost. As Wallace Kirsop comments: "In this unfortunate situation the student of bookselling in Sydney and Melbourne is certainly not alone, and he cannot turn with confidence to British publishing houses to have revealed and restored the other half of the perpetual dialogue." The prevalence of the lucrative colonial book trade goes some way to explaining our limited information on book sales. Large Australian firms such as Robertson's colonial book distribution agency supplied books to all of Australia and New Zealand, which remained close to Australia in most aspects of printing and bookselling through the nineteenth century. In 1873 Robertson imported £98,000 of books and issued a total of 55,000 copies of his trade and retail lists — this for a total population in Australia and New Zealand of little over two million. In 1926 Stanley Unwin described the 'typical' print run of a moderately successful first novel as 1536 copies. A third of this stock went to the colonies — for most British publishing firms colonial issues formed the largest single portion of the whole publishing programme. Graeme Johanson's study of colonial editions states "We cannot even speculate on an average size of sales of colonial issues overall," although he calculates that on average the firm Bell sold 902 copies of each title in its colonial series between 1894 and 1918. Johanson explains how London book exporters were always reluctant to reveal details of colonial buyers, as were colonial dealers to reveal their London sources of supply, or details of their Australasian clients. Issues of copyright and piracy meant that London book exporters closely guarded the details of their colonial sales and buyers as trade secrets. "Deliberately they left few

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records to posterity and none concerning the size of their businesses.\textsuperscript{72} Thus we have lists of 'library' titles by publishers of colonial editions such as Murray's Imperial Library or Macmillian's Colonial Library that include books by New Zealand authors, but no way of determining sales. The prevalence of colonial editions undoubtedly deterred New Zealanders from buying and reading their own indigenous fiction. Colonial editions were cheap, readily available and were mainly new British novels. The design and content of the nineteenth century colonial edition represented a desire by British publishers to impart the best imperial values to remote antipodean citizens, as well as make a profit. The overwhelming influence and prolonged control of colonial editions has been criticised by cultural historians as stifling native creative talent under the monolithic Anglo-centrism of literary imports.\textsuperscript{73}

A third source for determining readership of New Zealand books – library records – is also not particularly illuminating. Several theses on libraries, athenaeums and institutes discuss the reading habits of New Zealanders.\textsuperscript{74} Generally the majority of New Zealand titles in libraries were non-fiction, of which there was far more being written. Dulcie Gillespie-Needham's Ph.D. thesis, 'The Colonial and his Books: A Study of Reading in Nineteenth Century New Zealand' is the best survey of reading tastes, drawing on a wide range of public and private libraries.\textsuperscript{75} Gillespie-Needham draws on the 1895 report of the Wellington Public Library to ascertain the most popular fiction authors by number of copies, works and issues. No New Zealand authors made it into the top twenty, although several Australian authors did. Library readers had a taste for the romantic, the sensational and the sentimental, with authors such as Mrs Henry Wood, Rider Haggard, Edna Lyall, Conan Doyle and R. L. Stevenson making up the top five. Charles Dickens was popular throughout the nineteenth century, as was the more recent Thomas Hardy.\textsuperscript{76} A lack of available information means Gillespie-Needham is reticent on library readership of New Zealand books, mentioning the demand for only two early

\textsuperscript{73} Johanson, p.3.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, pp.421-424. For lists and some plot summaries of the various novels popular with and available to New Zealand readers through libraries, see also Hurd, pp.57-65.
novels, Thorpe Talbot's *Philiberta* (1883) and Vincent Pyke's *Wild Will Enderby* (1873) in rural libraries. However, New Zealand literature did appear in library catalogues, mainly in the larger community libraries. It appears that Australian literature was popular with New Zealand library readers, the work of most of the well-known end-of-the-century Australian fiction writers being available and Rolf Boldrewood being especially popular. Gillespie-Needham suggests that given a choice between the fiction of the two colonies, readers would find the Australian novel offered "the better, more prolific and varied diet. If the evidence of library issue books and catalogues is to be accepted, then it is apparent that the New Zealand reader did make a choice and sensibly selected the Australian product." Of course there are reasons for this. Australia with its larger reading population controlled the publishing market and distribution networks. British publishers viewed the colonies as one homogenous 'Australasia', and a large quantity of books for the Australian market were re-exported from Australia on to New Zealand. The exchange of fiction between Australia and New Zealand went both ways. New Zealand poets, if not novelists, were widely read in Australia and indeed many were described as household names there. Furthermore the assessment of New Zealand readership of New Zealand books based on library catalogues is fallible. New Zealanders would have been more likely to have brought their own copies of local authors, or may have even already read the novels when first issued in serialisation in journals and newspapers as was common. Based on the contents of library collections, Gillespie-Needham incorrectly concludes that New Zealanders preferred prose fiction and that the popularity of poetry was declining in the 1890s. This overlooks the far greater quantity of popular poetry being produced at this time, published in newspapers, journals and subscription book form and more likely to be sold locally rather than found in library collections.

The melodramatic and often imitative styles of New Zealand late colonial literature show that New Zealanders were definitely tapping into the market for popular fiction, and were therefore likely to have been read. Terry Sturm examines New Zealand popular fiction in the *Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* - identifying the most widely read of all New Zealand writers, both here and overseas, during the period as "Alien" (Louisa Alice Baker), G. B. Lancaster (Edith Lyttleton) and Isabel Maud Peacocke.

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78 Ibid. pp.454-455.
79 Johnson, p.5.
80 See section 'Australasian writing' in Chapter 8.
Interestingly, all women writers. Their fiction appealed not only to the broad colonial market (Australasia, Canada and the Indian subcontinent) but also to the 'home' market in England, where many readers were interested in exotic locales and the progress of Empire in the colonies.

For most books we have no way of determining readership. It is arguable that a book does not need to be widely read to be influential – many overseas works, which went unnoticed at the time of publication or received bad reviews, have later been heralded as landmark influential works in terms of formulating a style or genre, evoking an age or contributing to a national literature. But there is no doubt that most of the New Zealand late colonial literature was read and read widely. Without concrete statistics on readership, it is sufficient to reiterate that a national literature reflects and creates a national consciousness and identity. If the work of a great number of poets and writers display common themes and attitudes, they can be taken to reflect the sentiment of a nation.

Period.

The term 'Late Colonial' is a literary (rather than historical) one, used by Lawrence Jones in the *Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* as a definition for the novels of the period 1890-1934, differentiated from the preceding 'Pioneer' or 'Early Colonial' period (1861-1889) and the following 'Provincial' period (1935-64). "These periods are defined by three interrelated factors: the major social and economic changes in New Zealand society; the novelists' relationship to and attitude towards these changes; and the novelistic modes and conventions that they evolved for depicting their society and expressing their attitudes towards it."82 I have limited my research to a rough thirty year period, 1890 to approximately 1921 — a period culminating with the environmentally significant works of Jane Mander and Herbert Guthrie-Smith's *Tutira*. This parallels a most significant period of New Zealand's environmental history: a period of rapid, widespread and most visible transformation, in particular the burning and removal of the North Island native bush and its transformation into pasture. I follow Jones's divisions of literary periods — in this case the major change in society depicted by the novelists would be the

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transformation of the landscape, a prevalent theme within the literature. Apart from a few major authors such as William Satchell and Katherine Mansfield, the literature of the late colonial period has been shockingly dismissed and neglected, and has fallen out of publication. In the course of my research I have been able to expand the literary knowledge of the period by identifying gradual changes to literary modes which took place across it. In any case, to avoid confusion I have applied the apt 'Late Colonial' label indiscriminately to both literary and historical timeframes.

Methodology.

Having completed a double honours degree in English and History, I was keen to combine my interests in New Zealand literature and environmental history in a study of literature as environmental text. Firstly, I read as widely as possible from the period's literature, with attention to all references to the New Zealand environment. This included depictions of the landscape, such as landscape portraits, descriptions of transformation and urban references. Secondly, I identified attitudes to the landscape – responses to indigenous and transformed landscapes, and the ways in which the landscape was equated with ideologies of Home and national identity. This was not as straightforward as I had anticipated – for example it soon became apparent that there were diverse, complex and contradictory attitudes to the transformation of the landscape. Attitudes changed across the period and the themes often overlapped – for example, for some writers the transformation of the landscape was represented as a symbol of the creation of national identity. In order to deal with the vast amount of literature I initially divided chapters into the subjects of poetry and fiction, each dealing with much the same themes and drawing similar conclusions, but with certain differences arising from the genres.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis I have not confined myself to any single literary, historical or environmental theory in which to place my work. The approach is primarily empirical – an attempt to describe the extent, the range, and the major concerns of the material rather than an interpretation of them from a theorised point of view. Admittedly there is no such thing as objective description – in my thesis I asked questions of the materials such as what attitudes they had towards landscape transformation and how these related to attitudes towards national identity, but these were questions suggested by the texts themselves. My readings of the sources go basically with rather than against the grain, but with the arrangement and
classification being possible only because of the historical distance. Therefore the approach is one of organised description, rather than a theoretically-orientated interpretation. The language of the description is not determined by the vocabulary of a single approach, allowing flexibility.

As the 'Theory of Landscape, Literature and Identity' section shows, I have not discarded theoretical discourses, and have taken onboard useful aspects from a number of disciplines. I have used various terminologies in a cross-disciplinary way, wherever they are useful or accurate to the New Zealand historical or literary context – for example, the use of a literary rather than historical label on the period of study. I looked at and found a number of approaches not particularly useful. The applicability of postmodern or postcolonial readings to the period of literature or history is questionable. Ecocriticism is still struggling to balance theory and practice. Some approaches, such as ecofeminism, I rejected outright. I am indebted to environmental history and geographical concepts such as landscape, wilderness, frontier and symbolic landscapes. Relph's approach of place and placelessness is implicitly central to my analyses of notions of home and identity in literature. I found Cronon's combination of environmental and cultural history admirable. An approach I particularly admire and have attempted to emulate is that of Suzanne Falkiner, whose 1992 works, *The Writer's Landscape: Wilderness and Settlement*, provide a literary, cultural and historical portrait of the Australian landscape.

Chapter One: 'New Zealand Late Colonial Poetry as Environmental Text, 1890-1920' begins with an explanation of the modes, themes and contradictions of New Zealand verse during this period, as little has been previously written on the topic. A description of the various ways in which the poetry can be used as an environmental text follows. Poems from two key publications of the period – Alexander and Currie's 1906 and 1926 anthologies of New Zealand verse – are discussed in this light. There is a brief section on the use of poetry in portraying landscape pictures. The theme of the transformation of the landscape in verse is discussed, revealing some surprising attitudes from late colonial poets. Chapter One concludes with a section on environmental disasters in verse.

Chapter Two: 'Response to Landscape in New Zealand Late Colonial Poetry, 1890-1920' begins with the transitional problems of identity that settler poets faced when describing the New Zealand landscape. The comparative British-New Zealand landscape theme of Home versus home is discussed, followed by a section on the ways in which the New Zealand landscape was
used in poems of national identity. A section on 'station ballads' concerns a much-neglected form of popular poetry that has had a significant influence on New Zealand national ideologies and literature. The section entitled 'The Living Landscape' questions and reinterprets the exemplification of Edward Tregar's 'Te Whetu Plains' as representative of a colonial consciousness, and identifies various forms of response to the landscape by late colonial poets, revealing poets were more likely to appreciatively express beauty and peace rather than fear and alienation. The chapter concludes by discussing the poems of Blanche Baughan and Katherine Mansfield in terms of original responses to the New Zealand landscape.

Chapter Three: 'Late Colonial Fiction as Environmental Text, 1890-1921' begins with a mapping of late colonial novels by geographical location. The extensive documentation of the transformation of the landscape in New Zealand literature is shown. The chapter concludes with a section on the portrayal of bushfires and other common frontier hazards in literature.

Chapter Four: "'The Toll of the Bush': Perceptions of the New Zealand Landscape in Late Colonial Fiction' begins with a look at expressions of fear with the untransformed wilderness in late colonial literature. A second section deals with the influence of the semi-transformed New Zealand landscape in literature. The third section is on attitudes of characters towards the New Zealand landscape, whereby a range of common responses to the transformation of the landscape are identified. Finally, the chapter identifies explicit authorial attitudes to the transformation of the landscape.

Chapter Five: 'Home, National Identity and Landscape in New Zealand Fiction, 1890-1921' draws on examples of how the landscape began to be comparatively used as the symbol of and associated with national identity in late colonial novels and short fiction. The section 'Environmental Rationalisations and Nationhood' identifies in New Zealand late colonial literature a common belief in a positive future and rising national pride associated with environmental transformation. The chapter concludes with a summary of the dominant attitudes that emerge from the full range of texts.

Chapter Six: 'Late Colonial Non-fiction as Environmental Text' briefly deals with examples of various forms of non-fiction, such as travelogues, tourist booklets, popular scientific writing and certain highly significant texts such as William Pember Reeves' popular history The Long White Cloud: Ao Tea Roa (1898) and Herbert Guthrie Smith's Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station (1921) – some of the world's earliest environmental histories in modern terms.

Chapter Seven: 'Urban Landscapes in New Zealand Late Colonial Literature, 1890-1921' begins with a statistical description of the process of
urbanisation New Zealand underwent during the period. A section entitled "The Four Queens" finds consistent similarities in writing on the centres of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. A section on provincial townships explains why New Zealanders were happier writing about these than urban environments and gives examples from verse. 'The Rural Myth in Literature' returns to historiography in order to examine the transportation of the British rural myth to New Zealand, and its enshrinement here in social and legislative institutions – thus explaining the distinct lack of urban settings in New Zealand late colonial literature. This is expanded on in the section 'Rural vs Urban', as attitudes of New Zealanders to their cities in literature are exampled. 'The Greater Urban View' outlines reasons for the preference of Australian and British urban settings in New Zealand literature of the period. Chapter Seven concludes with a discussion of the problematic 'New Zealand rural-urban paradox.'

Finally, Chapter Eight provides a comparison of New Zealand literature, 1890-1920, with its contemporary colonial literatures of Australia and Canada – affirming many of the trends and attitudes I have identified within New Zealand literature, but also highlighting certain unique attitudes to environment and transformation that arise from different landscapes.

One perceivable omission from my thesis is the place of Maori in environmental transformation. The reason for this was an absence of Maori in literature, reflecting an invisibility in society. There were no Maori authors writing in English during the period, so Maori were only presented from a Pakeha perspective. Although Maori were active in logging, selling cutting rights to land and sometimes establishing their own timber companies, the only portrayals of Maori bushmen in literature are found in William Satchell’s *The Land of the Lost* (1902) and William Baucke’s *Where the White Man Treads* (1905). Maori in literature were confined to the stereotypes of either comic characters (such as Pine in Satchell’s *The Toll of the Bush*) or melodramatic savages (such as in Alfred Grace’s *Atareta: The Belle of the Kainga*). Maori in literature were viewed as colourful background material, romantic relics of a former age, confined to the *pa* and the periphery of the developing colony. The ‘dying Maori’ theory was prevalent – best seen in Baucke’s documentary. The same terms of evolutionary progress used to justify the replacement of the bush with farmland, were applied to the Maori. Many novels such as Jessie Weston’s *Ko Méri* (1890) and William Walker’s *Zealandia’s Guerdon* (1902) articulated and mourned the passing of the Maori race, while Arthur Adams’ *Tussock Land* (1904) advocated a future of intermarriage. Several novels, such
as Harry Vogel's *A Maori Maid* (1898) dealt with the problems faced by half-caste girls. In verse the transformation of the landscape was frequently related to the passing of the Maori. For example, the image of 'English grass' replacing native plants as the doomed Maori give way to the Pakeha settlers occurred in Dora Wilcox's 'Onawe' and Marie Randle's 'The Maori Boy's Lament' (see Chapter 1). The literature is evidence primarily of the perceptions of the time, not the actual population distribution, just as the relative lack of attention to urban life does not mean that it was not there but only that it was not considered as especially suitable for literary presentation nor as a distinctive factor in national identity.

The Transformation of the Landscape in Late Colonial New Zealand.

This is a brief overview of the environmental changes that occurred during the late colonial period in New Zealand. The transformation of the landscape was extraordinarily ruthless and rapid. Sinclair states: "The alteration of the central North Island from dense forest to grass must be one of the most startling and efficient reconstructions of a landscape in the world. For the pioneers it was a hard-won and major achievement." In the South Island a generation before settlers had systematically burnt the tussock. The Canterbury plains had been a sea of tussock, encased by the dangerous rivers coming down from the Southern Alps. Now the settlers had replaced the tussock with grassland, fields of wheat and plantations and windbreaks of exotic trees. Changes in land-holding took place, with the advent of the small family farm. By the mid 1890s the large sheep runs had been trimmed away to allow a closer mesh of lowland rural settlement. Another major alteration to the landscape was the draining of swampland. In the 1900s large areas of swamp were drained, burned and converted into pasture. The Hauraki plains, south of Auckland, were reclaimed by digging canals through the swamp. In Southland the same result was achieved by laying endless miles of tiled field drains below the surface of the soil.

In the North Island 'breaking in' the land meant clearing the bush for pasture (the term 'bush' denoting anything from manuka scrub to immense primeval forest trees). An enormous zone of bush was cleared in the North Island, from land newly acquired from Maori. It was the biggest such

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clearance in the country’s history and one that was questioned, if at all, for its too rapid destruction of a valuable resource than for the process itself. Where the bush was reasonably accessible to transport, towns and ports the trees were felled for timber. In North Auckland and the Coromandel waterways were used to float logs out of the bush. Elsewhere logs were brought out by teams of bullocks, on railways, and to a lesser extent on horse-drawn tramways. Sawmills were powered by steam engines, fuelled with wood. In 1905 and 1907, when official reports were compiled on the state of the timber industry, the major sawmilling areas were the lower North Island and Northern kauri forests. Timber was used for railway sleepers, housing in both the North and South Island towns and cities, and in the case of timber from the west coast of the North Island was exported to Australia. By 1907, by which time milling had passed its peak, national output totalled 432 superfeet from 411 sawmills. Sometimes considerable areas of hillside bush would be cleared by a 'drive/whereby a line of trees on a slope would be partly cut through and then the highest one felled so each tree would knock down the one below it like dominoes. In the North Island kauri forests, tree trunks were often washed downhill by a system of log dams – a remarkable engineering feat. Sawmilling often complemented farming, with settlers contracting the felling of stands of timber to sawyers. Much of the North Island bush was cleared by Scandinavian and Maori bush-fellers working on contract.

For settler-farmers the commonest method of clearing bush was simply to burn it off. Ideally as many trees as possible were felled during the winter so that an area could be burned off in the hot summer. Often, however, settlers simply cut the undergrowth to make tinder and fired the trees as they stood. Timing for burning off was critical, as the felled trunks and branches had to be thoroughly dry and sufficient wind was needed to produce the sought after 'white burn' which reduced most of the logs to ashes and provided a bed for the grass. If a burn-off consumed only the lighter and dryer wood, a second attempt would almost certainly fail. The fires would last for days, even weeks, covering the countryside with a pall of smoke. Fires could all too easily get out of control – the summers of 1886, 1908 and 1918 being especially notorious for bushfires. After a burnoff grass seed was hand-sown in the potash-rich ash. Cattle grazed in between the stumps or the gaunt blackened skeletons of dead trees, usefully clearing paths through the bush and firming

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85 'From Forest to Pasture: The Clearance of the North Island Bush, 1870s to 1910s,' in Malcolm McKinnon, ed., New Zealand Historical Atlas. Auckland: David Bateman Limited and Department of Internal Affairs, 1997, Plate 47.  
86 New Zealand Historical Atlas, Plate 47.
the soft ground so sheep could be introduced. Pickaxes and horses helped dig
and drag out huge stumps, a prolonged task often completed by a later
generation of farmers, with trunks remaining standing for thirty or forty years
in many parts of the country. The Crown also encouraged bush clearance.
Settlers who improved land by clearing bush, sowing pasture, fencing and
building a permanent house, could get title to it from the Crown on favourable
terms. Between 1895 and 1914 settlers cleared some 1,684,231 acres of land
leased or sold by the Crown.

Other dramatic transformations of the landscape took place. In the far
North the kauri timber and gum industry peaked between 1890 to 1910, being
a major cause of Auckland's physical, industrial and mercantile growth. Gum
extraction left large areas of the far North semi-desert landscapes. Gold mining
revived in the 1890s and 1900s with the introduction of new methods and
equipment, such as sluicing and dredging, leaving large scars of tailings on the
Central Otago landscape. Rabbits reached plague proportions in the 1890s
despite substantial attempts at control, devastating the landscape in large parts
of the southern and eastern South Island and the south-east of the North Island.
The landscape also showed increasing signs of human habitation, with fences,
roads, railways, bridges, telegraph and telephone lines, the creation of
townships and the rapid expansion of the main urban centres.

The settlers spoke of 'breaking in the land' meaning taming or
domesticating. Breaking the land might have been a more accurate image,
their transformations leaving huge scars on the landscape. The majority of the
ancient and unique New Zealand forests were destroyed forever, survivors and
descendants of the forests of Gondwana of fifty to a hundred million years
ago. The burnt tree trunks left a depressing yet strangely eloquent testimony
to the price paid for progress or economic development, as observed by
poets, such as William Pember Reeves in 'The Passing of the Forest', Blanche
Baughan's 'A Bush Section' and Alan Mulgan's 'Dead Timber'. Scenes of
environmental desolation dominate the literary and photographic records of
late colonial New Zealand. The same records also portray the heroic and
exhausting labours of the pioneers – chopping down huge trees, driving
railways, roads and bridges through the bush, digging great drains, and all by
hand, with the aid of horses and bullocks. Man broke the land, but often the
land broke man too. For some decades after it was the constructive efforts of

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87 Sinclair and Harrex, Looking Back, p.102.
88 New Zealand Historical Atlas, Plate 47.
89 Sinclair and Harrex, Looking Back, p.102.
the pioneers which were remembered by their descendants. The consequences of their environmental transformations also caused problems for their descendants. Burning off the tussock exposed the ground to more rapid run-off, thus increasing the likelihood of floods and also drying out in summer. Erosion of hillsides where the bush had been removed became a major problem for farmers. The removal of bush in headwaters, coupled with uncontrolled burning of vegetation, undermined the ability of catchments to cope with extreme weather events. Rivers suffered from shingling up and flooding, destroying valuable farmlands along their lower reaches. These effects of environmental damage generally did not become apparent until the 1930s.

The late colonial period also saw the beginnings of a conservation ethic. A strange and often contradictory attitude to environmental transformation is apparent in the source literature. On one hand settlers celebrated the progressive transformation of the landscape, while on the other they lamented the loss of the natural indigenous beauty. During this period government took the first political steps towards conservation. In 1897 a forestry division within the Department of Lands was established, but the government's primary goal was settlement and improvement of land – little or no efforts to conserve indigenous forests were implemented until 1920, when a separate forestry division was created. More significantly parliament created reserves and national parks and measures were introduced to preserve natural scenery and protect endangered birds. Horonuku Te Heuheu had sought to establish Tongariro National Park since 1887 – the agreement was formally ratified by the government in 1894. Egmont National Park was established in 1900, and in 1905 much of Fiordland was acquired as the Sounds National Park. By 1907 more than half the present area of national parks had been reserved in one form or another. Whether the appropriation of land for national parks arose from a genuine desire within the government for preservation, or through political premeditation with a view to tourist and recreation potential is questionable. New Zealand geographers Fitzharris and Kearsley state: "It is perhaps more fortunate that the bulk of scenic land was perceived as unsuitable for settlement and farming and thus passed into preservation almost by default."91 There was concern for preserving areas of natural beauty which had the potential to attract tourists. John McKenzie, Minister of Lands, passed special legislation in 1891 to protect the Wanganui River and he tried to buy up

as much of the riverbank as he could to maintain its pristine appeal. The 1892 Land Act also made provision for the preservation of scenery, flora and fauna, and instructed the Department of Lands to investigate areas which should be designated as suitable for such care. These detailed and often beautifully illustrated reports can be found every year thereafter in the *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*. Eventually the 1903 Scenery Preservation Act expanded this role and established a special division within the Department of Lands and Survey for this express purpose. Bird sanctuaries were set up at Resolution Island in Doubtful Sound, on Little Barrier Island and at Kapiti Island. Brooking evaluates the environmental impact of McKenzie's policies as Minister of Lands during a period when "General settler indifference to preserving native fauna and flora and the economic imperial drive to develop farmland and thereby burn bush and drain wetlands obviously proved much more crucial than the actions of individual politicians in determining the fate of native species."

In late colonial New Zealand the conservation ethic was by no means widespread in government and society. Environmental pressure came upon the government from a handful of concerned conservationists (such as James Wilson, Harry Ell, and Leonard Cockayne) whose views were more radical than popular. However, across the late colonial period there emerged a slowly dawning realisation that many unique natural features were under threat of extinction and needed rescuing before it was too late. In the years in between transformation from an indigenous beauty towards an imported notion of pastoral beauty, the burnt bush presented an extremely unattractive and desolate landscape. Some settlers even stopped detesting native fauna and flora that had formerly blocked development and began to appreciate their special qualities. This realisation is revealed in the poems of William Pember Reeves, the poems and stories of Blanche Baughan and the novels of William Satchell. The gradual move to preservation and conservation can be seen as part of a wider global changing attitude to nature. European history had been characterised by a love-hate relationship between the country and the city.

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95 Brooking, *Lands for the People?* p.182.
expressed by an idealisation of the Pastoral. Wild lands were seen as a reservoir of opportunity for society to tame to pre-Romantic beliefs that the world had a pre-ordained goal which was founded upon the fate of humanity. Once the reservoir was seen as in danger of being emptied by exploitation, a conservation ethic arose celebrating wilderness for its own sake in almost spiritual and sometimes misanthropic terms.\footnote{Fitzharris and Kearsley, 'Appreciating Our High Country' in \textit{Southern Approaches}, p.204.}
FIGURE 1: The Hay-Wain, John Constable (1776–1837).
Constable’s Hay-wain, epitomising the picture of rustic England, entered the national imagination through reproduction. The imposition of British ideals of rural beauty was to have an enormous effect on the colonist’s attitudes to the New Zealand landscape and their transformation of it.
[The National Gallery, London.]
During 1890-1920 vast areas of central North Island bush were burnt and replaced with grassland – one of the greatest reconstructions of a landscape in the world. Fires covered the countryside with a pall of smoke. Fires could all too easily get out of control and the bushfire became a melodramatic plot staple of late colonial novels. This photograph was taken by Charles Wildbore, a farmer in the valley.

[Palmerston North Public Library.]
CHAPTER 1.

NEW ZEALAND LATE-COLONIAL POETRY AS ENVIRONMENTAL TEXT, 1890-1920.
NEW ZEALAND LATE-COLONIAL POETRY AS ENVIRONMENTAL TEXT, 1890-1920.

"He might have been all right at his poetry and stuff, but he was a rotten new chum of a musterer." ¹

New Zealand Late Colonial Poetry: Approaches and Themes.

New Zealand late colonial poetry has always been something of an embarrassment for the compilers of collections or anthologies. Within the Hocken or Turnbull libraries there are over sixty volumes of verse, optimistically printed between 1890-1920, now forgotten and unread except by literary researchers. The majority of these slim volumes were published in the 1890s and early 1900s, with the First World War evidently repressing the writing of poetry, an occupation perhaps seen as frivolous in a colonial society during wartime.

New Zealand late colonial poetry, like the British poetry of the time was transitional between late-Victorian and Georgian modes, but with additional colonial complications. The period saw a gradual, tentative and partial transition from the 'Home'-orientated attitudes of the Colonial period towards the cultural nationalism that emerged in the 1930s. The 1930s poets associated with Phoenix and the Caxton Press oversimplified the period in their quest to overthrow the 'conservative literary establishment' and create a body of indigenous literature differentiated from English traditions², and thus emphasised where the poetry immediately fell short of their goals rather than attempting to characterise the tensions within it and its patterns of development. Curnow's notorious statement concerning the poetry of the 1890s, that "The lucky accident of a good poem did not happen in that space of the colony's history,"³ has set the tone for the dismissal of the poetry of the period as "inept,"⁴ "disappointing and awkward,"⁵ "depressing" and "mediocre."

However, the consensus that late-colonial New Zealand verse was poor verse is not a retrospective view, coloured by contemporary taste or style; the writers and critics of the time were the first to admit that New Zealand poetry was inferior – both in terms of the great Victorian poets it sought to imitate, and in terms of an embryonic New Zealand school of verse. Alexander and Currie, compilers of *New Zealand Verse* (1906), admitted that New Zealanders, though they wrote poetry, did not read their own poets and that many volumes of poetry deserved the death from neglect they suffered. The editors stated apologetically that "there is nothing very great to be disclosed herein". Alexander and Currie excused the failings of New Zealand verse on its pioneer heritage (too busy for literary effort) and the small population, concluding that they had done their best with the material available and hoped the compilation would be a beginning that would further the progress of New Zealand literature and culture. Of course the poetry of the period is not all bad; there were genuinely talented poets such as B. E. Baughan. The effect of the inundation of poor verse is that when a writer produced a good poem it sticks out. Thus the compilers of anthologies, such as Curnow and O'Sullivan, have exemplified individual poems such as Edward Tregear's 'Te Whetu Plains'. Any literary critic searching for a distinctive New Zealand poet, voice or school of poetry in this period will invariably be disappointed, but there are more than enough individual poems of value to make the search worthwhile.

As Alexander and Currie's introduction shows, from almost the very beginnings of New Zealand poetry, New Zealand poets have been self-conscious and critical of their work. Partly this is due to the awkward contradictions of writing colonial literature, which O'Sullivan defines as "a necessary stumbling between appropriating what belongs to someone else, and the need for some kind of subsequent redefining." Torn between Victorian poetical convention and the need to find new forms or a voice in which to express a new situation – "a problem of radical isolation which genius might scarcely have mastered" – the late-colonial poets managed according to their

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8. Ibid.
means. If the poetry of the period was poor, it was due to the period being one of confusing but necessary literary transition.

As a result of these tensions and insecurities, New Zealand late-colonial poetry seldom produced any original forms. By the 1890s New Zealand poets, with their utilitarian colonial education, modeled themselves on an earlier period of an idealised British tradition, that of Tennyson, Browning and Wordsworth. Other influences were Robbie Burns, Kipling, or Longfellow. There were numerous melodramatic versifications of Maori mythology, following in the footsteps of Alfred Domett’s epic Ranolf and Amohia (1872). Another popular model was offered by the Australian balladeers Gordon, Kendall, Paterson and Stephens. The larger, more discerning Australian audience for poetry meant that much New Zealand verse was classified as 'Australasian.' The Sydney Bulletin, under the editorship of ex-New Zealander Arthur H. Adams, assumed the role of patron to New Zealand poetry: it printed much verse from New Zealand, labeling its country of origin with the pet name of 'Maoriland.'

The great majority of New Zealand poems of the period were lyrical or meditative and distinctly not New Zealand in content:

Reflex homage to the Beauty and Grandeur of Nature and pious musings about God, the Great Creator... sentimentality, didacticism, pomposity, melodrama, vagueness – these are the hallmarks of the bulk of nineteenth century New Zealand verse.

New Zealand late colonial poets concentrated on the themes of Victorian verse, typically love songs, lullabies, dirges and sonnets, celebrations of Art and Beauty, verses on classical Greek mythology and philosophical and religious musings. This omission or avoidance of recognisably New Zealand content in poetry can lead to several significant cultural-historical conclusions. New Zealanders (as represented by New Zealand poets) lacked confidence in their colonial state – they still strongly identified themselves as British, and adhering to the tried and safe formulas of the British literary tradition would have served as a reminder of this. Indeed this may explain poetry's social or personal function and why so much was produced. Therefore the late-colonial poets

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12 Curnow, 'Introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45' in Look Back Harder, p.48.
14 See the section 'Australasian Writing' in Chapter 8.
were not yet ready to come to terms with their new surroundings and environment in poetry.

The poems that were written on New Zealand topics were initially predominantly either bland cliches of sentimental Victorian verse or schizophrenic romanticisations of New Zealand as an exotic scenic wonderland. These poems also shared a number of common themes. There were apostrophes to 'Zealandia' and descriptions of Maoriland tourist spots. For history, poets drew on Maori mythology or tales of ancient gold-prospectors. Poems on seasons, sunrises and sunsets over various places were common. There were many poems on native birds and trees.

Significantly, themes of colonial exile and homesickness were common in New Zealand verse. Loss, sadness and absence (common themes of Victorian poets) were expressed in New Zealand verse as nostalgia for an idealised English or Scottish childhood. Poems such as Bracken's 'April Here and April There' compared the two countries, while there were a disproportionate amount of verses commenting on how different Christmas was in New Zealand. Consciousness of difference led to picturesque tourist's-eye descriptions of New Zealand as an exotic scenic wonderland.16

The British-born poets-in-exile compensated by writing grandiose praises of their rugged new land as pure and free, an ocean citadel unsullied by (British) history, and by celebrating the achievements of the pioneers and the golden promise of the future. In conjunction with their nostalgic homesick poems, and difficulties over transition of language, these writings often seem strained and unconvincing. However a new generation of poets (often New Zealand born) was appearing, and in the late-colonial period writers such as Jessie Mackay, Blanche Baughan and David McKee Wright began writing verse in genuine appreciative response to the New Zealand landscape.

It is the way in which poets learned to respond to the New Zealand landscape during the 1890-1920 period, adopting new styles and using new vernacular language, that provided the foundations for a distinctive New Zealand poetry. Through tracing the ways in which the late-colonial poets depict and respond to the New Zealand landscape, we can understand much about their colonial insecurities, their growing sense of national identity, their perceptions of beauty and their attitudes towards the environment.

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Landscape in Late Colonial New Zealand Verse:
Poetry as Environmental Text.

There are several ways in which New Zealand verse, 1890-1920, constitutes an excellent source for environmental history. At its most basic application, poetry can provide 'landscape pictures' – descriptive portrayals of the New Zealand landscape as seen through the eyes of contemporary observers. In their introduction to New Zealand Verse (1906), Alexander and Currie stated that if there was any New Zealand school of poetry it was certainly a school of landscape:

Such a thing might be expected. New Zealand is perhaps unequalled among the countries of the earth for the combination in its natural scenery of variety with grandeur and beauty.

Nearly all the Maorilanders have put some of their efforts to painting, each in his own way and with his own limitations, a portion of the splendour that lies around them. Half this volume could have been filled with verses in praise of Maoriland, and the standard the editors set themselves not been lowered. It would, in fact, have been possible to fill the book entirely with such pieces – and in that case, it is true, some of them would have been very bad verse indeed: but it would have been the sincerest book of verse in the "Canterbury Poets" series.17

Alexander and Currie were being modest. As I was to discover, they had painstakingly trawled through all the New Zealand verse and extracted every single poem of any literary value. Allen Curnow states their achievement can be appreciated by anyone who has undertaken the "drudgery" of reading every early published volume of New Zealand verse: "Suspecting that our editors might have passed over some colonial poet of unusual gifts, I once completed this unprofitable task: at least I was satisfied, if a little disappointed, that no such poet existed."18 In fact, because the amount of verse with distinctive New Zealand content was so scarce, in their search for indigenous material Alexander and Currie have included virtually all the landscape poems published before 1906.

Alexander and Currie realised that if there was anything novel or intrinsically interesting in their country’s verse, it was in this "scenic poetry," and while it was not capable of "being made into the loftiest poetry" it could rise

17  Alexander and Currie, New Zealand Verse. xxi-xxii.
to no mean heights and the need for this kind of writing had not been exhausted: "the Bush and hills of Maoriland are still calling their lovers to paint their colours and sing their songs".19

In actuality, the landscape is inextricable from poetry with a New Zealand content; it is an ever-present force or background which, while not intended as the explicit purpose of a poem, intrudes into the foreground colouring all subjects, as Alexander and Currie recognised:

... the land itself comes by glimpses into verse which cannot strictly be called scenic verse – up-country rhymes, songs of the seasons, tales of the Maori, – her mana is woven into the complaints of the exiles, and in the best of it all, the national verse, the land and her people are hardly to be separated the one from the other.20

In other words the New Zealand landscape exercises an influence on history, national identity and the people, and the portrayal of these subjects in verse. Poems can be environmental texts on far more levels than landscape descriptions, and I will examine New Zealand late-colonial poetry in terms of some other common poetical/environmental themes.

The standard for the treatment of landscape in early colonial poetry was set by Alfred Domett (1811-1887). Domett received exorbitant praise from Alexander and Currie for the landscape "word-painting" in his Maori romance *Ranolf and Amohia* (1872), in particular his vivid descriptions and accurate observations of bush and birdlife.21 Ever more cynical, Curnow considers these brief landscape descriptive passages the only bits worth salvaging in the five-hundred-page epic.22 If Domett's elevated style and romanticised Maori landscapes of Eden represent the 'hieratic' Victorian mode, the 'vernacular' was represented by the Scottish verse of John Barr (1808-1889), who described the struggles of pioneering life and breaking in the land. A predecessor of the station balladeers can be found in the demotic slang of Charles Robert Thatcher's goldfields verse.23 The themes of an overseas Home landscape, romanticisation of the exotic indigenous landscape, and (contradictorily) the celebration of the transformation of the landscape were continued in late-colonial poetry, but with significant modifications or departures.

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20 Ibid, xxv-xxvi.
22 Curnow, 'Introduction to The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse ' in Look Back Harder, p.148.
Poems of 'national identity' often make good environmental texts. Within the late-colonial period a significant number of poems, odes or jubilee works in praise of New Zealand were written. It was common for books of verse, especially those published overseas, to begin with an effusive address to Zealandia, ocean citadels and homes of the free. A developing national identity, resulting from New Zealand's performance in the Boer war, meant that much of this verse became increasingly militaristic and patriotic. While some poets continued to portray New Zealand as a dutiful child of the British Empire, others began to see New Zealand as a nation in its own right. The poets-in-exile and native born poets compared New Zealand to Britain, and sometimes found in its favour. For the first time, native-born poets away from New Zealand, such as Arthur Adams or Dora Wilcox, began writing verse expressing homesickness for their own country. These poems of national identity make good environmental texts because they inevitably associate the landscape with the essence of nationhood. The national verse contains large amounts of landscape description, and while these descriptions are mostly idealised, touristic and exotic rather than accurate, this does not detract from their relevance; New Zealanders searched for national emblems and found them in the landscape, fauna and flora. Metaphors of purity and pristineness were common, as New Zealand's landscape and climate were compared favourably over those of overseas. The jubilee odes celebrate the labour of the pioneers and the profitable transformation of the nation's landscape. Such poems of national assertion were often contradictory, as they praised the pristine New Zealand landscape, but also the 'improvement' of it.

Until the turn of the century themes of exile and homesickness had dominated poetry. New Zealand was defined in terms of absence of what it lacked. Both Curnow and Jackson discuss this as symptomatic of Victorian verse – expression of colonial alienation was a convenient vehicle for conventional Victorian gestures of sadness and loss. The struggle of the colonists to sustain their feeling of identity with England meant that the New Zealand landscape was often portrayed as an exotic or dream-like unreal fairyland, in comparison with the 'reality' of England. Gradually 'Home' became idealised into an equally unreal landscape: "nostalgia for an English home fabricated out of cosy childhood memories of robins, village greens, rose gardens and white Christmases, or a 'guid auld Scottish hame where the blue

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heather-bells bloom'd bonnieie." After reading yet another maudlin spiel on longing for childhood's fond home after seeing a blackbird in the garden, one is tempted to respond 'if you don't like it leave, you whining pom!' O'Sullivan defines this period of literature as "colonial neurosis" — obsessive regret for what one has not had, and self-consciousness about one's own, leading to a paradox of awkward local assertiveness on one hand and rabid imperialism on the other. The problem was where to draw the line between the English who settled overseas, and those born overseas who claimed they were English. This colonial condition meant that literature was being fed by two sources at once — poets were committed to a tradition moving beyond their grasp, and at the same time confronting a present which demanded a different eye and voice. Even though more than half the population were New Zealand born by the 1890s, New Zealand poets were seldom sure where to locate their audience. Consciousness of difference meant that whenever New Zealand poets attempted to describe the landscape, they expressed themselves largely in tourist's-eye postcard descriptions. The contradictions within this 'Home versus Home' poetry can be a useful source of environmental material, and in particular this consciousness of difference. It is possible to identify much about late-colonial New Zealanders' attitudes to their environment and their place in it through the comparisons they made between the two landscapes.

New Zealanders, of course, were not unaware of the presence or the beauty or the brooding ambiguity of the landscape they lived in. Within the large amount of late-colonial verse produced only a fraction is on New Zealand subjects, yet a good deal of this is an attempt to say something about the landscape that confronted settlers. One reason for the paucity of verse written on New Zealand subjects, and the awkwardness of the verse that is, could be due to problems over the transition of Victorian poetical convention and language. O'Sullivan states of early New Zealand verse:

For the most part it talks about something new, in a way that has only proved suitable for talking about somewhere else. This was perhaps inevitable. Language must be broken in as much as land itself, the local voice planted and adapted to specific ends.

The poets were carried away in the sentiment of the time. They wrote about exoticised scenery and romanticised Maori mythology because this was how

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25 Jackson, p.350.
27 O'Sullivan, Collected Poems: Ursula Bethell, xiii.
their education and contemporary literature had prepared them to see their country. Curnow states:

It did not occur to them to examine themselves, to find out how far such assumptions corresponded to any actual human response, beyond the sentiments familiarised by 'minor poetry'. If, as they complained, the New Zealanders were apt to neglect their own verse-makers, it may well have been because they found little in them that answered to any radically felt need. The scenery was mainly too close for comfort and the modern Maori was at once too much and too little like ourselves, to be dressed up in verses like a child for a fancy-dress party. There were undercurrents of fear and self-disgust among these 'dwellers in a little island country', the first generation of native pakeha New Zealanders.28

Faced with a radically different new landscape, New Zealand poets had to find new forms of poetry and language to portray or express it. "Insipid praises in a minor Victorian key were no help."29 Poems where the tension or uneasiness of the colonial poet has broken through are rare, but when they do they stick out as far better poetry – genuine or realistic responses to the landscape that owed more to the awareness of an individual mind than to what currently was thought poetry's due, for example Blanche Baughan's 'A Bush Section'.

Late colonial poets responded to the New Zealand landscape in various ways. The most predominant (and extreme) way was to ignore the landscape completely. Poets like David Will M. Burn or Arnold Wall published volumes of poetry with no recognisable New Zealand content whatsoever – very hard to do I imagine for Burn, an Otago farmer, and Wall, an authoritative New Zealand botanist, linguist and mountaineer. They wrote Victorian romantic poetry on 'tried and safe' themes such as love, death, art, dreams, classical mythology, philosophy and religion. Any poems relating to the landscape were on safe topics such as sun, rain or the seasons, and worded in terms of idealised English landscapes. The effect of this is a neutered universal landscape that could be anywhere. Adamant Victorian poets were reluctant to explore new forms or styles in response to the new landscape, or even acknowledge it since it did not fit into their world/literary view. It is ironic that the adamant New Zealand Victorians such as Burn could not deal with the New Zealand landscape when response to nature was such a central theme for the English poets they were influenced by. A good example of this is the incomprehensible poetry of Hubert Church, who manages to address the landscape as sublime

28 Curnow, 'Distraction and Definition,' in Look Back Harder, p.219.
29 Ibid.
without mentioning the actual landscape itself. For Church, a scenic feature, for example Mount Egmont, was a convenient vehicle for a sermon on metaphysical thought – once the scenic point of internal inspiration was got out of the way in the poem’s title there was no need to refer to it again. One gets the impression that writers of identifiably local or vernacular New Zealand verse were to be looked down on – for example as late as 1916 in the foreword to a volume of verse by D. M. Ross, C. R. Bell praised his poetry for its universal qualities and lack of local colour, stating "the poems in this little book may have been written in, say, Sussex instead of Northern New Zealand for all inherent evidence they present to the contrary". Bell praised Ross for his poetic integrity in avoiding the "limited field" of indigenous poetry, and for his adherence to the traditional sonnet form while other Australasian poets were no longer producing them, comparing his work to Milton, Keats, Wordsworth and Rossetti. Many late-colonial writers, such as Mary Richmond, produced several volumes of verse during the period, and often their first book would be entirely Victorian themes with no New Zealand content at all, but later volumes might include tentative poems on the New Zealand scenery or weather.

At the other extreme were the writers of 'station ballads' – distinctive vernacular rural New Zealand verse, by writers such as David McKee Wright, Blanche Baughan, Hamilton Thompson and G. P. Williams. These poems are written in idiomatic New Zealand language with use of colloquial expressions and farming terms. They are narrated by shearers, musterers, prospectors and swaggers. Common themes are a love of the New Zealand rural landscape, hard work, mateship and a mistrust of those in towns. They are often entertaining and humorous, and therefore have not been considered 'serious' poetry suitable for inclusion in anthologies, even by contemporary compilers such as Curnow and O’Sullivan, although a good collection exists in A. E.


C. R. Bell in Ross, Morning Red. Despite Bell's comments, Ross's next book [Stars in the Mist: A Book of New Zealand Verse , London: Selwyn and Blount Ltd, 1928] reveals that he published localised vernacular poems under the false name 'Darius' in the Bulletin ! Poems such as 'Down South' or 'The Old Green Road' were the very type of station ballads Bell despaired.

Likewise Arnold Wall also wrote some excellent farming verse, on topics such as mustering, shearing, frozen lamb, land agents and rabbits. These were not considered appropriate for publication in his volume of 'serious' poetry [Arnold Wall, Blank Verse Lyrics and Other Poems by a Colonial Professor. London: David Nutt, 1900] and were printed in newspapers and journals, but some have been collected in A. E. Woodhouse, ed, New Zealand Farm and Station Verse 1850-1950. Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd, 1967.
Woodhouse's *Farm and Station Verse 1850-1950.* They are a good depiction of station life and work and the rural landscape. For an environmental historian these poems are an untapped goldmine.

Once recognition of difference had translated to acceptance of difference, the late colonial poets had to find a new language to adequately describe their new environment. There are poets who attempt to discuss the New Zealand landscape using English or Scottish words such as 'dell', 'brook', 'burn', 'glen' or 'wood'. These soon became seen as inadequate and words connotating New Zealand landscape features such as 'gully', 'bush' and 'creek' soon infiltrated into the poets' vocabulary.

Another environmental theme within late colonial New Zealand verse is descriptions of changes to the landscape. The most significant human change to the landscape during this period was the removal of the native forests, and William Pember Reeves, Dora Wilcox, William Satchell, Mary Colborne-Veel, Blanche Baughan and Alan Mulgan all wrote poems on this subject. Some early expressions of conservation also surprisingly found their way into verse – for example G. P. Williams and Alexander Bathgate both wrote poems on the demise of indigenous birdlife. William Pember Reeves' poem 'In Pember Bay: Papaitonga Lake' – a poem advocating forest and wildlife reservations – is the first expression of preservation I have found in New Zealand poetry.

Poems that depict 'environmental disasters' are also useful environmental sources. There are a number of poems on subjects such as fires (a common event), floods, droughts and rabbits.

For reasons I will discuss in Chapter 7, descriptions of urban landscapes did not make their way into late-colonial poetry, despite the fact that urban and township growth rapidly accelerated during this period and the majority of New Zealanders now lived in cities. There were a large number of poems on New Zealand towns and cities, but these were brief vague addresses or eulogies, as in novels emphasising idealised garden settings, rather than accurate depictions of urban life. The pastoral myth continued to dominate New Zealander's self-perception of identity.

Overall there is no shortage of environmental material in late colonial New Zealand poetry. The quality of the poems does not matter; it is the content that is important. The period's thematic choice of subjects, what they say (or do not say) about landscapes, and the language they are written in reveal much about attitudes to the environment. But in any case I believe the

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verse representing the New Zealand environment constitutes the best late-colonial poetry. Because of the importance of Alexander and Currie's 1906 anthology, I will treat it as a single work in the same way that the Oxford History of New Zealand Literature and other literary works have done. Environmental verse written by the anthology poets after 1906 and the verse of other poets will then be discussed as environmental texts under broad headings derived from the above discussion. There are numerous poems about, or including landscape description, so I will only use the best-written ones and ones that show a diverse range of landscape-types. I am most interested in poems that demonstrate a genuine response to the landscape – whether an expression of fear, alienation, peace, beauty or the sublime. Therefore this thesis will be a useful reference of literary sources for future environmental historians.

The 1906 Anthology.

In 1906, a young journalist, W. F. Alexander, and a young lawyer, A. E. Currie, compiled the first national anthology of poetry. New Zealand Verse was published in London in a series entitled 'The Canterbury Poets'; it was the last of 103 volumes predominantly made up of all the major English poets from Chaucer onwards. Alexander and Currie produced a well-arranged book, intelligently edited and introduced. It contained 173 poems by 55 authors and an introductory essay of twenty pages. The anthology was biased towards more recent work, but gave a fair picture of the country's poetic achievement over the previous seventy years. Curnow, although dismissive of the poetry of the period, states the importance of the 1906 anthology as a record of our colonial poetical heritage. The poems in New Zealand Verse are loosely arranged, not chronologically or by author, but according to theme and type. About half the volume is on distinctively New Zealand themes, such as landscape pictures, indigenous fauna and flora and Maori myth; the second half of the anthology is Victorian themes. I will discuss selected poems from the 1906 anthology in terms of environmental themes:

The anthology's introductory poem is William Pember Reeves's 'New Zealand' – a nationalistic eulogy. In his portrayal of New Zealand as "a citadel free" Reeves draws on the purity of the environment: "Nor pall of dun smoke
overclouding / Vast cities of clamorous night." Stanza 2 promotes New Zealand's separateness from the fevers, harsh climates and urban pollution of the Old World. The first and final stanzas stress New Zealand's isolation by the "pure" and "wild" seas. The central stanza invokes subduing the landscape through work:

Lo! here where each league hath its fountains
In isles of deep fern and tall pine,
And breezes snow-cooled on the mountains,
Or keen from the limitless brine,
See men to the battlefield pressing
To conquer one foe – the stern soil,
Their kingship in labour expressing,
Their lordship in toil.

Another anthology poem by Reeves, XII 'A Colonist in his Garden' similarly depicts settlers' attitudes towards a progressive transformation of the landscape. The poem describes a colonist receiving a letter inviting him home, and his response. The old colonist states he will never leave; he is firmly rooted. As in the previous poem, transformation of the landscape is imaged as a struggle and a victory over the land:

We stand where none before have stood
And braving tempest, drought and flood
Fight Nature for a home.

The settlers have spent their lives turning "wilderness to flower" in the style of England:

Mine is the vista where the blue
And white-capped mountains close the view,
Each tapering cypress there
At planting in these hands was borne,
Small, shivering seedlings and forlorn,
When all the plain was bare!

The colonist describes his imported thrushes and skylarks – just like at Home – and the land he has planted with exotics: poplars, birches, oaks and flowers, concluding of his daughter; "could I rear in England's air / A sweeter English rose?"

Reeves's poems celebrating the transformation of the landscape are contradicted by his well-known XXVI 'The Passing of the Forest'. The poem laments the loss of the native forest as a cost of transformation, a subject Reeves evidently felt strongly about as this poem appeared in several different
versions in diverse publications, including the appendix of Reeves’s history of New Zealand, *The Long White Cloud: Ao Tea Roa* (1898). I will examine this significant environmental history poem later in the chapter. In the anthology this poem is accompanied by Dora Wilcox’s poem of similar title, ‘The Last of the Forest’, in which the Spectre of the forest addresses the “White Man.” The poem invokes the ghostly sounds of dead trees creaking in the night: "Moaning a requiem in their utter desolation, / For old worlds passing by?"

The theme of ‘Home vs Home’ is well-represented in the anthology. Poems II, III and IV; ‘To One in England’, ‘The Night-watch Song of the “Charlotte Jane”’ and ‘The Old Year and the New’ are poems of exile, or transitional nationalistic poems, pointing at New Zealand as a new start or utopia. Naturally the easiest comparison to make between old and new worlds is that of landscape or climate. Winter and Spring are common symbolic themes in this type of poetry. VII, ‘Emagravit’ by Mary Colborne-Veel nostalgically contrasts the beauties of New Zealand’s flowers and birds with those of England. XIII, ‘A Leave-taking’ by Frederick Napier Broome describes the writer’s sadness at leaving New Zealand on a ship. Looking his last on the country from the sea, he states he will miss the landscape, especially the peace, calm and silence of the ranges when he is back in urbanised Home. Nevertheless he is leaving, and when he reaches the “white cliffs” of England he will cease to be sad for the “white ranges” of New Zealand.

XIV, ‘Written in Australia’ by Arthur Adams is the first example of a poem about exile from instead of in New Zealand.35 Adams was born in Lawrence, Otago, educated at Otago University and established as a literary figure before settling in Australia, where he wrote the literary columns of the *Bulletin* and was editor of the *Sydney Sun*.36 In this poem Adams complains of the severity of the Australian climate:

The wide sun stares without a cloud:
Whipped by his glance truculent,
The earth lies quivering and cowed!
My heart is hot with discontent –
I hate this haggard continent.

*But over the loping leagues of sea*
*A lone land calls her children free;*
*My own land holding her arms to me*

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Over the loping leagues of sea.

In alternating verses Adams compares the harshness of the Australian landscape and climate with that of New Zealand. Sydney, the stifling and dormant city is contrasted with breezy Wellington. Desolate, stripped and shadeless Australia is described as a wasteland in contrast with New Zealand's cool forests, lakes and rivers. The final five verses personify the two countries' landscapes as girls; he ignores "listless" Australia in comparison with the New Zealand beauty.

XV, 'In London' by Dora Wilcox continues this theme. The narrator looks out on London's "teeming streets", "grim grey houses" and "leaden skies" and feels homesick for the New Zealand landscape. She nostalgically remembers her favourite beach. The poem contains evocative landscape imagery:

Nor shall I hear again
The wind that rises at the dead of night
Suddenly, and sweeps inward from the sea,
Rustling the tussock, nor the weka's wail
Echoing at evening from the tawny hills.

She vividly reminisces about New Zealand flowers and birds – kowhai, tuis, bellbirds, koromiko and manuka – using her memories of "Paradise" to comfort her in London.

The anthology contains poems recognising New Zealand's place in the Empire, such as Charles C. Bowen's 'The Battle of the Free' – a call to arms for England and her "sons of Freedom". However other poems are concerned with an embryonic national identity in relation to the landscape. XLIV, 'The Blind, Obedient Dead,' by M. C. Keane deals with the New Zealanders who died in the Boer war ("They are dreaming of the far-off bush and creeks, and shade and sun"), and those who wait for them at home on the stations and bush farms. The poem concludes by wishing them "Good pasture in their islands of the blest!" X, 'The Dwellings of our Dead' by Arthur Adams depicts a personified landscape as a fittingly splendid grave for the pioneers:

The flax-blades mourn and murmur, and the slender
White ranks of toi go,
With drooping plumes of splendour,
In pageantry of woe...
Our brooding bush shall fold them
In her broad bosomed peace.
Poem V, Alan Mulgan's 'The Empire Builder' is also a transitional nationalistic poem, again emphasising the purity of the new landscape and the satisfaction of hard work:

But mine the sacrament of taintless sky,  
The unstained landscape and the virgin wave,  
Untramelled Nature past all loveliness,  
The rootless toil that shapes the hard clean life, ...  
The axe-song rings its triumph to the stars,  
And ceaseless toil is burnt upon my soul.

However this poem is more significant for the attitudes it displays in regard to changes to the landscape, as Mulgan suggests that transforming the landscape is part of God's plan for the Empire:

And every stroke that seeks the timber's heart  
Swings into place another fretted stone,  
Or shapes to loveliness some breathing curve  
Upon the branching temple of our name.  
God-summoned to the ripening cause I stand,  
Upon the van of Empire, hand to task,  
To work the purpose of the centuries.

LXI, 'The River Avon' by Henry Jacobs celebrates the transformation of Christchurch into an English landscape, as the "wastes" of the plain and "uncultured banks" of the river are beautified with English "verdant meads and fields of waving grain" and church spires.

LVI, 'Onawe' by Dora Wilcox is a poem on the colonisation of the landscape and a lament for the passing of the Maori. The first three stanzas of landscape description evoke gradual landscape transformation, through a gentle atmosphere of peace and tranquillity:

All undisturbed the Pakeha's herds are creeping  
Along the hill;  
On lazy tides the Pakeha's sails are sleeping,  
And all is still.

The Maori, who once battled and feasted there, are gone from Onawe. The phrase "English grass", repeated at the beginning and end of the poem, becomes a metaphor for Darwinian progress:

Tena koe Pakeha! within this fortification  
Grows English grass –  
Tena koe! subtle conqueror of a nation  
Doomed, doomed to pass!
XXXVII, Jessie Mackay's well-known poem 'Spring Fires' is a good landscape and environmental change poem – one of the only poems that depicts the burning off of the tussock in the South Island high country for conversion to pasture. Mackay has effectively captured the feel of the burn-offs, "the running rings of fire", "the quiet bloom of the haze" and "the scent of the burning tussock on the Canterbury hills" – things that were a common sight at the time.37

XLI, 'The Whare' by H. L. Twisleton depressingly describes the aftermath of bush-felling, describing a deserted homestead, on the "thistled grass" where the "stumps, that rot in rain and sun, / Stand bleached to spectral white."

The anthology has a few poems concerned with 'environmental disasters'. David McKee Wright's poem, 'Arlington' XXXIX, describes a broken-up sheep station, ruined by overstocking and rabbits: "The rabbits flourish on the hills and burrow all over the plain, / The stock that ran on Arlington will never run again." The poem is a comment on the demise of the large sheep stations and the harsh environmental and economic realities of sheepfarming.

LXXIII 'To the Makomako, or Bell-bird (Now rapidly dying out of our land)' by Alexander Bathgate, laments the demise of the bell-bird, which he says is now seldom heard and seems doomed to disappear from even remote woods. Bathgate perceptively blames the bell-bird's demise on competition from introduced honeybees, which steal its food source, and from exotic English songbirds.

XL, 'The Old Place' by Blanche Baughan is a depressing narrative by a farmer, in vernacular New Zealand speech, who has given up after fifteen years of hard work breaking in the land:

Oh, it's a bad old place! Blown out o' your bed half the nights,
And in summer the grass burnt shiny an' bare as your hand, on the heights:
The creek dried up by November, and in May a thundering roar
That carries down toll o' your stock to salt'em whole on the shore Clear'd I have, and I've clear'd an' clear'd, yet everywhere, slap in your face,
Briar, tauhinu, an' ruin! God! It's a brute of a place!

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The settlers' sheep numbers are nothing to boast about, his house burnt down, his homesick wife died, but he will miss the place - the apples he planted, the bush paddock, the sea air. He concludes with pathos: "Well, I'm leaving the poor old place, and it cuts as keen as a knife; / The place that's broken my heart - the place where I've lived my life."

The theme of 'station life, work and the land' is well represented in the anthology by the rollicking ballads of David McKee Wright. XXXVI, 'In the Moonlight' contains descriptions of those working on the land at night; gold-dredgers, harvesters and rabbiters. XXXVIII, 'In Town' contains more good South Island landscape description and is unusual because of its internal rural/urban homesickness theme, rather than homesickness for England. In this poem some rabbiters retired in town feel homesick for the rural landscape. XLII and XLIII, 'While the Billy Boils' by David McKee Wright and 'What used to be' by G. B. Lancaster are two vernacular narratives in which farm workers reminisce about the blokes they worked with. Lancaster's musterer recalls his mate who was trampled to death in a cattle drive - now: "Hill an' scrub an' lone gray river - only things I'm lovin' -"

Naturally the majority of New Zealand poems within the anthology are simple landscape descriptions. I have chosen XXII, 'A New Zealand Picture' by Mary E. Richmond as an example of late-colonial landscape portrait poetry at its best. The poem describes Otaki, encompassing the minutest aspects of the environment:

OTAKI, that rollest in thy pride,
First among the rivers far and near,
Little streamlet, flowing blue and clear,
Ocean, with your strong imperious tide.

Russet bushes, sandhills waste and wide,
Pointed flax blades, shining vivid green,
Scarlet spotted spiders, rarely seen
Save by those who know where you abide.

Grey and orange grass, that creeps to bind
Shifting sands and bid them to stay and rest,
Dear and lovely are you all are in kind.

Each is touched with a peculiar grace;
And the soul that loves and watches, best
Learns the wonder of this happy place.
The anthology contains three landscape poems by Anne Glenny Wilson, describing journeys she has made in a unique personal tone (XVII, 'A Spring Afternoon in New Zealand', XXIV 'Fairyland' and XXV 'The Forty-Mile Bush'). There is a series of geo-specific landscape portraits of various scenic places. An early poem by Alfred Domett describes the pink and white terraces and a poem by Joyce Jocelyn shows a waterfall. There are portraits of ' Bowen Falls, Milford Sound' by Hubert Church (LVII) and 'At Governor's Bay' by Dolce A. Cabot (LIX). LX, 'The Four Queens (Maoriland)' by Arthur Adams is an address to the four main cities of New Zealand. In LXII and LXIV David McKee Wright describes 'Wellington' and 'Nelson'. In LXVI and LXVII, 'The City from the Hills' and 'The City in the Plains', Arnold Wall provides two views of Christchurch and surroundings. Clara Singer Poynter describes 'Picton Harbour by Night' (LIV), and in LV John Maclennan is inspired by 'The Mountain Spirit: A Glimpse of Mount Cook'. It is an eclectic collection, but evidently these were the landscape-features that poets chose to depict as representative of New Zealand.

The anthology also has a group of poems on native flora and avifauna, such as LXXII, William Satchell's 'Bell-birds'. LXXIV and LXXV, 'Twilight and the Makomako' and 'Ti-trees and the Kukupa' are poems about bell-birds and wood-pigeons by Johannes C. Andersen, who was praised by Alexander and Currie for the development of the "little dainty vignette of bush and bird," in which he specialised.38

Therefore the 1906 anthology contains a large number of poems on environmental themes. When read as poems they are fairly superficial, but when these poems are examined as environmental texts, the 1906 anthology becomes a significant document, revealing much about attitudes towards and perceptions of New Zealand's landscape and the changes it was undergoing during the period.

The 1926 Anthology.

New Zealand Verse served New Zealand as a standard anthology for more than twenty years. In 1926 Alexander and Currie enlarged it into A Treasury of New Zealand Verse, including forty-three new poems and eighteen new poets. Curnow is scathing of the Treasury, stating it loses the integrity of place and time of the 1906 anthology, adding an air of literary pretentiousness. He judges

38 Alexander and Currie, New Zealand Verse. xxiv-xxv.
that almost nothing that matters was added to New Zealand's verse between 1906 and 1930.\textsuperscript{39} Stuck in the backward-looking Victorian mode, New Zealand poetry did not develop until the emergence of R. A. K. Mason, A. R. D. Fairburn, Ursula Bethell, etc. Within the 1926 anthology there are only four new poems of any environmental relevance.

Alpine and coastal environments are portrayed in XXX, 'The Old Botanist's Farewell to the Southern Alps' by Arnold Wall, and LXXIX, 'A Song of Sandhills' by Mary Colborne-Veel.

XXVIII, Alan Mulgan's 'Dead Timber' has been inserted alongside Reeves' and Wilcox's poems on the removal of the native forests. Unlike these two, Mulgan does not lament the change in landscape, but suggests that the nation is built on dead timber: "There, on the hillside, is our nation's building, / The tall dead trees so bare against the sky." Overseas countries have their temples and cathedrals, but the man-made "desolation" of the New Zealand landscape symbolises "the story of our gain". Mulgan suggests the destruction of forests is an expression of cultural identity or an inspiration of art and literature:

Yet if some ask: "Where is your art, your writing 
By which we know that you have aught to say?"
We shall reply: "Yonder, the hill-crest blighting, 
There is our architecture's blazoned way. 
The monument we fashioned in our winning, 
A gibbet for the beauty we have slain, 
Behold the flower of our art's beginning, 
The jewel in the circlet of her reign!"

The final three stanzas point at the beauty of the dead timber; it is an ever-present, familiar part of the landscape that New Zealanders will come to associate with Home. Mulgan has reworked the 'passing of the forest' genre into a poem that advocates the transformation of the landscape as positive progress. The landscape feature he has chosen to represent New Zealand differs radically from the picturesque bush and mountain scenes of A. H. Adams and co.

In CLXXXVI, 'Rangiora' by Phillip Carrington, the narrator is riding through Rangiora. A voice in his head tells him the land has no history or antiquity, in comparison with England. He questions what history is, and by observing the landscape he reaches a definition of the environmental history of Rangiora (possibly the first expression of environmental history in New Zealand verse). He looks at the fields and sees their story, from "swamp and

\textsuperscript{39} Curnow, 'Distraction and Definition,' in \textit{Look Back Harder}, p.213.
bush of long ago," through to the arrival of the Maori and the environmental changes they made:

Then came the white men with the axe and gun,
And the birds are killed, and the trees lie low in the sun,
And the ground is cleared and stubbed and burned and drained;
And each descending day
Is another chapter in history,
And another acre gained.

The narrator sees the march of settlers: "They come with harrow and plough: with pick and spade they come." He sees the paddocks, fences, introduced trees and houses and concludes by representing children as the environmental future.

**Landscape Pictures.**

In the introduction to *Lilts and Lyrics of New Zealand* by Marie R. Randle, W. P. Reeves writes:

The New Zealand settler is not all prose, nor is he deaf and blind to the fair aspects of Nature around him. The yellow tussock-covered slopes of his swelling hills, the sombre green depths of his forest-clad valleys and gullies, the breezy beaches of his ever-restless sea, the far-off outlines of his snowy alps are as dear to him for their beauty as for their home associations.

... As he turns the pages pleasant memories will arise, and happy hours spent in sunny places present themselves anew and vividly. The notes of the *tui* and *mako-mako* will sound in his ears. He will hear the murmur of his own clear-running creek winding between stiff blades of flax and arching plumes of golden *toe-toe* grass.\(^{40}\)

The section of Randle's collection, headed "New Zealand Lights and Shadows" contained brief simple sketches of life in Otago, with poems such as 'A View at Moeraki' providing detailed and localised landscape description.

It was poems such as these that prompted Alexander and Currie to point towards a New Zealand 'school of landscape poetry'. The landscape picture poems can describe either localised or more generalised settings, weather and seasons, native flora and fauna. They are simple unpretentious poems, not written in especially elevated verse. This chapter-section has no purpose other than to document some of the better examples, depicting a variety of environmental terrains.

Good examples are the poems from the appropriately named section "Water Colours, 1897-1898" in Mary E. Richmond's *Poems*, which includes 'A New Zealand Picture' from the 1906 anthology. Other poems include descriptions of Rangiuru, a storm in Peel Forest and the Otira Gorge. They are all short but evocative poems, with good descriptions of local flora and fauna and an emphasis on colour. Arthur Adams similarly writes short depictive landscape illustrations, such as 'On the Plains' (tussock landscape), 'The Rain in the Bush' and 'The Storm in the Bush'. Douglas Sladen (editor of the Australian anthology) singled out Alexander Bathgate's poem 'Our Heritage' as a "fresh genuine bit of landscape-painting" (although not by modern tastes).

Both Johannes Andersen and Thomas Bracken wrote poems in response to waterfalls they encountered. Bracken's poem, 'The Waterfall: Nicholl's Creek' captures the visual plenitude and atmosphere of the bush, while Andersen's poem 'The Waterfall and the Piwakawaka' economically captures the bush scene and the movement of a fantail.

"Roslyn" (Margaret A. Sinclair) wrote many landscape picture poems, often in the form of descriptive travelogues, such as 'Bush Ballad', which depicts the kauri forest. One of her best landscape pictures, 'Manuka', is unique in depicting "acres on acres" of unproductive manuka-covered scrub-land, which she praises for its hardy qualities and resistance to transformation.

Jessie Mackay's 'The Call of the Upland Yule' demonstrates how a brief verse can paint a vivid alpine scene. Hamilton Thompson's 'The Rabbit Raid at Kenn McGaw's' provides a more detailed and localised high-country scene, with his description of the Lammerlaw ranges in Otago:

A stony, tussock-covered flat,
A turbid stream ahead of that,
And further on, a yellow hill –
A dusky range on further still,
And in the distance, tinted blue,
Another range is what you view
When gazing down at Kenn McGaw's
Old home beyond the Lammerlaws.

There's nothing there of scenery;
There's scarce a shrub, and not a tree;
A verdant patch of grass is rare,
And everything looks bleak and bare.
Though mountain rocks grotesque abound,
And tussock everywhere is found,
There's nothing up at Kenn McGaw's
To make the passing tourist pause...

The austere arid monotony of the tussock land was either very attractive or estranging for settlers and travellers. Something of the latter is captured in Annie Murgatroyd's 'The Sundowner', which describes a swagger's journey through the barren and sweltering landscape until eventually he dies of exhaustion. At its most extreme, poetical treatment of this type of landscape manifested itself in the 'deathly silences' of Edward Tregear's 'Te Whetu Plains'.

David McKee Wright wrote many landscape picture-poems of the Otago high-country. A good example of seasonal poetry is provided by his poem 'Summer in Central Otago,' which evokes the dormant stillness and heat familiar to those who know the region:

Warm summer sleeps around me, droning bees
Suck the dry flowers, and not a whispering breeze
Moves in the languid, dusty poplar trees.

Hoarsely the river murmurs on its way
Between hot banks of shingle; far away
The rugged mountain sides are hazy grey.

There is a listlessness in all around;
Low voices speak with slumber in the sound;
The dry fruit falls unripened to the ground.

No wagon o'er the dust-white road comes down;
There is no stir within the sleepy town;
No sign of life; the plain is still and brown...

Its companion poem, 'Winter in Central Otago,' captures something of the region's frozen climate and landscape:

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52 David McKee Wright, Wisps of Tussock: New Zealand Rhymes. Oamaru: Andrew Fraser, 1900, pp.29-30.
Wild winter in the frozen hills
The rocky peaks, the ice-bound rills
The lowering red of early morning,
The even with its misty chills.  

Therefore, poems can be found that are representative of virtually every New Zealand landscape type. The predominant landscapes chosen as subjects by poets were the bush and the sea. There are not as many poems on alpine-environments as one would expect, possibly because of their accessibility (Arnold Wall’s 'The Old Botanist’s Farewell to the Southern Alps' is the best). Many alpine poems are of tourist spots, such as Mount Cook, viewed from a distance. The mountains however are an ever-present part of the scenic background in poetry. This is compensated for by the poems on the bush, which frequently include detailed descriptions of diverse flora and fauna. In terms of language, no particular style relates to the landscape selection. High-country Otago seems to lend itself to demotic station-ballad verse, but too few poets wrote on this landscape to constitute a regional school.

Transforming the Landscape.

Environmental history at its most basic level studies the changes that humans have made to their environment or landscape. Late colonial New Zealand poetry provides an excellent (as yet untapped) source of documents for the environmental historian.

The most overt environmental transformation to the New Zealand landscape between 1890-1920 was the removal of the indigenous forests of the North island and their conversion to pasture. The demise of the bush was too rapid and visible to ignore and late-colonial poets, departing from the Victorian sentimentality that characterised the era, wrote some of the period’s best and most memorable verse on this subject.

The poet who most vividly evoked the physical realities of the New Zealand late-colonial landscape was Blanche Baughan. Her poem 'Burnt Bush' depicts the stark fallen timber and burnt stumps that were a common scene of the 1890s bush-farm frontier. Baughan, lingering on a bridge in a gully at twilight, describes her surroundings; the "Naked, denuded" land and the "Tall

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53 David McKee Wright, Station Ballads and Other Verse. Dunedin: J. G. Sawell, 1897, p.127.

blacken'd splinters" of trees among which the sheep must pick their way. Her awareness heightened, Baughan is joined in her lament by the voice of the river, Mangi. The sole survivor of a transformed landscape, Mangi speaks to her of the pleasant forest that is gone. The river describes the cool shade, the glances of sunlight through the foliage; the matai, maire, totara and rimu that moss-hung and fern-footed leant towards him; the tree ferns that covered him and drank of him; the sounds of locusts, tuis, rain and the singing of leaves and boughs in the wind. Now Mangi stands unprotected amid the devastation: "Now, unmelodious, barren, unfragrant." The vision passes and Baughan moves off through the stretches of new pasture: "Through the Burnt Bush and the little bare settlement."55

Baughan's more in-depth work on the same subject, 'A Bush Section,'56 written within a few years of her arrival in 1900, is the definitive New Zealand environmental history poem. Curnow praises 'A Bush Section' as "the best New Zealand poem before Mason," pointing to the unabashed truth to its subject, vivid density of language and other features of poetic technique.57 The poem's five acts provide an image of a place, a moment in history and a colonial state of mind; charting with marvellous precision the "inner landscape" that "colonists so rarely and reluctantly... admitted to consciousness."58 This poem is not a tourists' or Victorian lyrists' romanticised Maoriland, but a powerfully-visual scene of rural environmental devastation:

> Logs, at the door, by the fence; logs, broadcast over the paddock;
> Sprawling in motionless thousands away down the green of the gully,
> Logs, grey-black. And the opposite rampart of ridges
> Bristles against the sky, all the tawny, tumultuous landscape
> Is stuck, and prickled, and spiked with the standing black and grey splinters,
> Strewn, all over its hollows and hills, with the long, prone,
> grey-black logs.

> For along the paddock, and down the gully,
> Over the multitudinous ridges,
> Through valley and spur,
> Fire has been!
> Ay, the Fire went through and the Bush has departed,
> The green Bush departed, green Clearing is not yet come.
> 'Tis a silent skeleton world;

55 Baughan, Shingle-Short and other verses, pp.63-66.
56 Ibid, pp.79-88.
57 Allen Curnow, 'Introduction to the Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse' in Look Back Harder, pp.151-152.
Dead, and not yet reborn,
Made, unmade, and scarcely as yet in the making;
Ruin'd, forlorn and blank.

Baughan's landscape; "the little raw farm on the edge of the desolate hillside," is observed by ten-year-old orphan Thorold von Reden. Baughan's images of the landscape are those of stasis:

Out, on this desert of logs, on this dead disconsolate ocean
Of billows arrested, of currents stay'd, that never awake and flow.
Day after day,
The hills stand out in the sky,
The splinters stand on the hills,
In the paddock the logs lie prone.
The prone logs never arise,
The erect ones never grow green,
Leaves never rustle, the birds went away with the Bush, –
There is no change, nothing stirs.

The motionless landscape and the repetitive images of logs become representative of colonial psychic desolation. Thor looks for mobile things in the unchanging monotonous valley, observing the river, a train and the stars. However Thor has never left the valley, and the only images of comparison he has to describe these things come from his immediate bleak surroundings. The logs run with the river, the smoke from the train is like the smoke from the stumps or the huts crazy tin chimney, the sky is a wide black paddock and the stars are its logs. These aspects of the landscape are the formative influences on young Thor, the taciturn "Son of the Burnt Bush," who can be seen to represent the future of New Zealand.

The poem questions Thor's potential through imagery of motion. Unique in the landscape, he is alive and capable of making changes. Thor has the capacity to break the stasis of the colonial condition. In the future he will have the power to continue successfully the already begun process of transforming Nature:

- Till the charr'd logs vanish away;
  Till the wounds of the land are whole:
  Till the skeleton valleys and hills
  With greenness and growing, with multiplied being and movement,
  Changeful, living, rejoice!

The poem ends with a strong environmental message. The transformation of the devastated landscape into productive pasture will parallel the healing of the land and the growth of a nation. Little Thor, face to face with the burnt bush, stands for the country's future; the dawn after the night. The poem ends
questioning, like the river, train and stars, how far will he go, given the enormous forces of change he possesses?  

There are other verses on the destruction of the forests, but they lack the dramatic assertiveness of Baughan's imagery. William Pember Reeves's well-known environmental history poem, 'The Passing of the Forest' appeared in his book of verse New Zealand and Other Poems (1898), in the appendix of Reeves's history of New Zealand: The Long White Cloud: Ao Tea Roa (1898), and in Alexander and Currie's anthologies. Reeves felt strongly enough about the subject to constantly amend the final verse of the poem. This is the original conclusion from his 1898 book of verse:

Mighty are axe and fire, destroyers twain,  
Swift servants of the arch-destroyer, Man;  
And he is mighty as he hews amain,  
Bronzed pioneer of nations. Ay, but scan  
The ruined wonder never wrought again,  
The ravaged beauty God alone could plan!  
Bitter the thought: 'Is this the price we pay -  
The price for progress - beauty swept away?'

Subsequent versions appeared in the 1903 edition of Reeves's poems, in the 1906 and again in the 1926 anthologies as well as in later editions of the history. By 1906 Reeves had worked the conclusion into a more strongly-worded and emphatic statement. The 'mighty bronzed pioneer' was replaced with a vandalistic Nature-hater, and significantly “progress” was relabelled “Man's dominion". The Biblical echo might be irony on Reeves' part, implying a misuse of man's God-given 'dominion'. This is the final incarnation of the verse, from the 1926 anthology:

The axe bites deep. The rushing fire streams bright;  
Swift, beautiful and fierce it speeds for Man,  
Nature's rough-handed foeman, keen to smite  
And mar the loveliness of ages. Scan  
The blackened forest ruined in a night,  
The sylvan Parthenon that God will plan  
But builds not twice. Ah bitter price to pay  
For Man's dominion – beauty swept away!

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60 Selected verses from Reeves's 'The Passing of the Forest' were also regularly found in the Arbour Day sections of the July issues of The School Journal in 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1911.
William Satchell's six page 'Ode to the Vanishing Forests of New Zealand' is in the same style. Satchell apostrophises types of trees, then describes their felling, personified as if murder, concluding with a lament. Dugald Ferguson's 'On a Tree Stump in Inch Clutha' laments the felling of a huge tree, the reason for its death sentence:

Connected with its market worth –  
(That wields o'er man such potent law  
And doomed it to the woodman’s saw).

Ferguson echoed Reeves in tone and sentiment, describing how the tree might have been preserved, "As a prized object on the farm." The age of the tree is addressed: "Ere yet the ruthless Pakeha / Appeared with desolating axe." According to Ferguson, the absence of the tree, man’s imprint on the earth, is "A costly monumental stone." Mary Colborne-Veel’s lighthearted 'We Go No More to the Forest' conceals a serious environmental message. The rimus, kauris and ratas are all cut down, so that the "grown folk" in town may have houses, dancing floors, ships to bring cargoes, golden cornfields and smooth lawns. Maud Peacocke's 'The Phantom Forest' is a vivid and evocative passing-of-the-forest poem. When the ghosts of the murdered forest have passed away: "A blackened waste lies burned and bare... / Stricken, and desolate, and lone." When we add Dora Wilcox's 'The Last of the Forest' from the 1906 anthology, and Alan Mulgan's 'Dead Timber' from the 1926 anthology, there is a substantial body of literature, showing what a profound impression the destruction of the bush made on colonists.

The transformation of the landscape was a popular theme among other poets. Thomas Bracken's 'Waiaronui' is a romanticised Maori legend, but begins with descriptions of the pre-European bush, stating "From Pakeha defiler thou art free... Why should the Pakeha with spade and plough, / Not change thy woodlands into smiling farms?" Marie Randle's 'The Maori Boy's Lament' equates the demise of the Maori with the Pakeha transformation of the land; a common metaphor in late-colonial poetry:

Those days will never more return,
And it will come to pass
That as our Native tussock fails
Before the English grass,
So, in the ruthless coming years,
'Twill be our people's doom
To fade away from out the land,
To give the white man room! \(^66\)

Likewise John Liddell Kelly's 'Sonnet: In Maoriland' noted with discontent that as the "dark bush dwindles, golden gorse spreads free" as the fair-haired race replaced the Maori. Similar images are found in Dora Wilcox's 'Onawe' from the 1906 anthology and in Jessie Mackay's 'Henare Taratoa' in which the fated Maori "Fights and falls as doth the kauri / hewn by axe away." \(^67\) G. P. Williams and W. P. Reeves provide a more humorous treatment of the dying Maori and transformed landscape topic in their poem 'The Last of his Race (An Apostrophe to a £1 Bank of New Zealand Note)'. \(^68\) The £1 banknote depicted a Maori warrior, and a scenic bush scene with a nikau palm, tree fern and kiwi. The narrator comments that the kiwi is unknowing of the white man's dog and gun. His vision is replaced by the images on the note above the Maori and bush scene: the fat merino wether and the portly shorthorn cow – emblems of the white man's power. The shady bower of the bush has been transformed by plough and spade. The poem cleverly plays on the dying Maori metaphor, whereby "Remnant of a missing race" refers more to the narrator's lack of money.

There are various poems praising the labours of the pioneers in transforming the landscape. Edward Tregear's 'New Zealand (A. D. 1899)' \(^69\) says of the pioneers "They broke the untilled fallow-lands, and laid / The seed of promise for the days To Be..." Moving to the present (1899), Tregear describes the transformations wrought upon the landscape in terms of positive progress: the taming of nature, the establishment of agriculture and human settlement of the once lonely and empty landscape. Tregear celebrates the creation of Arcadian farmlands with sheep and grain. He describes how the landscape has become structured and industrialised, with telegraph and railway lines and mines. Tregear is not one to lament the passing of the aesthetic forest, rather he celebrates its transformation into a human productive landscape:

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The woodman's axe in leafy solitude
Beneath the twilight of the pines chime clear;
The task is his to turn the waste to food,
To make the desert jungle growth give way
To fields of harvest where the sunset smiles
Bite deep, keen axes letting in the sky
Ye ring God's music through the forest isles.

'Floreat Rus! (A Picture of Colonial Life)' by H. S. Gipps encompasses the transformation of a bush section over 45 years, beginning with a settler family starting out on their selection. Forty-five years later the bush has gone – stumps have been uprooted, the ground ploughed, the earth smoothed with harrow and roller and sown with grasses and corn. A settlement is thriving, with a school, church, doctor, street and store. The old home in the clearing has been replaced with a spacious mansion and garden. The children own farms of various sorts throughout New Zealand. Metaphors of wealth and progress abound.70 Other good examples are 'The Bushman' by J. G. Morris71 and 'Southland Pioneer's Song' by Andrew Kinross.72 The appallingly-rhymed New Zealand jubilee poems of John Liddell Kelly and Cornelius O'Regan similarly celebrate the labours of the pioneers in subduing the "wilds" and turning them into productive agricultural populated landscapes.73 A typical example is John Henry Dillon's 'The Jubilee of New Zealand':

Beneath the shadow of the cloud-capped mountain
Amongst the wheat his scythe the farmer swings,
Along the margins of its sunny fountains
The bushman's axe its measured music rings;
O'er hill and dale the ploughman drives his furrow
Till earth's waste places blossom as the rose,
And wilds of desert newer aspects borrow
Where o'er the footsteps of the toiler goes.74

While jubilee poems of this sort celebrated New Zealand's independence in the world, other poets promoted the re-creation of England in the transformation of New Zealand's landscape, for example Thomas Bracken's

72 Andrew Kinross, My Life and Lays. Invercargill: John Ward Co, 1899.
Margaret Sinclair's "Summer" depicts a New Zealand "Golden time"; an idealised pastoral Arcadia.

Future transformations of the landscape were the subject of an 1890s poem by G. P. Williams: 'Farming in the Future (By a Contemplative Cockatoo)'. The poem is a comment on Vogel's predictions for farming in the year 2000. Williams stated by 2000 pumice land would have been altered by fertilisers. He envisioned vineyards, oranges, lemons and figs growing where there was sand before. New Zealand wines would become famous. Fertilisers would make the crops large and healthy, immune to rust, blight, smut and mildew.

Finally, amidst all the enthusiasm or lamentation for the transformation of the landscape, some early expressions of conservation or preservation by the environmentalists Williams and Reeves found their way into verse. G. P. Williams' poem 'A Plea of Despair' asked were the beasts of the field and the birds of the air to be hunted to extinction by man to make room for flocks and herds; was there no room for them on earth? The poem's subject was an international issue, but Williams concluded with New Zealand examples, pointing to the imminent extinction of the New Zealand heron, bell-bird, tui and the kiwi: "Soon you shall painfully seek what you never shall find." In the poem 'In Pember Bay: Papaitonga Lake', W. P. Reeves rejoiced that the lake had become a forest and bird reserve, when "Though thro' that land the straight tall trees must fall, / The birds be stilled." At Papaitonga the birds might find sanctuary among the protected trees, safe from fire and the axe.

Environmental Disasters.

Fire, flood, drought and rabbits... all the complaints of the late-colonial farmer found their way into verse. These poems depicting environmental disasters

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76 Margaret A. Sinclair ("Roslyn"), Echoing Oars: or, "Waitemata" and other verses. Auckland: Star Office, 1904, pp.33-34.
79 W. P. Reeves, New Zealand and other poems. London: Grant Richards, 1898, pp.28-30. Accompanying the poem is an extract from the New Zealand Graphic describing the lake: "the beauty of the south", an historic site, the home of Sir Walter Buller and the breeding ground of numberless native and introduced waterfowl.
(both natural and man-made) are useful sources for the environmental historian.

The extremes of climate and the rapid changeability of the weather came as a shock to many settlers. In 'The New Zealander's Winter', Mary Colborne-Veel complained of the inconsistency of the country's seasons. In the middle of July it could have been mid-summer, until a sudden freeze brought snow, making the climate impossible for poets to portray. Indeed the period was a time of climatic extremes, with heavy snowstorms, floods and droughts. Dora Wilcox's 'After the Flood' recalls the floods following a bad winter, and finding the body of a drowned unknown swagger. Winter turned into summer in a week, as a warm nor'wester melted the snow. Wilcox describes waking in the night to the roar of the angry creek, and watching as the homestead flooded:

On rushed the yellow flood, crashing, and dashing, and hurling
Timber, and logs, like straws in the foam of the angry deep,
And, as the day wore on, we heard through the roar of its swirling,
Piteous, the low of cattle, and the cry of terrified sheep.

Then when the flood went down, paddocks and roads were strewn
With timber and broken branches, half-buried in oozy mud;
Carcasses hither and thither, palings and posts torn down,
Flax and toi uprooted, traced the course of the flood...

In Maud Peacocke's 'Flood', a river speaks, describing the narrow bounds man has set for it between willows, fields and gardens. A storm in the hills makes it powerful and it rises in flood, overwhelming the barriers and dams.

With the removal of the bush and tussock, erosion became a major problem for farmers. G. P. Williams and W. P. Reeves humorously put this into verse in 'The History of Mr and Mrs Miggs (A Tale of the New Zealand Land Laws). In this poem a couple try to avoid legislative land tax by placing their house across the boundary line, which works very satisfactorily until the heavy rains cause a landslip which moves the house, a problem for the landowner...

For a river sometimes robs him of his title in a day;
Though it serves to bound his section, it declines to make a stay,
Or occasionally washes all his section clean away;

Or the fierce Nor'-wester's fury will be sometimes so intense
As to strip him of his holding, in a realistic sense,
And deposit half his section up against his neighbour's fence...

Interestingly the poets did not make any connection between the transformation of the land and environmental disasters, until the 1930s when erosion became more apparent, and writers such as Cresswell and Sargeson made the connection a major theme of literature.

Drought was a major concern for late-colonial farmers. 'Drought' by Francis Hutchinson, a station owner from Hawkes Bay, depicts its effects:

The hand of the Sun  
Lies heavy on the land  
The solemn drought steals on  
The grasses will wilt and wither, faint and fade.

First on the high-terrace lands,  
On grey cliff edges, naked spurs,  
The green grass browns and fades to grey.  
Parched are the high land water holes,  
And far below the creeks shrink fast.  
We look to westward, longingly,  
But rain so wished for does not come.

Only the daily portent –  
Clouds:hat, hurrying up, seem full of promise,  
Thinning too soon to harsh grey blue  
And boisterous gales.

Is it prophetic impulse that the plants  
Are pushing onward suddenly –  
The great and small alike –  
To quick fruition?  
The wind bows a myriad bents,  
The sward's ablaze with flowers.⁸⁴

Jessie Mackay's 'The Wind of Paradise' similarly begins with vivid images of drought as Nemesis and Death. The "tinder earth" is repetitively described as "windy brown" and the dead creek is "a salty trail of white." The toi sighs with dread, fearing that the world will be held in arid drought for evermore.⁸⁵ The same images appear again in Maud Peacocke's 'Drought', where Drought is a malignant hag who stalks the land:

The pastures where her footsteps beat,  
Like the swift passing of a fiery flail  
Lie blasted, blackening in the heat.⁸⁶

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⁸⁴ Woodhouse, New Zealand Farm and Station Verse 1850-1950, p.55.  
⁸⁵ Mackay, Land of the Morning, pp.91-94.  
⁸⁶ Peacocke, Songs of the Happy Isles, p.95.
W. P. Reeves' poem 'Nox Benigna'\textsuperscript{87} contains images of drought and fire; eventually relieved by the night and the rain:

\begin{quote}
How kind is night 
After the fierceness of the summer day, 
That glared so long on yellow grass and gray 
And earth-cracks parted as parched lips that pray 
For water bright!

The wind awakes, 
And over distant mountains grassy, dry, 
Blown by its breath the red fires leap and fly, 
Or climbing backward, slowly creep on high, 
The golden snakes. 
\end{quote}

Fire was an ever-present danger for settlers, and was a constant theme in late-colonial novels. Annie Murgatroyd's poem 'Kura: A Tale of the Maori War'\textsuperscript{88} (an epic romance between a Maori girl and a white farmer) describes the horror of a bush fire:

\begin{quote}
O'er the sky spread wreaths of black smoke, 
And they hid the pale-hued moonbeams, 
Shut out all the light of heaven 
While beneath, the burning forest, 
Sent its red flames higher, higher, 
Like some all consuming passion, 
Whose foul deeds melt into darkness, 
And excludes all that is pure, 
Like yond smoke that hides the moonlight. 
In the darkness scream the wild birds, 
For their throats are parched and burning, 
And their nests of fairy mosses 
With their young, unfledged, unfeathered, 
Are all burning with the forest. 
And the streamlet boils and bubbles, 
As the boughs fall burning on it. 
\end{quote}

H. B. King's 'A Bush Fire' describes the "destruction and death" of a bush fire and the demise of rimus and kauris in passionate terms. However King's attitude is one of progressive transformation – the fire is playing the part of a friend, helping the bushfellers untangle the web of the bush: "For the flames in conjunction with agents unseen / Were preparing the earth for her garment of green." The poems ends with a a pastoral picture: "a scene of improvement, contentment and home."\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{87} Reeves, New Zealand and other Poems. pp.12-13. 
\textsuperscript{88} Murgatroyd, Poems of Annie Murgatroyd p.57. 
\textsuperscript{89} H. B. King, Bill's Philosophy and Other Verses. Nelson: Alfred G. Betts, Printer, 1903, pp.21-22.
Rabbits, of course, were a major environmental concern for farmers (a self-inflicted problem). Williams and Reeve's 'Atra Cura: A Pastoral Plaint'\(^90\) complains of the economic effect of rabbits on a station:

Then the rabbits are commencing  
To make inroads through the fencing,  
And to spread upon the run and eat it clean  
Till you really wonder whether  
You'll be cleaned out altogether  
There's so very little pasture to be seen.

Several poems document the attempts to control rabbits. In Marie Randle's 'Blanche to her White Rabbit'\(^91\) the narrator tells her pet rabbit it is lucky because bunnies are plentiful, her dogs could capture twenty up in the gullies any day. She tells it how its kindred are hunted with dogs, guns, traps and poisoned grain. Likewise, in Williams and Reeve's 'Rabbits (The Sad Lament of an Old Doe)'\(^92\) a rabbit complains about pest control. They are poisoned with phosphorus and rhodium, their progress is stopped by wire-netting barriers, they are hunted with guns and dogs, stoats and ferrets, and now by new scientific methods:

And now they please to spread disease by methods scientific,  
Microbes and worms, and fever germs, and parasites prolific,  
The nasty things that Pasteur brings - a horrid sort of measles –  
Which makes us sick and kills us quick, ensuing after weasles.

Naturally these methods of control often did as much environmental damage as the rabbits themselves.\(^93\) A poem by G. B. Starky, 'The Weasel Pest'\(^94\) was

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\(^90\) Williams and Reeves, *In Double Harness*, pp.1-4.  
\(^92\) Williams and Reeves, *In Double Harness*, pp.34-37.  
\(^93\) See Holland, O'Connor and Wearing 'Remaking the Grasslands of the Open Country' in *Environmental Histories of New Zealand*, pp.80-81, on the 'rabbit difficulty.'  
\(^94\) Williams and Reeves, *In Double Harness*, pp.34-37. (Reeves and Williams wrote their 'Rabbits...' poem in response to this poem which appeared in the Christchurch *Press*, said to represent the 'cockatoo's' view on the subject; that cockies hated stoats and viewed them with dismay. Reeves and Williams replied with the "runholders'" view that anything that could be introduced to help the country to keep sheep instead of rabbits should be done, because "it pays to do so". In their poem the rabbit welcomed the good news of G. B. S's poem against stoat immigration. A similar poem by G. B. Starkey (a popular Canterbury farmer and horseman) entitled 'The Weasel' can be seen in *New Zealand Farm and Station Verse*, p.27. See also David McKee Wright's 'The Poisoner's Lament' and its companion response poem 'The Rabbit's Refrain' by 'John Plod' [Michael Sharkey. 'David McKee Wright, Maorilander,' *Journal of New Zealand Literature*. 10, 1992, pp.41-42.]
opposed to the introduction of weasels and stoats, who killed his chickens; he would rather have had one small pest instead of two:

Who'll go and feed these little beasts when they have scoffed the rabbits?
Will the asses who imported them before they knew their habits?

Finally in 'Farming in the Future (By a Contemplative Cockatoo)' the narrator discussed the weed pests that plagued farmers of the 1890s: fern, dock and thistles. However he optimistically reported that scientists said they were beneficial, because their tap-roots helped break up the soil and their rotting roots fertilised the clay with nitrogen. He also stated sparrows were a pest, but they had at least killed off the caterpillars!

In conclusion, environmental themes were prevalent in late colonial New Zealand verse, reflected in Alexander and Currie's 1906 and 1926 anthologies. The transformation of the landscape was an important theme of verse, revealing a range of attitudes. From landscape portraits, depictions of environmental problems and expressions of progress or preservation, late colonial New Zealand verse provides an excellent environmental text.

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95 Williams and Reeves, In Double Harness, pp.26-33.
96 See Thomas D. Isern, 'Companions, Stowaways, Imperialists, Invaders: Pests and Weeds in New Zealand' in Environmental Histories of New Zealand, pp.240-243, on threats to farmers from weeds.
FIGURE 3: A kauri tree and bush-fellers, Omahuta, 1913.
"Shows the saw at work, the scarf having been put with the axe on the opposite side."
[Northwood Brothers Album 97, Hocken Library.]
FIGURE 4: A kauri being felled.
The impressive sight of the felling of a giant kauri is evocatively described in William Satchell’s *The Land of the Lost* (1902) and Jane Mander’s *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920). Both authors use different characters to represent various points of view on the destruction of the indigenous forest.
[Hocken Library.]
CHAPTER 2.

RESPONSE TO LANDSCAPE
IN NEW ZEALAND LATE-COLONIAL POETRY,
1890-1920.
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IN NEW ZEALAND LATE COLONIAL POETRY,
1890-1920.

Describing the Landscape.

The problems of response to the landscape in poetry were best summed up in a poem by Mary Colborne-Veel: 'The Colonial Poet's Lament' (1894) in which the colonial poet complains of being poetically inclined in the colony. The Canterbury landscape is uninspirational and monotonous, and the rivers are savage rather than placid and beautiful in the English sense:

A Browning or Keats I would pity
If writing his rhymes in this city;
Or, say that we fly from the town
And seek nature – all rugged and brown
Stretches out a monotonous plain,
Too crude for a fanciful strain,
Too vast for a poet to sing.
And our rivers, that beauty might bring,
To naiad and nixie unknown
Find a new savage life of their own.
Each bank an horizon is seen;
Such tracts lying stony between
Where the torrent dividing may flee
On separate paths to the sea,
That a whole savage kingdom it seems
Of terrible swift flowing streams.

Other poets take up the lament at being born in "this loveless new land" where they will perish "in silence unknown." They wish they were overseas in the land their fathers called home, where there is much to enchant, enthrall and inspire their souls and volumes of poetry. There is no romance in secular and scientific Christchurch – pierian springs would run dry in New Zealand. The great immortal poets overseas respond to their complaints, saying good poetry will come with practice.

The late-colonial period was a time of confusion for New Zealand poets, who found the conventional terms of British poetry inadequate to describe the New Zealand landscape. It was perceived that use of demotic New Zealand terms were not conducive to elevated verse, and only suitable for lowbrow bush and station ballads or humorous verse.

1 Mary Colborne-Veel, The Fairest of the Angels and Other Verse. London: Horace Cox, 1894, pp.89-93.
Thomas Bracken’s ‘The Brooklet in the Glen’ is a classic transition of language poem, showing the poet’s confusion of location. Bracken’s indigenous tui seems out of place against the British terms of landscape that he uses:

The Tui’s trill,  
Upon the hill,  
Is answered by a thousand notes,  
Till one grand swell  
From nook and dell  
Upon the morning ether floats;  
But in a voice subdued and low,  
Which tells of things beyond our ken,  
The brooklet’s gentle accents flow,  
Meandering down the glen.

David Will M. Burn managed to describe the New Zealand landscape in such a way that it seemed to be a British landscape. In his volume of heavily Browning-influenced Victorian romantic verse, the only clue at all that Burn was a New Zealander is the use of the word "weka" in a single poem, 'My Brook'3:

I love to walk at even  
Where thy waters purl along,  
While the husht woods seem to listen  
To thy murmurous evensong.  
Thy pendant leaves are silent  
Nor wakes the littlest bird,  
The weka’s melancholy tune  
Alone the air hath stirred,  
Once and again  
Startling the glen;  
Or mingles with thy flowing  
The lowing  
Of a distant herd...

Another adamant Victorian poet, Hubert Church, coped with the New Zealand landscape by identifying it with God and the sublime. Poems such as 'To My Dog' and 'Maoriland' use British landscape terms and attempt to show the presence of God in New Zealand’s alpine landscape.4 Church’s poem 'New Zealand' is a thirty-two page incomprehensible ode, full of personifications such

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as Hope, Time, Solitude, Discontent, Triumph and Summer (some examples from the first page), dwelling at length on the sublime in the New Zealand landscape. The few poems which address specific New Zealand landscape features such as 'Mount Egmont' act as a vehicle for Church's internal metaphysical ramblings; this poem is a response to the sublime represented by the mountain:

What temple shall I enter at thy feet,
What sacrament availeth here below,
That I do penance till all thought is sweet,
And pure as thy investiture of snow?
Let me but hear thy cloudy music fall,
Nor the far thunder, but the tacit shower
Of secrecies revealing thee, till all
My heart encloseth rest like a shut flower...

Church addresses the mountain as sublime, without actually describing the mountain at any point. Outside of ordered English landscapes the adamant Victorian poets were lost, because alien environments did not fit their perception of beauty. Mountains, waterfalls and other impressive scenic features were fine because they represented the grandeur of God, but primarily the scenic feature was merely a convenient natural inspiration for the poet's internal musings. Another poem, 'Acheron Valley,' contains no landscape description of the valley at all, but rather is a sermon on the imagination and metaphysical musings on the human condition, concluding with a religious message. The landscape is merely an inspiration and not a necessary part of the poem; once referred to in the title there was no need to mention it again. In other words, a lack of affinity with the New Zealand landscape meant that Victorian romantic poets such as Church could only respond to it in terms of the sublime and metaphysical – the only open avenues in their literary view of the world.

Poets within this transitional period were often heavily indebted to the great British Victorian poets. Colonial poets attempting to emulate their mentors undoubtedly had a repressing effect on the development of genuine or original responses to the New Zealand landscape in poetry. Jessie Mackay was a poet who displayed a wide variety of influences. According to critic MacD. P. Jackson: "Her main poetic impulse is towards Swinburnian

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6 Hubert Church, Egmont. Melbourne, Thomas C. Lothian, 1908, pp.1-2.
7 Ibid, pp.25-31.
incantation... but her own Gaelic romanticism can complicate the mix. For example her poem 'Dunedin in the Gloaming' is pure Tolkiensque Nordic epic, while 'For Love of Appin' is a Scottish dialectical poem. Mackay was imaginatively inspired by legend and history. In 'Sunset on the Kaikouras' Mackay, possibly inspired by Mathew Arnold's Balder Dead, mingles Norse and Maori mythology. The poem vividly describes the death of Balder (the sun) – scarlet on the sea and mountains, as Kiwa (the Pacific ocean) and Taniwhas mourn his passing. Interestingly Jessie Mackay recognised that elevated Victorian verse had no place in adequately describing the New Zealand landscape, or indeed in everyday New Zealand life. She satirised the conventions of romanticised poetic expression in 'Poet and Farmer':

The diamond dews begem the wings of morn;  
The sable tui's liquid notes are trilling;  
The myriad voices of the day awake; –  
(Susan, I guess that hog is fit for killing!)

The broad-leaf bends above the murmurous creek,  
With silver ripples shining and receding;  
The marshy star unfolds its golden eye; –  
(That bed of onions wants a power of weeding!)

Now mounts my soul on wings of light conceit  
To glacial heights where snowy billows harden!  
I scorn the plain and all its sordid care; –  
(Hi, there, you brute; – the calf is in the garden!)

Yet stay. Who lingers in these silvan shades,  
More blest is he than Emperor or Kaiser:  
Hark, infant prattle floats upon the breeze; –  
(The irps are cutting gorse with my new razor!)

The incense of the dewy clover mead  
Invites the happy roaming bee to suck it;  
The queenly rose is throned in verdant bower; –  
(Well, I must milk. Say, Susan, where's the bucket?)

G. P. Williams humorously examined the problems of colonial language in verse in his poem 'An Old Chum on New Zealand Scenery' (1904). The

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8 MacD. P. Jackson, 'Poetry: Beginnings to 1945' in The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, p.358.
9 Jessie Mackay, Land of the Morning. —?: Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, 1909, pp.66-68.
11 Jessie Mackay, From the Maori Sea. Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1908, pp.35-36.
poem says New Zealand is an enchanting land, but should you ask a settler for
details of the beauty, his description may not please. Surrounded by the
landscape, he finds it hard to describe, and the terms he uses are not ones poets
would love to hear:

What they call a brook or brooklet, or a streamlet, or a rill,
I do on y, I confess it, call a creek, and always will.
Then there's what we call a gully, which of course we take to mean
Just a small and narrow valley in which bush is oftimes seen;
You perchance, were you a new chum, might describe this as a dell,
Bush gully suits me better, serves my purpose just as well;
Bush, too, means the native forest; you will never, I'm afraid,
Hear a self-respecting bushman call a bush a sylvan glade,
Nor a bosky leafy bower; every kind of native shrub
Growing rank in wild profusion, he denominates as scrub.

Another poem on colonial language; 'Wanted – Some Metaphors' by G. P.
Williams and W. P. Reeves\textsuperscript{14}, examined why New Zealanders were fearful of
discussing beauty in an emotional manner. It was very difficult to find suitable
figures of speech because of the colonial vocabulary. For example, you must
describe the sun's heat as "hot as blazes", "scorcher" or "hot as h--l" because no
other metaphors were available! Williams and Reeves recognised that New
Zealand had developed an idiom of its own, very different from that of English
people and English poets. But their attitude seems rather equivocal, as if the
writers did not altogether approve the ousting of English terms by their rough
colonial replacements. Their complain reinforces E. H. McCormick's
observation that "Not for many years were New Zealand writers to use their
own language with anything approaching self assurance."\textsuperscript{15}

Some poets managed to overcome the conventions of language,
prosody and decorum (i.e. what was a fit subject for poetry) and wrote genuine
and original responses to the New Zealand landscape, some of which are
examined later in the chapter.

**Home vs Home.**

Verse concerning the late-colonial dilemma of identity was a popular
preoccupation of New Zealand poets between 1890-1920. The poems were

\textsuperscript{13} G. P. Williams, *A New Chum's Letter Home and Divers Verses, Dry and Diverse.*
\textsuperscript{14} G. P. Williams and W. P. Reeves, *In Double Harness: Poems in Partnership.*
\textsuperscript{15} E. H. McCormick, *Letters and Art in New Zealand.* Wellington: Department of
Internal Affairs, 1940, p.97.
presented from a variety of different views; by homesick exiles from Britain, colonists who came to prefer New Zealand, the first-born generation of New Zealanders who were unsure of where to locate their audience, and for the first time poems by homesick New Zealanders overseas. Home, wherever it was located, was always strongly identified with the landscape.

At the extreme end of the spectrum were the homesick exiles, whose poems contained only English landscape descriptions. H. L. Twisleton's poem 'The Wandering Minstrel'\textsuperscript{16} stated he was indifferent to the New Zealand landscape:

> But I, a wanderer from my native nest,
> Still ache with wintry pain;...

> All scenes alike the old-time scenes endear
> Where'er I rest or roam;
> Winds, birds and streams still murmur to my ear
> The name of my lost home.

Twisleton concluded "The wanderer will return."

The poems of the homesick exiles from Britain share common themes. There are a number of verses where the sight of an introduced bird is the trigger for reminiscences of Home. In John Liddell Kelly's poem, 'Blackbirds at Calderville'\textsuperscript{17}, he doesn't mind blackbirds plundering his cherries and berries because their song reminds him of Home. Alexander Bathgate's 'On Hearing a Yellow Hammer Sing Near Dunedin'\textsuperscript{18} recalls his overseas childhood. 'The Exile Skylark'\textsuperscript{19} shares the same theme, though is more awkwardly optimistic:

> The exiled lark is joyous here,
> And soars and sings in skies more clear
> Than in the land from whence he came.
> Then why should I not be the same?

Hubert Church's 'A Swallow in Maoriland'\textsuperscript{20} is a typical example of Victorian bird-induced nostalgia\textsuperscript{21}:

> Dear swallow from a fonder sky!

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, pp.116-117.
\textsuperscript{20} Hubert Church, \textit{The West Wind}. Sydney: The Bulletin Newspaper Co Ltd, 1902, p.10.
\textsuperscript{21} Or possibly feathered flights of fancy.
... you bear a load
That only Memory may see, –
The fragrance of my Youth's abode,
The ecstasy of life to me!
... To all thy flight my vision clings,
For far off home like thee I yearn;...

Other poets were more accepting of the New Zealand landscape. There were verses which compared the two Homes and reached a positive recognition of New Zealand's value. Johannes Andersen's 'Home Echoes'\(^{22}\) is a mix of pure Kiwiana\(^^{23}\) and homesickness, in which he compares the landscape and seasons of his two countries, asking when will New Zealand become Home, and when will its beauty be recognised? Alexander Bathgate (1845-1930), born and educated in Scotland before coming to live in Dunedin in the 1860s,\(^^{24}\) wrote poems on this theme. 'Otago' is a personal poem, in which Bathgate stated he was torn between the love of his birthplace Scotland, his mother, and Otago, his bride. But Bathgate also wrote 'A New Zealander's Song' from the point of view of a native-born narrator who loves the country "from snowy peak to ocean strand." His father sings of Scotland and his mother tells him of England, but he loves New Zealand over either of them. It has no bloody memories of ancestral crimes, only strong hopes upon which to build a great and free nation.\(^{25}\) David McKe Wright's 'Our Cities Face the Sea'\(^{26}\) talks of how free New Zealand has become home for various characters – Jack from Cornwall, Pat from Donegal, 'Arry from London, Sandy from Aberdeen and native-born Tom – now all mates working together. Their thoughts linger fondly in the North occasionally, but they have learned to love the New Zealand land: "And we take our homeland with us, however we change our sky."

A common comparative Home theme was that of Christmas – an ideal opportunity for poets to observe the differences in the festive climates, for example Margaret A. Sinclair's poems 'The Mistletoe' (which compares rata with mistletoe), 'Bells of Yule', 'Austral Christmas' and 'Christmas Climes.'\(^{27}\)

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\(^{23}\) I use the anachronistic term 'Kiwiana' unashamedly – Andersen himself would have been delighted. Geographer E. Relph discusses 'kitsch' in terms of inauthentic attitudes to place in *Place and Placelessness* (1976), pp.82-83.


During the 1890-1920 period New Zealanders began to write homesick poetry for New Zealand. Will Lawson (who was known as 'the Wellington Kipling') was brought up in both Australia and New Zealand, alternating between them before eventually settling in Australia.\r
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His poem 'Winds of Home' is a homesick poem written in Australia, where the winds bring him memories and visions of Wellington. Likewise, in 'The Adventurer' his character looks south-eastward from Sydney heads over the sea and his thoughts fly home to New Zealand. He looks westward to where Australia stretches, mysterious and alluring, yet concludes:

Then, though Australia's beauty
Has cast on him her spell,
He'll turn to the New Zealand hills
That he has loved so well
Here is his Great Adventure,
Here wide-world music streams
But oh, those hills,
He knows those hills
He sees them in his dreams –
Green slopes, that dip so steeply
Down to the lines of foam –
Bare peaks that are as beacons
To guide the petrels home.

Marie R. Randle was the poet who wrote the greatest number of Home vs Home poems, from a diverse range of viewpoints, illustrative of the confused identity of the late-colonial period. Little is known about her, except that at one time she lived near Shag Point in Otago, where her husband was a school teacher. During the 1890s she contributed verses to the Otago Witness under the nom-de-plume "Wych Elm" which were published in a collection, *Lilts and Lyrics of New Zealand*, in 1893.\r
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'A New New Year' is a classic comparative difference of climate poem, yet a positive one: "But this New Year is full-grown, strong and merry" as opposed to the British "Poor new-born infant, timid, weak and wailing." 'An Arbour Day Vision' talks of the olden days in the romantic Shakespearian forests of England. In an environmental vision she hopes New Zealand may be transformed into an idealised English Arcadia:

Some day, our barren hills may boast
A mantle rich of forest trees,

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And oak, and ash, and elm, and beech
May whisper in the Summer breeze;
Then will a Rosalind appear
To fancy's eye, amid the glades,
And poets dainty lays will sing
Of elves within those woodland shades;
And old-world visions will arise
To bloom anew 'neath Austral skies.

'The Coming of Spring' again is a classic "Old World" versus "Southern Home" poem, again positively nationalistic: "For grim King Frost is less despotic here." However in the following poem 'Autumn', New Zealand's season evidently cannot compete; she is homesick:

Yet there are tones of voice, and looks of thine,
I strangely miss, – and Memory fills for me
The blanks with dreamy pictures borne by her
O'er the wild waves of the dividing sea;

There are two Christmas poems, 'The Soul of Christmas' and 'The Christmas Toast', comparing climates, but compromising: "The Soul of Christmas is not bound / To any clime by any form." Whether summer or winter, Christ's message is the main thing. The traditional English plum pudding is decked with a spray of honeysuckle, more appropriate than holly on a sunny Christmas.

'The Flax at Kew' is a homesick for New Zealand poem. While wandering in Kew gardens in London, amid the most beautiful botanic specimens in the world, Randle comes across "a dear old friend" - New Zealand flax. She eulogises the flax, which takes her on a vision of home. 'A Farewell to Moeraki' is another classic New Zealand homesick poem, but is contrasted with the English homesick 'Honeysuckle'. 'Homeward Bound' is schizophrenically torn between both hemispheres. Finally in 'Grandmother's Greeting' the old woman recalls her home in Devon to Randle: "No lanes in New Zealand will ever compare / With those that I rov'd in when I was your age." Despite her multiple points of view on the location of Home, Marie Randle appears to have a real affinity with the New Zealand landscape. Many of her poems are distinctively New Zealand in flavour, even those which purport to be on Victorian themes – for example 'A Lassie's Lament' contains images of woolsheds and gorse.

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National Identity and Landscape.

The New Zealand landscape was a constant factor in poems of national identity. The new environment was the obvious symbol that defined New Zealand as distinctive from the Old World. Arthur Adams' poem 'Maoriland' addressed "Maoriland, my mother," stating while older poets sang of "frozen England in her mists enshrouded" his Muse had chosen newer unclouded lands. The next six stanzas are a series of verses eulogising various New Zealand landscapes, each beginning

"Land of rugged white-clad ranges..."
"Land of silent lakes that nestle..."
"Land of forests richly sweeping..."
"Land where fire from earth's deep centre..."
"Land of tussock plain extending..."
"Land where torrents pause to dally..."

The following four verses are on the dying Maori and the fortunate New Zealanders. The last verse addresses the cities - symbolically enwreathed by and merged with the bush. The unspoilt land, with no written history, was compared with a chaste virgin: "a starting place / "For a newer, nobler race."

The poem's repeated first stanza patriotically presents New Zealand as the most beautiful place on earth; a solitary gem standing alone in the Pacific.

'The Brave days to Be' by the same author again represents New Zealand as a pure and beautiful queen, standing alone above all other nations. The poem talks of the labours of the settlers to subdue the environment in their struggle to nationhood. Virile and strong young New Zealand is compared with the 'grey old crone' Britain, in terms that are in no way complimentary to Britain: "Her old frame enervated... Upon her fallow fields huddled her brood / Of teeming pigmies, craven beneath their pride." New Zealand's youth and vigour is of course related to the environment. The narrator's dream of the future is interspersed with the songs of the landscape. The poem's landscape description increasingly takes on a nationalistic military personification, until the indigenous environment appears to be marching in defence of the nation:

Out in the open by the swampy pools
The army of the waving grasses went;
First in the van the hosts of raupo reared
Long lines of ruddy spears; close following

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Ibid, pp.22-27.
The green ranks of the harekeke came;
Lifting aloft their sullen flashing blades
And sturdy bronze-brown standards; and, behind,
The toi’s white battalions flaunted far
Their dazzling banners and soft silver plumes:
While gaunt and motionless upon the hill
The naked cabbage tree stood sentinel.

Likewise, David McKee Wright’s poem ‘Our Island Home’\(^{35}\) shows a patriotic landscape, with the guardian mountains standing as "sentinels of freedom / About our young, free land." In ‘Zealandia’s Birth\(^{36}\) New Zealand is again hailed as a queen.

Thomas Bracken’s poetry similarly nationalistically depicts New Zealand as better than other countries, due to its unique landscape. In the same volume that the national anthem ‘God Defend New Zealand’ appeared (entitled 'New Zealand Hymn’), several other verses linking national identity and landscape can be found. Bracken’s poem ‘God’s Own Country’\(^{37}\) begins by relating a discussion between two Maorilanders in Melbourne; when asked how he likes Australia one replies it is wonderful and he is doing well, but he would "much sooner be on a smaller salary in God’s Own Country." This is the signal for lengthy grandiose praise of New Zealand’s landscape:

God’s own country! framed by nature in her grandest, noblest mould;
Land of peace and land of plenty, land of wool and corn and gold!
Where the forests are the greenest and the rugged mountains rear
Noble turrets, towers and spires, piercing through the ambient air;
Rising to the gates supernal, pointing Godwards through the blue,
When the summer’s sunny splendours tip them with a nameless hue,
And the gusts of winter gather snow and sleet and mists and cloud,
Weaving many a curious mantle, many a quaint fantastic shroud.
Oh! the mountains of New Zealand! wild and rugged though they be,
They are types of highest manhood, landmarks of a nation free.

The poem continues in a more place-specific mode, eulogising some twenty landscape features and tourist spots across the country, concluding here artists and poets might find enough material for a lifetime’s work. The chorus of Bracken’s poem ‘Hurrah for New Zealand’ contains the image of "unsullied snows that crown her grand mountains."\(^{38}\) – again purity of the environment is

\(^{35}\) David McKee Wright, *New Zealand Chimes*. Wellington: W. J. Lankshear, 1900.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.


\(^{38}\) Ibid. pp.18-19.
equated with freedom and national superiority. Bracken's poem 'Bush Children' describes settler children playing the English game of cricket beneath the ti-trees, but ominously remarks:

Now's the time for recreation,
Bye-an-bye there's work to do
You have yet to build a nation.\(^{39}\)

Eleanor Elizabeth Montgomery's 'The Land of the Moa: A Poem'\(^ {40}\) opens with an elegiac depiction of New Zealand as a utopian landscape:

Surrounded by the jealous Southern waves,
A happy Island sleeps upon the sea:
The blue Pacific's arm is round her thrown,
Guarding her Ocean Child!
O Maoriland! Nature's last gift to man –
Blessed by the viewless Powers – alone – unknown –
Waked by Dawn's golden lance – hush'd with Night's dews,
And guardianed by wandering airs of heaven;
Your listening forests hearing wild sea winds,
Singing a song caught from the Infinite:
Your lonely mountains lifting snowy arms
In silent prayer for all they sentinel –

Cornelius J. O'Regan's 'New Zealand: Jubilee Poem'\(^ {41}\) is a potted history of New Zealand. The section on 1840 celebrates the labour of the pioneers, as Nature was replaced by rural homes and fields, signalling the birth of a nation. By 1890 the landscape has been transformed:

O time flies fast! tis now full fifty years
Since our brave fathers settled on this shore
Since first the axes of the pioneers
Broad clearings made where all was wild before.
Stupendous change! rude Nature rules no more,
But everywhere the mark of toiling hands
Greets the mazed eye – the farmer's harvest-store

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39 Bracken, Not Understood and other poems. p.68.

O'Regan wrote this Jubilee poem, which celebrates the felling of the bush, at the age of sixteen. O'Regan grew up in the West Coast bush and from childhood took great pleasure in felling trees. An adamant Victorian romantic poet, he was hailed as a genius and national icon. However, ironically, while chopping in the bush on a rainy day at the age of 11 he contracted rheumatism which led to heart-disease and he died at the young age of 21.
The heads that graze upon the smiling lands,  
The city newly built, that day by day expands.

O'Regan patriotically states with ships sailing everywhere, New Zealand may proudly take its stand among the nations. In contrast with the other poems of national identity, O'Regan's landscape is not the untamed picturesque, but transformed. Effectively, O'Regan states that the key to nationhood lies in transformation to a productive, prosperous environment.

The poems of "Roslyn" (Margaret A. Sinclair) seek international recognition of and encourage national pride for New Zealand's landscape. 'Our Pearl O' the Sea' patriotically begins 'Speak no more of Northern Christmas.' The poem urges New Zealanders to forget winter, put on summer clothes and get out into nature: "Mark the distant purple mountain clearly outlined against the blue... / From the bush where Rata blossoms richly crimson meet the view." Roslyn states, let the Swiss or Tyrolese sing of their mountains; we can with equal right point to Earnslaw's snows or Te Anau. She continues to compare New Zealand favourably over other countries:

Now let the dusky Cingalese his odorous island chant,  
And let high Quito's colonist his altitude still vaunt;  
Blame, an you will, our honest pride in woods more safe, as fair,  
Or in the ozone richness of our ocean-gathered air.

Roslyn continues; throughout New Zealand the coward cannot be found who would fail to fight for such a land in any hour of need. 'Zealandia' by the same author, reflects New Zealander's inherent insecurity about their place in the world, as well as late-colonial embryonic nationalism. The poem shows New Zealand as a poor little dot in the sea, ignored by the Old World and crying out for attention. She is young – pure and virgin – and lacks history. However her day will come, when grown into a woman and an ocean queen, suitors will kneel before her throne and poets will sing her praise. Other poems by Roslyn show developing nationalism such as 'My Own Land'; a nationalistic anthem, and 'Botha's Pass', which combines Boer War patriotism with New Zealand landscape description, stating the "brave lads" who died heroically at Botha's Pass will be missed in their country. 'Pohutukawa' is a

42 "Roslyn" (Margaret A. Sinclair), *The Huia's Homeland, and other verses*. London: Elliot Stock, 1897, pp.13-16.
43 "Roslyn", *The Huia's Homeland, and other verses*. pp.81-82.
46 "Roslyn" *The Turret Captain's Toast and other verses*. Auckland: W. A. Wilkinson, 1913, pp.9-10.
nationalistic Christmas poem, where the fame of the Pohutukawa is talked of overseas, since the tree is as worthy of praise as any foreign tree.

Overall, there appear to have been a certain number of repetitive themes in poems of late colonial nationalism. Generally New Zealand began to be nationalistically depicted as better than Britain and other nations, set apart by the purity and beauty of its landscape and environment. For every poem of nationalism, there were equivalent verses (sometimes by the same poets) depicting New Zealand as a loyal subject of the British Empire. The landscapes poets praised as representative of New Zealand were predominantly the untamed picturesque – an unspoilt pure utopia, although O'Regan advocated a transformed and productive landscape before nationhood. Bracken's 'God's Own Country' achieves a compromise with its "land of wool and corn and gold", greenest forests and noble rugged mountains.

Station Life, Work and the Land.

These demotic, often humorous, tales or ballads provide excellent pictures of rural life – the work, the people and the landscape – mainly that of the South Island high country. They were scorned by the Victorian poets as inferior verse and have been ignored by contemporary anthologists; however, an excellent collection appears in A. E. Woodhouse's *New Zealand Farm and Station Verse 1850-1950.* 47 (for this reason I have seen no need to give extensive examples in this section). The best station verse came from Otago writers such as David McKee Wright, George Meek, Hamilton Thompson and Marie Randle.

The New Zealand station verse was created from a number of sources. There were the popular Australian bush ballads and in New Zealand the early colonial Scots vernacular tradition. A large body of New Zealand poetry also dealt with pioneering life on the land. There were plenty of poems about contented old gold prospectors and swaggers, enjoying the simple outdoor life, for example Marie Randle's 'Up Country: The Old Settler's Song' 48 or C. J. O'Regan's 'A Lay of the Old Life.' 49 The latter is about an old pioneer, who sick of town life in a wooden house reminisces about life in a tent in the bush, amidst nature: "O, surely where heaven's elect are / The people must live in a tent!" The late colonial period saw more realistic portrayals of pioneering life, such as Baughan's 'The Old Place'. The station poets took on all of these genres

and created a distinctive body of literature, as distant from the conventions of Victorian romantic verse as one could get. Station verse was very much universal poetry for the masses. Poems about New Zealand and New Zealanders written by New Zealanders in this mode were more likely to be read by the general public in newspapers like the *Otago Witness* than lie unread in some exclusively overseas-published volume of poetry. I believe that scholars have overlooked the extent of how radical this form of verse was, and underrated its importance in the development of New Zealand literature.

There are connections between the unique language, prosody and the subject matter of the station verses. Firstly the localised demotic voice, with its indigenous-rural expressions, identified the verse as distinctly 'New Zealand', especially in conjunction with the vehement love of the high-country landscape which is a theme of these verses. Above all the station verses were characterised by a lack of poetic pretension. This recognisably indigenous voice and style allowed the expression of affinity with the land which would not have been considered a fit subject under the Victorian late-colonial tradition (poems of exile from Home were the convention). Station verse allowed the expression of other national characteristic themes, such as the work ethic and also humour (humorous verse was perhaps the form of writing that late-colonial poets did best). Furthermore, the station verses undermined the late-colonial tendency to romantically portray the New Zealand landscape as an exotic or pastoral Arcadia. They praised the beauty of the landscape but also recognised its harshness, portraying it realistically without glamourising either it or those who worked it.

Perhaps the best station poet (and most under-rated in terms of his contribution to New Zealand poetry) was David McKee Wright (1869-1928). MacD. P. Jackson describes Wright as the voice of 'the crackle of a speargrass fire under a boiling billy and the click of shears in the woolshed.' Wright was influenced by the Australian verse of Henry Lawson, and his verse was in this style – bush ballads written in six and seven beat lines and aimed at an audience of nomadic diggers, rabbiters, shearers and swaggers in the Depression years when the gold-fields were exhausted and the big sheep stations were mostly broken up. His ballads have titles like 'The Hawker's Cart', 'The Bloke that Ran Across a Snag', 'Shearing', 'Old Mates', 'While the Billy Boils', 'The Rabbiter', 'Lucky Joe' and 'Over the Ranges.' The picturesque flowering ratas and

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kowhai s of the Victorian New Zealand poets give place in Wright's verse to plain flax, fern and tussock.\(^51\) Jackson states:

Wright... anticipated Frank Sargeson in employing naïve narrators who deliver their verse anecdotes, reminiscences, or homespun philosophies in a simple colloquial style. The technique allows Wright to express the social values of this male subculture, with its respect for comradeship, resourcefulness, pluck, fair play, and physical prowess in the great outdoors. Even the odd sentimental touches are in character. When not using an imaginary narrator, he still adopts an unsophisticated persona. The self-imposed limitation frees him from dependence on Parnassian clichés.\(^52\)

In terms of landscape, Wright is able to portray a scene vividly with a few well-chosen economical words. His verse is also characterised by an intense love of the high-country land and a mistrust of those in towns, voiced by his various narrators. In the introduction to *Station Ballads* The Rev. R. D. Waddell stated that the life of the station and backblocks of New Zealand had found its poet: "STATION BALLADS sets us down amid the simplicities of life, and arches over us the blue skies of the country, and stirs around us the upland breezes and the smell of the tussock."\(^53\) For the first time in New Zealand poetry the New Zealand landscape had become both a recognised unglamorized presence and the correlative for a positive emotion.\(^54\)

Generally poets who had lived and worked on stations did not write romanticised verse about them. Hamilton Thompson's 'Another Station Ballad'\(^55\) humorously deconstructs the picture of romanticised station life portrayed by some station balladeers:

...Great Scott! it makes me sick,
When I read the swingin' verses those erratic poets make
Upon the life they rave about as bound to take the cake –

Thompson gives the example of waking up on freezing mornings in the darkness to inedible breakfasts served by terrible station cooks, and then going out to bring in starving sheep trapped in the snow:

\(^51\) Jackson, p.359.
\(^52\) Ibid.
\(^54\) Jackson, p.359.
\(^55\) Hamilton Thompson, *Ballads of Business and Back-Block Life*. Dunedin: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Company Ltd, 1909, pp.43-47. Thompson, an accountant in Central Otago and Dunedin and contributor of verse to the *Otago Witness* during the 1890s, wrote of this poem to a friend: "I wrote this when McKee Wright was publishing *Station Ballads* in the *Witness*. It gave him the pip. He retorted in verse." [Woodhouse, pp.44-46].
By the lately-fallen snow, lads,
The lately fallen snow;
That's so bloomin' nice to look at
Twenty mile' away or so.

And in summer...

Yes, it's grand to ride in summer on the barren, sun-burnt hills,
And when it's ninety in the shade to sit until yer grills,
In yer seat upon the saddle when the skin peels off yer nose,
An' yer find it hard to think that here in winter time yer froze.

Thompson becomes increasingly sarcastic about the joys of station life: on
weekends you can sit in the sun and wait for Monday with intense excitement,
while you study architecture in a wire fence. You'll never get tired of mutton,
and never get annoyed when you find flies and gravel among the currants in
the duff. You'll never long for fruit at all because there's plenty of turnips!
Likewise Reeves and Williams's 'Atra Cura (A Pastoral Plaint) is a complaint
about the harshness of station life – the sandflies, moths at night, nor'-westerly
winds, blowflies, drought, stroppy sheep, rabbits, land taxes and troublesome
shearers' unions.

The ballads are useful historical sources because they often provide a
realistic and detailed description of rural life and work. All types of rural
characters are portrayed in these poems: station managers to station cooks,
shearers, musterers, rabbiters, bushmen, prospectors, swaggers and
gum diggers, and the work and conditions they labour under are described
down to the smallest detail. Dora Wilcox's 'The Splitter's Song describes
bushmen making tracks for home after a long day's work. The weary men
stumble through the sounds of the bush at nightfall to their camp:

There streams a flood of firelight from the wharé's open doors,
The cook's had supper ready long ago:
Fling the logs upon the hearth until the iron chimney roars,
Black pine, manuka sticks, and matipo!
Supper over, smoke begins; – with a yarn or song maybe,
And the splitter tumbles early into bunk;
Before the break of dawning, far across the hills is he,
So soon in depths of slumber he is sunk...

Apart from providing a generally realistic picture of rural life and work,
the station ballads are useful sources, firstly because of the rural New Zealand

57 Dora Wilcox (Dora Moore), Verses from Maoriland. London: George Allen, 1905,
pp.21-23.
male attitudes and values they display (for example attitudes to work and the land, values of mateship, physicality and ingenuity, examples of backblock humour); all the things that make up New Zealander’s perceptions of themselves when defining a stereotypical national identity. Secondly the ballads are excellent documents of vernacular New Zealand language, being full of rural expressions and farming terms.

**The Living Landscape.**

This topic is the hardest to define, and the most interesting. It deals with genuine and original responses to the landscape by New Zealand late-colonial poets, and attempts to determine the response that best reflected the national late-colonial view.

The poem which anthologists Curnow and O’Sullivan have exemplified is Edward Tregear’s ‘Te Whetu Plains’ mainly because it is regarded as epitomising a persistent theme in New Zealand literature – the immigrant’s alienation in a strange land. Curnow states:

I like Tregear’s ‘Te Whetu Plains’ because it expresses, with none of the familiar flatteries and pretences, the colonist’s true response to a landscape he found not merely alien, but repellent and terrifying. The voice is curiously strained, as Tregear attempts a romantic elevation of tone. But he is not attitudinizing, like Jessie Mackay. His poem expresses a mood which other and later New Zealand poets have had: as if all human history had lapsed behind them, ‘and left strange quiet here.’

O’Sullivan concurs:

There was little tension, little uneasiness, that filtered through to poetry. Only seldom did a poem such as Edward Tregear’s ‘Te Whetu Plains’ break through to a response that owed more to the awareness of an individual mind than to what was currently thought of as poetry’s due. The apprehension of ‘such ghastly peace’, in a land for the most part too strange even to be misunderstood in a meaningful way, must have been a not uncommon feeling in colonial life. It is almost unique as it appears in verse.

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However Curnow and O'Sullivan may be reading too much into their interpretation of this poem. The first (beautifully written) three stanzas are evocative of a silent, dreadful and bleak landscape:

A lonely rock above a midnight plain,
A sky across whose moonlit darkness flies,
No shadow from the 'Children of the Rain',
A stream whose double crescent far-off lies,
And seems to glitter back the silver of the skies.

The table-lands stretch step by step below
In giant terraces, their deeper ledges
Banded by blackened swamps (that, near, I know
Convolvulus-entwined) whose whitened edges
Are ghostly silken flags of seedling water-sedges.

All still, all silent, 'tis a songless land,
That hears no music of the nightingale,
No sound of waters falling lone and grand
Through sighing forests to the lower vale,
No whisper in the grass, so wan, and grey, and pale.

However the following six stanzas can be read as Victorian metaphorical expression on the themes of age, death and peace. The silence and death-like peace of the poem are universal themes, and at no time are referred to as relating to the isolation of the New Zealand immigrant. Tregear speaks of "universal death" and the Earth in general terms. The lonely rock and the landscape from the beginning of the poem could be seen to be acting as an inspiration or catalyst for the poet's internal musings, as per Victorian convention, leading Tregear to thoughts on age and death. It is a very Victorian post-Darwinian poem, where the external landscape mirrors the internal one of religious doubt. Note especially the references to Victorian geology – an important part of the faith/doubt debate. An examination of Tregear's complex religious beliefs might bear this out. Tregear's anguished conclusion; the plea for a gentle and calm rest in death, "But not, oh God, such peace, such ghastly peace as this", could refer to the oppressive silence of the landscape, representing the colonial immigrant's alienation, but equally could be taken at face-value – an outcry of fear at religious doubt, age and death's "gloomy terrors."

O'Sullivan's assumption that 'Te Whetu Plains' "must have been a not uncommon feeling in colonial life", yet admission that "it is almost unique in verse" may be significant. I have found (as this section will show) that poets were far more likely to find calm, peace, happiness, beauty, the sublime and
God in response to the landscape, rather than expressions of fear and alienation.

This leads to the question, how accurately does the verse of the late-colonial period reflect national attitudes of consciousness? In terms of the landscape and literature, my parallel historical research would lead me to answer 'accurately'. However certain modes within late-colonial New Zealand poetry complicate the answer when one is attempting to define something so complex as a national consciousness. But it is important to note that the Victorian conventions of "poetry's due" were far more conducive to expressions of exile and alienation than constraining. This means that perhaps the late-colonials were less concerned about exile from Home than we perceive them as being. The fact that the majority of verse about Home was idealised, clichéd and unconvincing and conveys the impression of going through the expected poetical motions, while the verse in response to the new landscape was fresh, alive and original, means that the late-colonials were appreciative of their new environment, rather than despondent about it.

An examination of the various responses of poets to the New Zealand landscape reveals negative reactions are distinctly in the minority; but they do exist. William Hodgeson displayed a strong distaste of the rain, mud and ugliness of the West Coast in his 'The Lay of the Weather Bound'. H. B. King's 'Sentimental Bill (In the Forty-Mile Bush)' is a humorous verse about a poet-farmer who loses his poetic gift in the face of the unforgiving landscape. Years of working on a slipping farm rob him of his sentiment and his poetry of charm, so that he only writes songs of floods and rain. When his fence collapses he swears and throws rocks at his dog. Amidst the Victorian versifications in praise of the beauties of the trees and birds of the indigenous

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62 Alfred A. Grace, ed, Poems of William Hodgeson. Nelson: Alfred G. Betts, 1896, p.8. Hodgeson was a farmer, schoolteacher and inspector of schools. This poem was subtitled "Written at Sludgeville, Pactalus County" and was probably written on one of his trips as inspector of schools for the Educational District of Nelson in the 1890s, which then included Marlborough and the West Coast. Hodgeson was an adamant Victorian poet, who wrote and translated Greek poems at night on these trips. In the introduction to his collection the editor, Alfred A. Grace, praised Hodgeson for being "distinctly a writer of the old school; his style was not that of those later Victorian poets who rejoice in reproductions of the Australian shearer's 'lingo', or the slang of private's of the Line." Grace criticised Hodgeson for abandoning his high classical standards when he wrote his "Nelson Lays", which he called "the weakest efforts of his pen" and only included them in the collection on account of local interest.

forest, William Satchell's 'The Ballad of Stuttering Jim'\(^{64}\) depicts the predatory and disorientating bush, as Jim, the girl and his English rival become lost and starve:

For the bush was as thick as a paddock of maize,
   and sharp as a tiger's claw
With the supple-jack vines, and the saw and spines
   of toi and tatara-moa...

Satchell's 'Song of the Gumfield'\(^{65}\) also contains depressing landscape descriptions of the "scrubby, grubby" North: "In the slighted, blighted North, where the giant kauris grow / And the earth is bare and barren where the bush-bee used to hum..." Satchell describes the diabolic noise of owl cicadas and mosquitos, and the "sloppy... dismal winter rain."

The single expression of fear of the New Zealand landscape is Alexander Bathgate's 'Faerie'\(^{66}\) in which he questions why New Zealand has no fairy dells, haunted woods, enchanted meres or legends of gnomes and goblins? (Bathgate overlooked Maori myth and legend). He states our woods are as dark and our lakes as clear as those of any land where fairies dwell: "Our craggy mountains are full of fear, / E'en rugged men hath felt their awful spell."

Mary Colborne-Veel wrote on the power of the landscape and found Death an ever-present force in 'Natural Death'\(^{67}\):

That woke when the forest first fired, when
the glaciers moved downward
Or hid in those rivers that flowed from the
garden of God.

Man measures his strength from the hills, and
   they cast him down headlong;
Man measures his strength with the floods,
   and they sweep him away.

Annie Murgatroyd's 'A Reverie'\(^{68}\) begins by evoking the same death-like silence as 'Te Whetu Plains', but the poem's mood is one of peace and tranquillity, rather than fear and alienation:

High hills and deep blue sky;
A silence all round as of death
The faint sweet scent of the flax


\(^{67}\) Mackay, ed, *A Little Anthology of Mary Colborne-Veel*. p.42.

\(^{68}\) Murgatroyd, *Poems of Annie Murgatroyd*. p.27.
Perfuming the zephyr’s soft breath.

Calm and peace was the most common response to the landscape. Early conservationist Alexander Bathgate’s ‘Ivan Graeme: A New Zealand Reverie’ describes Ivan and his dog, happy in their hut in the bush by the creek. The poem has extensive descriptions of the "lovely wilderness" of their natural surroundings, which "All speak of placid calm content." Likewise Marie Randle’s 'A Retreat’ promotes the peace of the New Zealand environment:

For loneliness,
Luxurious loneliness, give me a dell,
A ferny dell, in fair Zealandia;
Where lapp’d in tender sunshine, you may lie
Unheedful of the breeze that blows without,
Your couch the springy tussock, hedg’d around
With clumps of gorse (the toiling settler’s bane)
Ablaze with bloom and redolent of sweets,
Where you may gaze your fill upon the sky,
Unutterably blue; and store in heart
That lovely hue, to see again in dreams
When skies are dark, and you are tir’d and sad.
No sound disturbs your fragrant solitude,
Save the faint rustle of the browsing sheep
Upon the fern-clad slope; or the lark’s song,
Which blends so truly with the peaceful scene,
As scarce to break its spell of hush’d repose!

The peace or silence, therefore, was an asset, rather than fearful as for Tregear.

A very interesting attitude to peace and silence is seen in Walter Munro’s 'Monody to Solitude: In a Dead Forest, N.Z.' Like Bathgate and Randle, Munro finds "peace-giving quietude" and "restful calm contentment" in the bush. However Munro’s haven is a burnt bush landscape, whose ghostly trunks offer no shelter. Nonetheless Munro concludes by perceiving God in the landscape.

David McKee Wright displayed a true positive affinity with the landscape. In his poem 'The Rabbiter’, the narrator is at one with the land, finding pleasure in healthy honest work outdoors where there is glory and music in the landscape:

If you could come along with me some morning when I start,
You’d feel the brightness of the air go stealing to your heart;
You’d reckon you were twice the man, and be so too perhaps,

70 Randle, Lits and Lyrics of New Zealand. p.48.
72 Wright, Station Ballads and Other Verse. pp.12-15.
While dew beads hang on all the grass along the line of traps.
You'd tell your mates when you went home that work in town was slow.
There's something up the country that some other fellows know.

A different response to the New Zealand landscape came from David MacDonald Ross, who infused his melodramatic Victorian verses with exotic New Zealand scenic backgrounds. "The Tui’s Temple and his Song" displays a darkly romantic setting:

The tyrant ratas, gnarled and bold,
Rose crimson from their deathly kiss,
While kowhais flowering yellow gold,
That graced man’s paradise of old
Were starred with snowy clematis.

In his response to the New Zealand environment, Ross created a fantasy landscape of towering peaks, volcanoes, rivers, lakes and the bush, inhabited by spirits. In 'Where the Fairies Play' a romanticised New Zealand setting becomes the scene for fantasy. His poetry showed the influence of Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and in a more conventional response, his scenic settings would often lead to an epiphany in the style of the dream-vision genre. For example 'Yesterday' shows an exotic New Zealand setting, where mountains "Broke in bright silver, where the tussock climbed, / Past bushy gullies, where the bell-birds chimed / And dark-garbed tuis, that are poets rhymed." This scene becomes a background for the poet's metaphysical musings on Death and other themes. Ross's sonnet 'Ruapehu' (a mountain which appeared in many of his poems) is the best example of his epic and romanticised poetical response to an identifiable point in the landscape.

John Henry Dillon found the sublime in the landscape in 'Among the Hills':

But most among these ancient hills we see
Her grandeur and her rugged might displayed
In glimpses of such awful majesty
As dwarfs conception till it sinks dismayed,
For here the littleness of human skill,
The puny force of human thought and might,
Makes manifest the Omipotence and will
And love and wisdom of the Infinite.Æ

Ibid.
Ibid, pp.47-49.
In another standard late-Romantic response, Hubert Church found God in the landscape. ‘Maoriland’\textsuperscript{78} depicts the New Zealand landscape as divine. Church’s poems ‘Akaroa Heads’, ‘Sinclair Heads: Cook Strait’ and ‘The Three Islands’ all explicitly show the presence of God in the New Zealand environment, where the waves come flawless from the Almighty’s hand and God’s light is seen first each morning.\textsuperscript{79} This time, the silence in the landscape of ‘Akaroa Heads’ is responded to by declaring the wilderness holy ground.

Evoking New Zealand: Blanche Baughan and Katherine Mansfield.

I will conclude by discussing two poets in terms of originality of response to the landscape; Blanche Baughan and Katherine Mansfield.

Blanche Baughan, like Church and Dillon, found the sublime in the landscape, but found new and original ways to express this. Her scenes are vividly realised. ‘Hope’\textsuperscript{80} begins with a panoramic view from the Port Hills above Christchurch. This early poem of Baughan’s is a melodramatic moral tale of a suicidal young man who is encouraged by his mother to repent his sins. The landscape is intimately connected with the poem’s religious theme. His mother uses imagery from the landscape of burning bush, the renewal of grass and the enclosing alps to illustrate sin and redemption. His epiphany is accompanied by the setting sun turning the gorse into a biblical Burning Bush. In the poem’s jubilant closing lines, the landscape description becomes glorified and sublime.

In ‘Sumner Estuary’\textsuperscript{81} Baughan emphasises light and colour. Again the scenic description is panoramic, encompassing a 360 degree view. Baughan states her dog also tastes the divineness of the landscape, and questions how much of the vast, exquisite view her Collie can sense – all the breadth and detail? Note the use of light and colour in Baughan’s description of the estuary:

Bright twisting emerald, brilliant blues,
Purple and violet, bronze and fawn,
Blending, make bloom with the loveliest hues
All the broad water-lawn:
Clouds bosom it with white:
A myriad curling courses, golden-bright

\textsuperscript{78} Church, The West Wind, xxxv-xxxvi.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, xv.i, xvii, xxxix.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, pp.22-25.
Or like sharp silver, thread and flourish it
With inlaid light:
And, down its long length sinuously shining,
From right and left, rich roads of sapphire, glide
The sister rivers... then, together twining,
Gleam past the yellow dunes into yon wide
Glitter of bare blue sea...

Baughan continues by describing the view to the remaining three compass points. As she describes the line of mountains to the West, her language becomes sublime:

Station'd in sky, what means massive Splendour grows
Alone 'wixt blue and blue?
Pure silver are her bulwarks, and aspire
To domes and pinnacles of silver fire,
So holy in their lifted, bright repose,
That, watching them, one's hopes grow holy too...
O City Celestial, what indeed are you
Beyond mere snows?

Baughan states her "great home-picture" satisfies more than brain and eye, but also the soul. The beauty does more than satisfy – it overwhelms, yet there is still not enough beauty; she is looking for another level of beauty that she cannot express. She has an eye to gaze, a mind to read, a heart and soul to exult in the great scene, but, like her dog's, her sight is limited. Baughan lacks understanding of what it means. She questions how God must see and read the landscape. She feels impotent, and asks God, the "Master-Artist" for more sight to read his "emblazon'd Nature-speech."

Baughan's verse shows an intense love and appreciation of the landscape. Sight and vision are important themes. In 'Escape', a short ten-line poem, she forgets all her problems and the self – "the I and Mine and me" at the sight of the sea, the mountain and the pure air. Other Canterbury poems by Baughan are similarly concerned with light, vision and the landscape. In 'The Blind Lama', after describing the Port Hills scenery she relates the story of a Tibetan sage who shut himself in the dark for sixty-nine years, striving to see God's glory, and the inspirational effect this has on her. In 'The Summit Track', searching a clearer vision or wider view Baughan climbs out of Christchurch on the plain into the hills. Eventually the whole city lies spread below, the vault

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82 Baughan appears to have been in love with the New Zealand mountains. When describing alpine environments, in her poetry, prose and tourist guides, her language often became joyously uplifted and sublime.
83 Baughan, Poems from the Port Hills. pp.27-29.
85 Ibid, pp.31-39.
of heaven overhead, and across the plain the Angelic Alps and sea. Her gaze is able to go free there, enabling her to explore conceptions of perfection and beauty. For Baughan landscape, nature, vision and God were inextricably linked. Her ascent into the Port Hills mirrors her path to God, and her sense of sight enables her to become closer to him.

Baughan's scenic pictures favour wide views, perhaps the reason why she loves mountains. In 'Landlock'd' she feels confined by the surrounding inland pasture, which takes on the imagery of the sea. She appears to want to embrace and take in every detail and aspect of the environment, and this best expresses itself in her longest poem; 'The Paddock' The poem is a drama, set in a backblocks farm, in which each component of the things within the paddock speak. The human drama of backblocks farmer Andrew, his wife Elizabeth, her young sister Janet and an old Maori princess called Hine, is set against speaking and singing parts for the white clover, sunbeams and strawberries, the creek, wind, seeds and ti-tree. The poem is an environmental work, which deals with the all-encompassing themes of life, death, growth and renewal, and in which we see how all the things within the paddock interrelate.

It is questionable for me to write on Katherine Mansfield as showing a unique and original response to the New Zealand landscape, when her status as a New Zealand writer is uncertain. Mansfield's ability as a poet has always been questioned, critics preferring to concentrate on her prose. Even contemporary critics are unsure about Mansfield's poetry; the Oxford History of New Zealand Literature contains only six lines on her poems, stating they "add little to her literary reputation." Mansfield's bizarre poems were not written in fashionable form; she had problems publishing them because they didn't rhyme. Only one of her poems contains explicit reference to the New Zealand scene. Yet her unique personified landscapes are inherently evocative of New Zealand. Mansfield's expressive voice and spirit, and her personal and intense relationship with the landscape which is apparent in her poems, somehow makes her a distinctive New Zealand poet. I believe Mansfield's poems,

88 Jackson, 'Poetry: Beginnings to 1945' in The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, p.375.
particularly those written between 1909-1913, were ahead of their time and have not received the appreciation they deserve.

'In the Rangitaki Valley'\(^90\) is Mansfield's one overt New Zealand landscape poem:

O valley of waving broom,
O lovely, lovely light,
O heart of the world, red-gold!
Breast high in the blossom I stand;
It beats about me like waves
Of a magical, golden sea.

The barren heart of the world
Alive at the kiss of the sun,
The yellow mantle of Summer
Flung over a laughing land,
Warm with the warmth of her body,
Sweet with the kiss of her breath.

O valley of waving broom,
O lovely, lovely light,
O mystical marriage of Earth
With the passionate Summer sun!
To her lover she holds a cup
And the yellow wine o'erflows.
He has lighted a torch
And the whole of the world is ablaze.
Prodigal wealth of love!
Breast high in the blossom I stand.

The poem is a sensual expression of warmth and light, alive and verging on the sublime. Mansfield's intensely personified landscapes are characteristic of her poetry. 'The Storm'\(^91\) shows Mansfield's personal response to the environment. Her isolation, insignificance and terror are contrasted with feelings of serenity and belonging. 'Very Early Spring' and 'The Awakening River'\(^92\) are personal, elevated and vivid poems in which the landscape is personified as loving and active. In all Mansfield's poems the Sun is a major figure; walking in the forest, touching the trees with his golden fingers so they

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\(^90\) Katherine Mansfield, *Poems*. p.3. This poem was presumably written about 20 November 1907, when a camping party Mansfield travelled with in the centre of the North Island camped overnight at Rangitaki. [O'Sullivan, p.86.]

\(^91\) Ibid. p.20.

\(^92\) Ibid, pp.22-23. 'The Awakening River', published in *Rhythm*, Spring 1912, provoked A. R. Orage, who attacked *Rhythm* in his *New Age*, 19 April 1912, to speak of "pampering pretty feelings until the very rivers seemed to lie in sexual ecstasy." [O'Sullivan, p.88.]
wake from slumber, or in 'The Awakening River' lending the river his wings so it can fly away with the seagulls:

The gulls are mad-in-love with the river,
And the river unveils her face and smiles.
In her sleep-brooding eyes they mirror their shining wings.
She lies on silver pillows: the sun leans over her.
He warms and warms her, he kisses and kisses her.
There are sparks in her hair and she stirs in laughter.
Be careful, my beautiful waking one! you will catch on fire.
Wheeling and flying with the foam of the sea on their breasts,
The ineffable mists of the sea clinging to their wild wings,
Crying the rapture of the boundless ocean,
The gulls are mad-in-love with the river.
Wake! we are the dream thoughts flying from your heart.
Wake! we are the songs of desire flowing from your bosom.
O, I think the sun will lend her his great wings
And the river will fly away to the sea with the mad-in-love birds.

'The Earth Child in the Grass'\textsuperscript{93} is reminiscent of Baughan's 'The Paddock', as Mansfield lies down and listens to the "cold song of the grass" which speaks to her of the cycle of life and death. Likewise in 'Sea'\textsuperscript{94} the mocking snarling arrogant Sea, who demands "Come closer", perfectly epitomises the ocean and the inherent danger within the coastal landscape.

It can be argued that these poems concern English landscapes, and even 'In the Rangitaki Valley' is an expression of Mansfield's early literary romanticism rather than an original response to the New Zealand landscape. However I read them as essentially 'New Zealand' poems. Perhaps Mansfield's ambivalent non-specific landscapes were a radical new response to the colonial condition. Rather than lament her exile, nationalistically promote one Home or compare two landscapes, Mansfield has chosen to amalgamate both her heritages into an ideal landscape, symbolised by her childlike state or voice in these poems. Mansfield's landscapes borrow from English landscapes, in the same way that settlers attempted to transform the New Zealand landscape on an English model. The scenes may partially draw on England, but the spirit is definitely New Zealand's.

If we are to search for poets whose verse was representative of the late-colonial New Zealand environment and national consciousness, I would identify the living landscapes of Blanche Baughan and Katherine Mansfield, rather than Tregear's landscape of death.

\textsuperscript{93} Katherine Mansfield, \textit{Poems}, p.25.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid p.28.
FIGURE 5: A kauri log, Omahuta, 1913.

"The tree under review is 70 feet long to the first limb, and is 36 feet in girth. This gives contents in superficial feet of 68,000 feet, or over 120 tons dead weight, sufficient in itself to afford a full load for one of the timber crafts trading on the coast."

[Northwood Brothers Album 97, Hocken Library.]
FIGURE 6: A bush tramway.
These tramways were used to transport logs downhill to a sawmill. Note the wooden rails. It is on such a tramway that Tom Roland, of Jane Mander’s The Story of a New Zealand River (1920) meets his death.
[Northwood Brothers Album 97, Hocken Library.]
NEW ZEALAND NOVELS BY RURAL GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION, 1890-1921.

William Satchell, The Tell of the Bush (1905)
Jane Mander, Allen Adair (1925)
Jane Mander, The Story of a New Zealand River (1920)
Jane Mander, The Passionate Puritan (1921)
William Satchell, The Land of the Lost (1902)
HOKIANGA

Sir George Makgill, Blacklaw (1914)
Arthur Adams, Tussock Land (1904)
Herman Foston, In the Bell-Bird's Lair (1911)
W. H. Koebel, The Anchorage (1908)
Herman Foston, At the Front (1921)

Harry Vogel, The Tragedy of a Flirtation (1909)
TARANAKI

Charles Owen, Phillip Loveluck (1909)
WANGANUI
Ellen Taylor, A Thousand Pities (1901)

William Sylvester Walker, Zealandia's Guerdon (1902)
NAPIER

Louisa Baker, Another Woman's Territory (1901)
WAIRARAPA

WEST COAST

Louisa Baker, The Untold Half (1899)

MARLBOROUGH

Christchurch

G. B. Lancaster, The Tracks We Tread (1907)

CANTERBURY

isabella Maud Peacocke, The Guardian (1920)

OTAGO

Sir George Makgill, Blacklaw (1914)

Arthur Adams, Tussock Land (1904)

SOUTHLAND

G. B. Lancaster, Sans o'Men (1904)

DUNEDIN

Wellington

Edith Grossman Angela: A Messenger (1909)

POVERTY BAY

FIGURE 7.
CHAPTER 3.

LATE-COLONIAL FICTION
AS ENVIRONMENTAL TEXT,
1890-1921.
Introduction.

Lawrence Jones defines the 'Late Colonial' period of the New Zealand novel as 1890-1934, although the chronological boundaries of the period are not clear. I have confined myself to a thirty-year period which culminates with Mander's *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920), her equally environmentally significant but neglected *The Passionate Puritan* (1921) and Guthrie-Smith's environmental non-fiction classic *Tutira* (1921). The predominant form of literature produced by late-colonial New Zealand writers was the romance novel. In these novels the melodramatic and didactic traditions of the 'Pioneer' or 'Early Colonial' period continued, but with moves towards the critical realism and impressionism of the following 'Provincial' period. The main collective thematic factor of these novels is their depiction of and expression of attitudes towards the massive environmental changes that occurred during the period, as the bush-frontier settlers struggled to transform the wilderness into a pastoral paradise. These themes and attitudes were also reflected in non-fiction writing, where good environmental sources are found in descriptive travelogues such as Koebel's *In the Maoriland Bush* (1911), touristic writings such as Baughan's *Studies in New Zealand Scenery* (1916), and scientific works on fauna and flora by writers such as Cockayne and Guthrie-Smith. The period also saw the first publication of Reeves's popular history *The Long White Cloud: An Tea Rua* (1898), parts of which can only be described as environmental history. All these non-fiction works were written in prose designed to be evocative as well as informative. By 1921 the majority of accessible bush had been transformed into profitable farmland, a conservation movement was emerging, and this period of New Zealand's literary and environmental history drew to a close.

In this first of three chapters on New Zealand late colonial fiction I will assess the novels in terms of their use as documents of environmental history. Regional landscape depictions in the rural novels will be mapped to indicate their geographical coverage. The depiction of transformation of the landscape

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1 Lawrence Jones, 'The Novel' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, pp.107, 123.
as documented in the novels will be discussed. A third section will deal with the depiction of bushfires and other common frontier hazards in the novels. The novels are descriptive documents, but no description can be neutral: subsequently Chapter 4 will deal with the explicit or implicit attitudes towards the processes of environmental transformation described in this chapter. Chapter 5 will deal with the themes of home, national identity and the landscape in fiction, and attempt to synthesise a dominant set of attitudes from the full range of the texts. Chapter 6 briefly deals with the same themes in non-fiction writing.

Late Colonial Romances by Geographical Location.

The romance novels of the period cover a diverse variety of geographical locations and environmental terrains. Some settings are geographically identifiable, others are more regionally generic.

The North Island bush is well represented within late-colonial novels. The most realistic descriptions are found in the novels of William Satchell and Jane Mander, both authors basing their novels on first-hand experience of life in the districts they depict. Satchell’s *The Toll of the Bush* (1905) is a geographically identifiable portrait of the Hokianga district. Mander’s novels *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920) and *The Passionate Puritan* (1921) depict the kauri forest and timber-milling settlements north of Auckland.

The North Island bush frontier or farm is dealt with in a number of other romances, in which melodramatic plots are tempered with realistic landscape description and practical accounts of settler endeavours in breaking in the land. John Bell’s *In the Shadow of the Bush* (1899) is situated in the bush districts of the Wellington area. W. H. Koebel’s *The Anchorage* (1908) is set on a Poverty Bay sheep station. Harry Vogel’s *A Maori Maid* (1898) describes the Napier region. Conditions in the King Country bush appeared to inspire

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didactic novels, with Guy Thornton's *The Wowser* (1916) and Herman Foston's *In the Bell-Bird's Lair* (1911) and *At the Front* (1921) all set in the Taranaki bush. Both Vogel's *The Tragedy of a Flirtation* (1909) and Charles Owen's *Phillip Loveluck* (1909) deal with Wanganui bush farms. Ellen Taylor's *A Thousand Pities* (1901) is about a station cadet on a Manawatu bush farm. Edith Grossmann's *Angela: A Messenger* (1890) describes the Wairarapa. Sir George Makgill's *Blacklaw* (1914) contains evocative descriptions of a central North Island backblocks bush farm. In Arthur Adam's *Tussock Land* (1904) the bush-camp chapter provides an excellent picture of the half-cleared state of the central North Island. The North Island gumfields are the vividly portrayed setting for Satchell's *The Land of the Lost* (1902) and Mander's *Allen Adair* (1925). Overall the North Island is fairly well covered in these novels.

The South island is not as well represented in late-colonial novels, but there are a diverse variety of geographical terrains. William Sylvester Walker's *Zealandia's Guerdon* (1902) contains excellent landscape descriptions of a Marlborough station in the Awatere river district, and also good descriptions of the Marlborough and Wellington coasts, Karaka Bay, Christchurch and the New Brighton sand dune environments. The prolific Louise Alice Baker ("Alien") wrote about a number of South Island locations as exotic backgrounds to her romantic plots. *Another Woman’s Territory* (1901) is set on the West Coast. *The Untold Half* (1899) is set at Lake Manapouri and the Southern Alps around McKinnon's Pass. *Wheat in the Ear* (1898) is set on the Canterbury

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10 Herman Foston, *In the Bell-Bird's Lair, or "In Touch with Nature": A New Zealand Story*. Wellington: Gordon and Gotch, 1911.
21 "Alien" (Louise Alice Baker), *Another Woman’s Territory*. Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co Ltd, 1901.
plains, near the Otira Gorge. Isabel Maud Peacocke's *The Guardian* (1920) is set on a high-country farm towards the West Coast from Canterbury. Makgill's *Blacklow* is partially set on a Canterbury high country station. The Otago and Southland high country is evocatively represented by Adam's *Tussock Land* and G. B. Lancaster's *The Tracks we Tread* (1907) and *Sons o' Men* (1904).

All of these novels are valuable environmental texts due to the contemporary landscape descriptions of the geographical regions they contain.

The Transformation of the Landscape in New Zealand Fiction, 1890-1921.

The highly visible changes the landscape was undergoing, in particular the removal of the bush, became a central theme of the novels of the period. John Bell describes the process in *In the Shadow of the Bush* (1899):

To the artistic eye, the bush clearings, especially in their earlier stages, may appear as a sore blemish on the face of the landscape. Thickly strewn with blackened logs and branches, and with, perhaps some remaining giants of the forest still standing, but scorched and dead and gaunt in leafless nakedness, these clearings certainly stand out in ugly contrast with the virgin native bush, whose hundred shades of green, and wealth of feathery fronds, and rich carpet of fern growth must ever delight the eye of the lover of the beautiful in nature. But viewed only with regard to the utility of things, these bush clearings, unsightly though they be, afford ample grounds for satisfaction. The vigorous growth of grass, that springs up from the seed sown after the fire, soon covers thickly the dark brown soil, and gives evidence of great fertility, and sheep and cattle may then be counted amongst the logs in such numbers as would delight the heart of many an owner of open arable land. But even the roughest of these primitive clearings give to experienced eyes promise of smooth pastures or abundant harvests in the not very distant future. Time, and the action of fire, coupled with continuous hard work on the part of the owners, will bring about a striking change. A stranger visiting them after an absence of some years would be astonished at the improvements effected. The timber will have in great measure disappeared, fences will have been erected on every hand, the slab whare will have given place to the neat weather-board cottage, garden and orchard will now be visible, and the gum-tree of Australia, with the cypress and pine of the Northern Hemisphere, will be preparing to take the place of their dispossessed

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and less accommodating brethren of New Zealand, who, with a too ardent love for the companions of their gloomy forest home, will not bear to part from them or live a separate existence.  

A similar description is found in Arthur Adams's *Tussock Land* (1904), as King, returning to New Zealand from the civilisation of Sydney, takes the train from Wellington into the bush country.  

In Chapter XXX, Adams describes the rapid transformation of a district; a reflection of what was happening over much of the central North Island. The trees were felled and new roads were pushed into the solitudes. Day by day the bullock teams or steam trams carried the trees to the sawmills, which hummed ceaselessly while great heaps of sawdust grew. In Autumn burnings enveloped townships in heavy smoke for weeks. "Almost to the sight the forests withered away: the settlers felled their acres, and bare, rude, diminutive wharés, roofed with sheets of blue galvanized iron and surrounded with barbed-wire fences, took feeble possession of the cleared areas." Cattle pushed pathways into the forest, letting in the light, and it withered slowly. The settlers burned the tree trunks in heaps: "These smouldered for weeks, great funeral pyres of a doomed race." The stump extractors set to work, and the roots were pulled up and cast on the pyres. The newly cleared land was ploughed and soon rough uneven paddock spotted with a new and wonderful green. Townships slowly grew. Settlers combined to establish dairy factories. Butter was exported and railway trucks were packed with sheep for freezing. Creeks and streams were harnessed for electricity: "...here and there a traveller making his muddy way through half-formed bush roads would come at night to a blaze of light where some insignificant township had taken advantage of its situation near a rocky gorge to turn that riotous torrent into electric light." New schools were created and the district grew politically.  

Bell also described the rapid advancement of settlement on the bush and the development of townships. He relates how roads would begin as a winding pathway through the bush, then formed clay tracks over which drays might be taken over Summer and Autumn, but for the rest of the year would be a mire of liquid mud through which packhorses had to struggle, before the final installation of the metalled road.  

The transformation of bush landscapes took place in an extremely concentrated space of time. This brief but vital period of New Zealand's

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31 Bell, p.1.
agricultural and environmental history is illustrated in Blanche Baughan's collection of short fiction *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven* (1912). Baughan stated in her Preface that she wished to delineate a phase of New Zealand life that was already passing, and lacked a chronicler: "Young things alter very quickly; the lapse of five years, even, can render unrecognisable one of our bush settlements." The collection's classic story is *Grandmother Speaks* in which the old pioneer discusses the changes that have occurred in the Bay during her life:

> It looked a bit different though in them days; for the hills that's grass a l over now, an' cocksfoot, was covered then with standin' Bush — there was Bush, and nothin' *but* Bush, for what looked like miles above the sand, as well as miles on either side of it...

The settler's huts were replaced with houses, roads were pushed through the bush, now there is a church, a public hall and a library, steamers arriving from town and the pa has been replaced by a cheese factory. Grandmother wonders at all the rapid developments of "Civilisation on tap" that have made life in the Bay so prosperous and luxurious, stating "It's good to be in at the sowin' o' seed that's bound to grow, be it cabbage, or a country." Satchell's *The Toll of the Bush* (1905) depicts a landscape undergoing significant environmental transformation. The novel is set in geographically identifiable places around a Hokianga bush settlement, where the brothers Geoffrey and Robert Hernshaw are hacking their farm out of the wilderness, with forays into Major Milward's established station, the township, the new road through the bush that Sven Andersen works on, and the virgin bush. Satchell's biographer Phillip Wilson places the situation at about 1890, although the events of the novel are dated about 1900. *The Toll of the Bush* was based on the author's first-hand experience. Satchell migrated to New Zealand in 1886 and unsuccessfully attempted to break in a 400-acre block of Maori bushland in the Waima Valley on the south side of the Hokianga harbour, afterwards working as a storekeeper at Rawene from 1891-1892. Satchell's practical knowledge of the life and geography of the district were the basis for the *Toll of the Bush*. Kendrick Smithyman states Satchell's novel is "... most valuable for his presentation of the 'real life' of the Hokianga around the turn of the century, of which otherwise surprisingly few accounts remain" and

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Ibid, Preface. 
discusses his realistic and fictionalised treatment of the district. Events within the novel were based on Satchell's pioneer ventures; for example the episode where Robert Hernshaw's potato crop is destroyed by the wild cattle that roamed the bush reflected the fate of Satchell's orange seedlings, and more generally the Agricultural Department's failed fruit-growing scheme for the district. The novel contrasts the Hernshaw's bush-frontier farm with the virgin bush, the established big sheep and cattle station of "Wairangi" at Oponui (called Rivermouth in the book) and the unnamed township (Rawene).

The Land of the Lost (1902) is set around the North Island gumfields. Wilson states "Lost has a strong regional quality in its descriptions of the Hokiaanga bush and tidal river country, kauri forest and gumfield which could emerge from no-where else in the world." He also advances that the practical knowledge of life on the Takeke and Kawerua gumfields in this novel and a short story 'From a Northern Gumfield' suggests that Satchell worked on the gumfields himself in the intervals of felling bush on his Waima section. Mander, who may have been inspired by Satchell's gumfields novel, also visited the gumfields in a vividly-descriptive chapter of River.

The Land of the Lost (1902) is also an excellent document of environmental transformation. In chapter XVII, Esther and Wilfred, riding through the kauri forest, encounter a Maori bush gang at work and witness the felling of a giant kauri. The Land of the Lost encompasses the environmental transformation of the gumfields in past, present and future. The novel begins with a history of the kauri forests which covered the region one or two thousand years ago, telling how the earth became exhausted, the forest

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Ibid, pp.11-12.
Wilson, William Satchell. p.31.
Ibid, p.76.
Ibid, p.3.

It is likely that Mander had at least read Satchell's earlier novel. In the opening landscape-descriptive passages of River, Mander writes, in possible acknowledgement: "... the river and the hills were one of the gateways to the land of the lost" (pp.11-12), again repeating Satchell's title on page 218. Parts of Chapter 26, in which Asia and Ross visit the gumfields, appear similar to Satchell's gumfields descriptions, and this is echoed in the gumfields passages in Mander's Allen Adair (1925).

The portrayal of a Maori logging gang is also unique in literature, although Maori were active in milling, selling cutting rights to Maori land and sometimes establishing their own timber companies, [see 'Kauri Timber Industry 1890 to 1920' in Michael Rochc, History of Forestry, New Zealand Forestry Corporation Ltd and GP Books, 1990]. Satchell sympathetically portrays the Maori's exploitation at the hands of their European contractor, Roller (Esther's unsuitable fiance). Another example of Maori bushmen in literature is found in William Baucke's Where the White Man Treads (1905), where the author resets a saw for some Maori who are sawing timber for a settler [William Baucke Where the White Man Treads. 2nd ed. Auckland: Wilson and Horton Ltd, 1928].
retreated and the manuka took over the plain, before the arrival of the gumdiggers.\textsuperscript{13} Jess Olive, 'The King of the Diggers' is able to envision the trees of the old forest and determine where to find gum in the monotonous scrubby mounds of the field. The novel ends with a discussion of the future of the gumfields — when the last pound of gum is taken from the land:

"Then," says Hugh, "it will be a desert. The traveller in those days will see the country choked with impenetrable scrub, with here and there in the midst of it the abandoned houses rotting into the ground."

"No," says Jess, rising to his feet, "there is a better day coming. Every year the settler is extending his landmarks and rooting himself like the trees he displaces. As the gum goes he advances."

He turns his face beyond the settlement — a look of inspiration in his eyes. "I see the apple orchards and the vineyards of the future," he says. "Over all the land rests the peace of God.\textsuperscript{44}

Satchell was dealing with a critical period of environmental change in the Hokiangga. The large holdings were established around Parawai, small holdings were encroaching on the fringe of the gumfields. The wilderness as forest was being removed by felling or burning, and the wilderness as gumfield was being exploited and was vanishing. Farms were moving in behind the diggers’ spades.\textsuperscript{15}

Similarly, Jane Mander communicates a sense of the struggling lives of the pioneers in the little river settlements on the bush-frontier. Mander's novels; The Story of a New Zealand River (1920), The Passionate Puritan (1921) and Allen Adair (1925) depict the North Island kauri forest, timber-milling settlements and gumfields. Mander grew up in the kauri mills North of Auckland during the 1880s and 1890s and made use of her experiences in the novels. In 1885 Mander's family lived at Port Albert, then Pukekaroro near Kaiwaka, and this became the setting of River. Turner states "The setting of The River and the author's inside knowledge of bush-felling give it standing as a documentary."\textsuperscript{16}

Mander's The Passionate Puritan is, in my opinion, as good a book as River, but has never been reprinted. As an environmental text The Passionate Puritan is invaluable for its depictions of the timber mill landscape of Northland at Puhupuhu forest, between Whakapara and Whangerei. The descriptions of

\textsuperscript{13} Satchell, The Land of the Lost, pp.2-3.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p.207. Kendrick Smithyman notes Jess's vision was a reflection of the plans for the region by the Department of Agriculture, local body propaganda and the enthusiastic advice of the orchardist Federli [footnote, p.222].

\textsuperscript{15} Smithyman, 'Introduction' in The Land of the Lost, xi.

the mill settlement, its workings, the surrounding bush and the atmosphere of the burnt stumps and fern of the cleared forest make this novel a valuable environmental text. In the introductory chapters Sidney, a teacher from Auckland, observes the railway, the milled landscape, the mill settlement, the burnt strip protecting each house in the settlement from fires, the mill itself, the surrounding flat (which has already been milled), the mill dam and the system for floating logs down the river. Chapter XI describes the system by which four million feet of logs are washed down the creek from the Big Dam to the mill, witnessed by a group of tourists. The novel also conveys a picture of life in the timber-mill community and the various roles of its inhabitants, as Sidney is introduced to the residents: the saw doctor, the accountant, the engineer, the cook and their families. Chapter V is on the social distinctions and interactions among the women of the settlement.

Herman Foston's two didactic novels, In the Bell-Bird's Lair, or, 'In Touch with Nature': A New Zealand Story (1911) and At the Front: A Story of Pluck and Heroism in the Railway Construction Camps of the Dominion of New Zealand (1921) are excellent documents of the transformation of the Taranaki bush landscape. In these books the main character's moral development is achieved through hard work and profitable transformation of the landscape. In the Bell-Bird's Lair describes Edward Strangemuir taking up a Crown land section in the Taranaki bush. In Chapter ten, descriptions of the bush and bird-life are followed by textbook descriptions of felling and burning the bush, as Ted begins breaking in the land. Ted works hard developing his farm, clearing the bush, sowing paddocks, building a house, woolshed and sawmill. A township grows up around the mill (with a church but no pub) and the region is opened up with roads and settlements. Ted prospers, marries and is eventually knighted. The factual descriptions of breaking in the land are backed up by photographs, with captions such as "The bush was being rapidly felled" and "A small sawmill was erected." At the Front is equally factual, reading more as a documentary than a novel, for example chapters four and five describe John McKenzie's land policy and the need for access to the back country, quoting newspaper letters and government ministers. The hero, Ralph Messenger, fleeing a false accusation, goes to work with a railway construction gang in Taranaki (an interesting mix

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20 Foston, In the Bell-Bird's Lair, p.58.
of documentary with standard melodramatic clichés). Detailed descriptions of the life and work within a railway construction camp follow and the stages of construction of a railway, for example this description of draining a swamp:

Ralph was now busily employed. The length of construction he was in charge of was through a huge swamp. In several places up the valley, road diversions had to be carried out in order to facilitate the formation, but these had the effect of improving the road, giving better grades and a straighter run. In several places creeks or small streams had to be diverted, which would be of benefit to the farmers, as drains had previously to be made which drained the whole of the swamp. It was a wet, dirty job, the work being anything but pleasant. The men in the very worst places were provided with gum-boots, but these were of little use to the men, as the mud and water were too deep and got over the tops. Much of this country was low-lying and liable to flood, but by means of extensive protection works the line would be made safe from any trouble in this direction.

This is one of the few depictions of swamp-drainage in late colonial literature, yet the transformation by settlers of the flat lowlands of New Zealand from swamp to rich farmland was one of the greatest drainage operations in the world. Geoff Park quantifies the drainage at some 570,000 hectares, or 85 percent of wetlands. In comparison the Netherlands and Britain only lost around 60 percent of their original wetland areas. This dramatic alteration removed the environment in which much of New Zealand’s unique indigenous ecosystems evolved. To place Foston’s novel in historical context, in 1913 the Royal Commission on Forestry recommended the government eliminate swamps from the national landscape altogether. The Swamp Drainage Act of 1915 gave the government powers to undertake large-scale drainage operations, with a view for making more land available for settlement. Swamp drainage has been overlooked in New Zealand history, until Park’s essay in Environmental Histories. In literature, the absence of the bog-drainer is unexplained – perhaps the bushman, with his more glamorous occupation, offered a more romantic subject for writers.

In At the Front, as the line progresses, dairying develops. At the opening ceremony of the railway the Prime Minister’s speech describes how the district has developed along the line:

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Foston, At the Front, pp.54-55, Ch. VIII, pp.64-68, 107, 155.
Ibid, pp.76-77.
Ibid, p.163.
He was delighted to see grass in abundance everywhere, and glad to learn that the stock were all putting on condition and should winter well. He was also gladdened that the population of the district had more than doubled what it was a year ago. He had learned that, besides butter and cheese, over a thousand bales of wool went out of the district last season, and a good quantity of fat and store steers and sheep. He would like to remind them that it was only a few years ago when all the bush was standing; and it spoke well for the settlers to have done what they had in the face of all the drawbacks in such a short time.55

Such a speech could only be made by a New Zealand politician, and appear in a New Zealand novel! As in Foston's other book, the factual descriptions are supported by photographs of the railway construction.

William Sylvester Walker's Zealandia's Guerdon (1902) contains various scenes of environmental transformation. Frank Osbern's Canterbury homestead is described, surrounded by the mature English trees his father planted — a piece of England in the middle of a distinctively New Zealand setting of tussock plain, braided riverbed, mountains and sea.56 Descriptions of this sort appear in many novels of the period. In the bush of the Marlborough ranges, Arthur meditates about the future development of New Zealand, envisioning it as a productive landscape, mined, fished and farmed, populated and supplying the old country with produce.57 The novel also contains comprehensive descriptions of the New Brighton sand dune region; their landscape, fauna, flora and climate. Frank Osbern is experimentally reclaiming the sand dunes and transforming them by improving them into farmland. Osbern sows grasses, finding Australian 'couch' and American 'buffalo' have the best results because of their similarities in rooting and sand-binding properties to the native grass that grew on the sand, but are vastly superior to the wild grass in stock-grazing richness. He finds ashes and cinders on the sand form a good base, and orders cartloads from Christchurch. Osbern fences acres of sand, flax, manuka, rush, tui-grass and swamp, planting protective trees and gaining water by artesian bores.58

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Foston, At the Front, p.177.
Ibid, p.118.
Ibid, pp.175-177, 210, 275-277. The coastal 'Sandhills Run' which extended from New Brighton to the Waimakariri River was set aside for pasturage during the colonisation of Canterbury. Naturally grazing caused serious dune-mobility problems and a plan of coastal stabilisation and afforestation was implemented. Planting of introduced marram grasses started at New Brighton in the 1870s. [see Peter McKelvey, Sand Forests: A Historical Perspective of the Stabilisation and Afforestation of Coastal Sands in New Zealand. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1999, pp.116, 145.]
Finally, a retrospective of this vital and rapid period of transformation is provided by Helen Wilson’s *Land of My Children* (1955). Wilson, writing when she was 86, like the other authors was recalling personal experience. In 1888 Helen, aged 19, won a partly cleared section of 20 acres in a ballot of land in the Levin area. She and her mother were the first settlers on the Levin block. Through hard work they established a valuable property – fencing, digging, clearing the land and extending their small dwelling. In *Land of My Children* Wilson looks back at the whole seventy-year process in relation to one piece of land and celebrates the struggles of various settler families to “change a block of standing bush into the smiling farm it now was.” This semi-fictional novel is perhaps the best environmental text concerning the period, with its detailed and realistic descriptions of breaking in the land and the conditions for settlers.

Although most of these novels promote the progressive transformation of the landscape, several novels deal with the negative environmental effects of the transformation of the landscape. Both Charles Owen’s *Phillip Loveluck* (1909) and W. H. Koebel’s *The Anchorage* (1908) contain descriptions of overstocking. In Owens’s Wanganui farming melodrama, the settler-farmer Loveluck is in dispute with his villainous large-landowning neighbour Fairman, whose cattle roam wild in the bush and over their unenclosed boundary. By Chapter IV Fairman’s stock are all over the place and the grass is eaten down to the bare earth:

“He’s carrying six sheep to the acre,” Neil pursued, “on a place that won’t carry three. They die right and left, and his paddocks stink for miles. They’re sheep-sick from boundary to boundary, and we’ll be as bad soon on that side of the run. They’ve been crammed together till they’ve pushed their way through and through that bush in the gully that used to be as good as a fence once. They have tracks in every direction.”

Likewise in Koebel’s melodramatic tale of a Poverty Bay sheep station, Bentley, the villainous neighbour takes over the Major’s business and persuades him to buy 1500 mangy cattle when there is no feed to spare. This leads to an overgrazing disaster. Of course such characters who abuse the landscape are villainous. In the same novel the hero, Caverton, comparatively redeems...

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Ibid, p.213.

Owen, *Phillip Loveluck*, p.50.

himself from hopeless alcoholism through hard work and the responsible transformation of the landscape. Yet this parable is too basic – Satchell’s character Robert Hernshaw is more realistic in that he struggles, suffers setbacks and learns from his mistakes in breaking in the land, but Robert Hernshaw was based on Satchell himself. Nevertheless Koebel’s non-fiction work in the *Maoriland Bush* (1911) shows that he was thoroughly familiar with farming, bushwork and transforming the landscape. The fact that Owen and Koebel incorporated overgrazing into their melodramatic plots, highlights the existence of such negative effects of transformation and serves as a warning. Thus the environmental historian can separate fact from fiction.

While turn-of-the-century high country farmers were quick to learn from the mistake of overgrazing and regulate stock numbers according to the land’s limits, they were more vulnerable to the effects of rabbits on the land. Walker’s *Zealandia’s Guerdon* contains excellent descriptions of the rabbit problem on a Marlborough station in the Awatere river district. The hero, Arthur Somerset, observes the myriads of holes and the ground rippling with rabbits as he rides through Taylor’s Pass and alongside the river. At Harboro Station he meets a rabbieter with a greyhound who has made £2000 killing rabbits on the station in a three-year contract. The rabbit scheme is described, whereby ferrets and cats were released all over the run. Hawks and wild pigs were not hunted because they preyed on rabbits, yet the rabbit numbers still remained uncontrollable. Arthur observes the uncontrolled rabbits by the river — it seems as if the earth is moving. He says the sight is unbelievable:

There were cities upon cities of rabbit warrens everywhere, in all the banks, and in many dry flat places even on the sides of cliffs. The ground waved with them and yet the poison and rabbit gangs had devastated this part repeatedly. It had been netted and shot over and again netted, with enormous nets that bagged thousands at a time, and still there the cheerful bunnies rioted in hundreds of thousands.

A fencer tells Arthur that he can remember a period when there were exactly twenty-seven rabbits on the run, turned out for sport by an absentee landowner. The fencer had made so much from rabbiting that he had been able to purchase a large farm for his family. Arthur becomes a rabbiter, paid per dozen skins. In describing the work of the rabbiters, Walker’s personal

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64 The 1895 snowstorm in the South Island high country drew early attention to the dangers of overstocking. Resulting government legislation undoubtedly prevented large scale future environmental disasters caused by overgrazing seen elsewhere such as in Australia and America. See Julian Kuzma, *The 1895 Snowstorm*. BA (Hons) History dissertation, University of Otago, 1999.


66 Ibid, pp.52-63.
voice intrudes and the novel takes on the form of a documentary. Arthur is shown a wool-shed in which there is no wool, but which is full of rabbit skins, which are properly dressed, cleaned, dumped into bundles of two dozen and pressed into wool bales of two dozen for export. Stanford cynically remarks “We’re not sheep breeders now. It’s a rabbit station.” The sheep are starving and the rabbits have pulled up every tussock. In Chapter VI, ‘Station life in New Zealand,’ the narrator’s voice again intrudes in a factual and detailed essay describing the rabbiter’s work — the processes of poisoning, skinning and drying. For example:

... After tea the rabbiters repair there, and each of them prepares a pile of thin pieces of flax a little over a foot long. The phormium tenax, New Zealand native flax can easily be torn into strips of any width... to tie the rabbit skins firmly to the wires.

Great numbers of prepared wires are assets of a rabbit station. There are thousands of strong wires, bent half-circle-wise at the top, with two legs, the shape of the letter U, but with sharpened points and longer legs than that capital letter possesses. They lie ready to hand as the rabbiters sit down on the floor, each by his pile of strings and wires. The rabbiter takes one of the fresh skins, passes one hand inside and turns it inside out like a stocking. The wet skin is now inside. He stretches it at the same time upon his long legged wire letter U, and ties the lower ends to each leg of the wire. The rabbit is so skinned that the smaller end of the rabbit skin is confined at the half circle of the U, at the bottom of it. A few rapid turns of the knife and that skin is ready, the fat and gristle is taken off and the surface will now dry. He places it on its wire beside him. It is now stretched to fullest extent and ready for drying...

The chapter concludes with a good depiction of the rabbit-stricken high country run, with ample descriptions of landscape, fauna and flora. Chapters VII and VIII continue in this vein, describing Arthur Somerset’s life as a rabbiter; these chapters are texts for station work and life.

Overall these novels are good representations or documents of the transformations the New Zealand landscape was undergoing during 1890-1921. The main focus of transformation in the novels is on the removal of and conversion to pasture of the North Island bush, as the most visible and impressionable change. Some of the attitudes towards these changes will be discussed in following sections.

Ibid, pp.55-56.
Ibid, pp.61-62.
Bushfires and Other Frontier Hazards.

The bushfire was a recurrent theme of the late-colonial novel. In some cases the bushfire was used as a convenient melodramatic plot device, enabling deeds of courage and usually conveniently bringing the hero and heroine together. For example in Ellen Taylor’s A Thousand Pities, Esther and Ian struggle to set their bush alight in a controlled burn before the fire reaches them, before running from the smoke and flames while Ian frees the trapped cattle. In Helen Wilson’s Land of My Children, John Broadbelt nobly saves his sheep-rustling neighbour’s house from the fire. In Makgill’s Blacklaw the school bullies set the tent alight on Peter and Betty and they hide in a Maori pit. In a climactic chapter of Isabel Peacocke’s The Guardian, while the community fights the fire Gay sends Nick Daunt to rescue her amoral suitor Dion Westerway, who is lost in the burning bush. Nick saves Westerway... on condition she will never see him again, and Westerway departs with a final "curses!" In Satchell’s The Land of the Lost the villains Roller and Brice set Hugh’s tent alight, causing a fire over the gunfields and the destruction of twenty miles of magnificent forest. In Chapter XXX of John Bell’s In the Shadow of the Bush, the inevitable bushfire arrives just when the plot is at its most convoluted, enabling Frank Ashwin to bravely save the Elwoods and then Maud Elwood to save Frank in turn.

The central use of the bushfire in late-colonial literature is best seen in Satchell’s The Toll of the Bush when Andersen in a primitive mood of savage revenge, thus becoming Nature’s instrument of retribution, sets fire to the bush above Beckwith’s house. Satchell describes the fire in transcendental language:

Then, insignificant no longer, transfigured rather beyond all living possibilities of loveliness, the bush stood revealed to its centre. It became less a fire than an incandescence, waxing in brilliance to the point when, as it seemed, it must perforce burst into indistinguishable flame. Every leaf and twig of that fairy forest was wrought and hammered in virgin gold, every branch and trunk was a carved miracle of burnished copper. And from the golden leaves to the golden floor, floatingly or swiftly, there fell in an unceasing rain of crimson flame petals, gorgeous flame fruits. Depth after depth stood revealed, each transcending the last in loveliness. And as the eye sought to penetrate those magic interiors there seemed to open out farther vistas, beyond belief beautiful, as of the streets of a city incorruptible, walled and towered, lost in the light of a golden, incomparable star.

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29 Taylor, A Thousand Pities, Ch. VII, IX.
30 Wilson, Land of My Children, pp.90-96.
31 Peacocke, The Guardian, Ch.XI.
Andersen redeems himself by dying heroically, saving his children. The fire sweeps through the settlement, taking out half the houses, and the bush is on fire for miles. On the hilltop the settlers at Eve's wedding anxiously watch the smoke below, knowing "below that impenetrable canopy a hundred suffocating men fought tooth and nail against the encroaching monster, or stood by in haggard despair while their crops and household goods went up in screeching flame."75 However Eve has fled her wedding into the refuge of the virgin bush, where she encounters her lover Geoffrey, and in avoiding the fire they become lost in the deep bush. As the fire blazes, supernatural portents abound; the search party sees what they think is the ghost of Mark Gird, and the path of the fire stops mysteriously at Gird's bush in deference to the bushman's body. More realistic accounts of the damage to the settlement and the efforts of the settlers to fight it are found amongst the melodrama.76

However the frequent use of the bushfire as a melodramatic device in literature was based on the reality of conditions on the bush-frontier. Rollo Arnold's New Zealand's Burning: The Settlers' World in the Mid 1880s documents the extreme frequency of bushfires in New Zealand and studies the role of fire, both as a danger and as a tool in the development of settler New Zealand.77 Bushfires, in actuality, were a constant threat and a fact of life on the settler frontier. Accounts that are realistic rather than melodramatic can be found in late-colonial literature, and acts of bravery and courage in fighting the fires such as those that appear in the literature were no doubt common. The drama of the fire scene in Wilson's Land of My Children is tempered by realistic accounts of the conditions that started the fire, and the effects of the fire on the district.78 Realistic accounts of fire are found in Jane Mander's novels, a writer who growing up in the timber-mills North of Auckland during the 1880s and 1890s would have been well-aware of the threat and effects of fires. The brief description of a bush fire in The Story of a New Zealand River has no effect on the plot at all and is factual description, obviously one of the places in the novel when Mander writes from autobiographical experience.79 The description of the hot summer, afterwards remembered as one of the worst for fires that the north had ever known, and the period when the sun was blocked out for several days — a phenomenon which newspapers attributed to the huge fires

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78 Wilson, Land of My Children, pp.90, 93, 95.
79 Mander, The Story of a New Zealand River, p.293.
going on in Australia — enables the date of the passage to be verified (probably the summer of 1885-1886).

The best account of the threat and effects of fire on the bush frontier exists in Mander’s *The Passionate Puritan*. The fire scene in this novel is not “melodramatic plot-manipulation on the part of the author, including even that staple of New Zealand romance, the bush fire” but is rather part of the frontier experience, as we see a picture of a community rallying to protect the bush camps, the tramways, the dams and the valuable logs in the creeks. The fire does nothing to further the romance between Sidney and Arthur Devereux, Mrs James’s dilemma at the loss of her house and possessions is poignant, and Sidney’s courage is believable rather than melodramatically heroic. Furthermore the risk of fire has been anticipated from the beginning of the novel, with descriptions of the precautions taken in the mill-settlement for fire protection. One of the first things Sidney notices on her arrival is the burnt patches of bush; the second is the fire-breaks around the settlement:

For a chain or more outside her fence the fern had been recently burnt off, as it had round the school and all the other houses. Sidney was to learn later that in the summer and autumn fire was the demon against which the whole village guarded unceasingly.

Mander states of the mill, in the event of fire there was not a man who would not have deserted his belongings and rushed to save it first. Jack Ridgefield has a watchman look after the mill at night. The autumn of the fire is described as exceedingly hot and dry. The area round the mill and village is more carefully burnt than usual and Jack doubles his night watch. As a result in the event of fire the mill and village are fairly safe from outside attack, and Jack is more afraid of careless smokers than flying sparks. The fire, started by picnickers, begins in a gully fifty miles away and is fanned into an ever-growing danger by an incessant northeast wind. This careful build-up towards the events of the fire precludes any tendency to melodrama.

Descriptions of other hazards of bush-frontier life can be found in the novels. In Chapter XII, ‘A Bush Tragedy’ of *The Wawser*, following the death of a bushcutter crushed by a tree, Thornton discusses the dangers of the bush:

The death toll of the bush is heavy. The New Zealand forest is, happily, free from all noxious reptiles, but it is not without its dangers. Far

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Ibid, p.29.
away from civilisation, from doctors and nurses, living on the plainest
and generally badly cooked food, working as hard as it is possible for
men to work, standing upon slippery and sometimes carelessly
constructed platforms when felling large trees, cutting, chopping, and
sawing, soaked through in wet weather, damp from the natural
humidity of the bush in fine, many of these men age rapidly.
Rheumatism, indigestion and even pneumonia play havoc even with
their splendid constitutions. Accidents are alarmingly frequent, and as
in this case are often fatal because of the lack of medical attendance and
nursing facilities.84

In Mander’s The Story of a New Zealand River Alice sees a bushman named Shiny
cut himself in the foot with an axe. Shiny rams a handful of salt into the gaping,
squirting wound to stop it bleeding, and Bruce bandages the foot with rags.85
In the same novel Tom Roland is crushed under a log — "something that the
most hardened bushman dreaded to see" — while avoiding an accident when
driving a load of logs down the tramway.86 Likewise in The Passionate Puritan
Sidney witnesses a stretcher party carrying the body of a man killed by a falling
tree.87

Death by falling trees was common. In Chapter XVI of Bell’s In the
Shadow of the Bush, the process of a bush-drive gone wrong is described:

Harry had planned a big drive with a combined rimu and rata which
towered above its fellows of the forest; had "scarfed" all the smaller
trees in front of it down to the edge of the already felled bush, and
expected, when it was brought down, that it would send to earth the
whole of these, driving one upon another far beyond the reach of its
own length, with that continued prolonged crash which bushmen love
to hear. But they did not all go down...

The trees do not fall properly, and other trees pulled over by a tangle of vines
and supplejacks lodge them at a precarious angle...

This is one of the most awkward mischances to be found in the
work of bush-falling, and one that is attended with much danger to
anyone attempting to remedy it by giving a few well-directed strokes
of the axe at the point of least resistance, and so bringing the tree
down; for the ground round about is strewn with a tangled mass of
fallen timber, making it difficult for the axeman to get clear away when
the mass begins to move; and it is often uncertain in which direction it
may come down, or what antics one or other of the lodged and leaning
trees may be up to, on its own account, when the whole sways to the
fall.

85 Mander, The Story of a New Zealand River, pp.56-58.
86 Ibid, Ch 35.
"Well, I'll be jiggered!" said Harry, as he looked disconsolately at the unsightly clump still standing.

"Hallo!" cried Big George, who was working near; "hallo, Harry, my experienced bushwhacker, you didn't carry it all before you this time."

"No; but I'll soon put it to rights," replied Harry.

"Leave it — leave it, Harry," returned George; "the first gale of wind will bring them down, in any case. It isn't safe."

"I'll be cautious, old man," Harry answered. "It'll never do to have people saying we left some of the bush standing when we came away from the job."³⁸

Dismissing further warnings, Harry chops at the main support with his axe and is ignominiously crushed to death when the lot falls on him.

Drowning was another common death. With bridges uncommon in the backblocks, many drowned while crossing rivers. Settlers, accustomed to placid English rivers found the mountain rivers of New Zealand unpredictable. Makgill states "... in the back-blocks of the South men's plans depend much on the moods of the rivers, treacherous and uncertain at best."³⁹ Makgill describes a braided Canterbury river rising in flood after a storm in the mountains:

... as they swept round a bend of the road above the river he flung a glance at the broad gravelly watercourse on his left, and noted that a long shingle-bar that divided the stream was narrower than when they had passed in the forenoon. Also the stiff carcase of a sheep, which six hours sooner had lain clear of the water was now swaying in the rising flood.

Young Jack goes under while crossing, and John Westtray saves him, but loses his horse. Later John drowns in the same river. Drowning is a common theme in the novels of Louisa Baker ("Alien"). In Wheat in the Ear Professor Stanton drowns in the flooded Otira river. In The Untold Half young Paul drowns in Lake Manapouri. In Another Woman's Territory Frank Osmond is believed to have drowned in a West-Coast river. Justice is achieved when Howard Grey, who stole his manuscript, drowns in the same river. The best account of drowning occurs in a graphic description in Harry Vogel's A Maori Maid when Jake Carlyle is swept away by the Rangitikei River.⁴¹ As with the bushfire, novelists used drownings to further or resolve plots, but the hazard had its basis in reality. To settlers drowning was common enough to be known as 'the New Zealand death.'
Finally many late-colonial novels described the dangers of becoming lost in the bush. The best depiction is found in H. B. Marriott Watson's *The Web of the Spider*, as Palliser, an experienced bushman alone in the bush, with rising fear and horror at the oppressive silence and his decaying surroundings, becomes disorientated and lost, exhausted and obsessed with images of death. An almost identical account occurs in Vogel's *A Maori Maid* as Cyril, lost in the bush, begins to descend into madness and death. Another good description is found in Satchell's *The Toll of the Bush* when Geoffrey and Eve, fleeing the fire, become lost in the deep bush. Satchell describes the limited visibility, the innumerable obstacles to progress and the tangles of bush lawyer that make them unable to keep to a straight course. In Chapter XXXIV of Bell's *In the Shadow of the Bush* Old Dan becomes lost in the bush and is injured by a wild-boar.

Therefore, amidst the melodrama and romance, the late-colonial novels contain ample descriptive evidence of the common hazards and dangers of the frontier New Zealand landscape.

In conclusion, the late colonial novels, although romantic and melodramatic in plot, contain ample realistic and factual material for the environmental historian. The rural novels cover a diverse geographical terrain, especially the North Island bush frontier. Contemporary landscape descriptions in these novels are often enhanced with the author's first-hand experiences of life in the environments they depict. Within the novels there is extensive documentation and commentary to be found on the period's rapid and vital phase of transformation of the landscape, in particular the central theme of the removal of the bush. While the novels predominantly view the transformation of the landscape in a positive, economic and progressive light, early environmental concerns on the limits of the land appear. Common hazards of bush-frontier life such as bushfires, timber-felling accidents and drownings were incorporated into the melodramatic plots of novels. Overall the late colonial New Zealand novels contain substantial documentary material for the environmental historian. The following chapters will delve beneath the factual face value of the novels to examine the more complex and often contradictory perceptions, responses and attitudes towards the landscape and its transformation to be found within fiction.

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Another way of transporting kauri logs. Here kauri logs are piled up behind a wooden dam. These dams were used to ‘drive’ logs down the river. Jane Mander’s *The Passionate Puritan* (1921) describes the system by which four million feet of logs are washed down the creek from a dam to the mill, witnessed by a group of tourists. Mander’s is one of the only existing written descriptions of these impressive engineering feats.

[Hocken Library.]
FIGURE 9: A kauri dam released, Omahuta, 1913.

“When the big gate in the dam is tripped, the creek in which the logs lie below is immediately filled bank and band, and the logs are hurled down the creek with irresistible force. A sight well worth viewing.”

[Northwood Brothers Album 97, Hocken Library.]
CHAPTER 4

'THE TOLL OF THE BUSH':
PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEW ZEALAND LANDSCAPE
IN LATE COLONIAL FICTION.
Introduction.

This chapter deals with the perceptions, responses and attitudes of characters in the novels towards the landscape and its transformation. It is necessary to remember that the period was one of transition, a confused period of growth and change. This is why the novels are such an important source in trying to determine a Zeigiest, the half-conscious assumptions of the age that the writers shared, despite their differences in emphasis. Lawrence Jones states "Literature is an institution in society, and as such it both reflects and projects an image of that society's cultural identity." A scientific text of the period might give you one view on the transformation of the landscape, and a letter another personal view, but the novels of the period are invaluable in ascertaining the broader attitudes of the society they reflect. From a single novel of the period, say one of Satchell's Hokianga novels, we might be able to determine underlying attitudes to Progress (with the associated ideas of Empire, New World egalitarianism, Social Darwinism and attitude to Maori use of the land) versus the conflicting Romantic attitudes to nature, lamenting the passing of the bush (and the Maori), New Zealand nationalism and New Zealand as home versus England as home, etc. Furthermore we can often identify which side of the questions the authors come down on. Often they will have the characters expressing and embodying a range of attitudes, but they will implicitly favour some others. Some of them try a kind of dialectic — i.e. Romantic attitude to nature versus the ruthless exploitation of it, with responsible transformation of it as the synthesis. Some times these issues are not so much resolved as raised or evaded, with others attempting to have it both ways. The authorial attitudes are not always coherent, but when we examine all the novels of the period together we can find a number of shared themes or ideas.

The first section of this chapter looks at expressions of fear with the untransformed wilderness in late colonial literature. A second section deals with the influence of the semi-transformed New Zealand landscape in literature. The third section is on attitudes of characters towards the New Zealand landscape, whereby a range of common responses to the

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transformation of the landscape are identified. Finally the chapter identifies explicit authorial attitudes to the transformation of the landscape.

"The Silent Loneliness of the Trackless Forest."

In 'The Living Landscape' section of Chapter 2, I found Edward Tregear's 'Te Whetu Plains' to have been misrepresented as an expression of fear and alienation with the silent landscape. In fact in late colonial poetry such images are surprisingly next to non-existent, with images of peace and beauty the norm. On the other hand, in late colonial fiction the untransformed bush (i.e. the wilderness landscape) as a silent source of depression, isolation and terror is a common theme.

Katherine Mansfield's short story, The Woman at the Store (1912) describes a woman who has gone mad from isolation in the oppressive landscape of heat, wind, waves of tussock grass and manuka. Once she was pretty and popular with one hundred and twenty-five ways of kissing, now she has become an ugly figure of sticks and wires, who talks of loneliness and mistakes the narrator's arriving party for hawks coming over the hill. It is revealed she has shot her husband with a rook rifle and buried him.

In Myola (1917) H. Musgrave writes on the oppressive silence of the New Zealand bush landscape to those unaccustomed to it:

Some would flee altogether from the silent loneliness of the trackless forest, where few beasts or birds woke any echoes. The maddening stillness was such as could be felt, and had a strange effect on any newcomer, accustomed either to the noises of humanity or the minor sounds of a living creation.

The forest was impressive, with a weird grandeur. Its density, and uniform colouring, its great stretching waves of pines, extending farther and farther back to a distant horizon, became an oppression to many dwellers within its shadow after a season or two of its unfading monotony. Such an oppression could not be compared with any other form of terror. There was a brooding and shadowy silence that intervened, like a bridgeless chasm, between fellowship with man and the dweller there. It grasped the mind as well as the body. It needed imagination to combat it.

In the Chapter II, 'Wilderness is Paradise,' Myola and Dion find a clearing where a stranger had been building a bungalow, but the silence was too much

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for him, and when he went down to Auckland for more building material he never came back. Myola tells Dion there are very few people who really like isolation, though many think they do. She herself doesn't mind the work and poverty of bush-life, and feels she is lucky to be living in paradise.4

In Vogel’s *A Maori Maid*, Archie and Ngaia respond to the solitude of their wilderness surroundings by night with feelings of insignificance, melancholy and a desire to be assimilated into the overwhelming vastness of the place.5

Palliser’s fear of the silence of the bush in H. B. Marriott Watson’s *The Web of the Spider* (189-?) is one of the most evocative and powerful pieces of writing of the period:

Palliser’s heart misgave him when once he was fairly in the bush. It seemed to him that he had entered a world of silence. Not a sound was audible from bird or leaf. If there were any breeze astir it was playing far above in the surface of the tall pines; in these depths was no movement, but an unspeakable stillness. A profound gloom lurked in the recesses of that bush, and every now and then he struck into a patch where the undergrowth was so dense that he was encompassed by the darkness of night. In this he moved with a slowly-rising horror, his footsteps for the most part falling dead upon the heavy mosses! but now and again crashing through a treacherous and rotten bough enwrapped in lichens and overgrown with long grasses. In the centre of this stillness the noise echoed fearfully of disaster, so sudden it was in the quiet bush.6

Palliser, the experienced bushman, is so affected by the fear and oppressiveness of the silence that he becomes lost and is increasingly obsessed with images of death and decay.7 Later in the novel in Chapter XVI, “The ’Hatter’ of the Gorge,” Palliser and Miss Caryll encounter a man who has gone mad from the isolation of living alone in the bush. A similar hermit character, ‘the white tohunga’ is found in Part II, Chapter IV of Edith Searle Grossmann’s *The Heart of the Bush*.

In G. B. Lancaster’s *The Tracks We Tread* themes of silence and a hostile landscape are predominant, imbuing the novel with a constant sense of dread. Jimmy begins to crack up:

"Wouldn’t them blanky ole mountings trouble Ole Nick hisself?" he said.

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7 Ibid, pp.77-79.
It was not a world for a man to handle. It was alive with its own strong desolation and its unbroken pride. Peak upon glistening peak of everlasting snow; black rugged ridges; slopes pallid with the rain-death that stripped the earth from them, and reefs of sullen cloud smudging the cold stars. The snarl of the river fighting through its boulders came over the shingle that sloped from the door, and a couple of Paradise duck showed for an instant against the grey breadth of it as they fled down to the lower country for nesting.

"I'd sooner have silence than that river," said Murray, and shivered. "It's ghastly to think you're the first living man who's heard its waters go by. I don't like being so near the beginning of things myself."

In Grossmann's The Heart of the Bush, as Dennis is away on business more frequently, Adelaide becomes lonely and begins to hear voices:

She ceased to take a pleasure in the murmuring of the Bush trees, and had a fancy they were exulting over her and saying, "You hear us now, don't you? You've nothing else to hear." She scolded herself and would not say a word to Dennis. "I am getting morbid," she said inwardly. "It's beautiful, the great silence of the mountains"... The Bush trees became more and more unfriendly and insistent, crying "You hear us now."

Voices from the landscape also occur in Without Proof, a chilling short story by G. B. Lancaster." Tommy, a rabbiter in an isolated whare has been three months alone and is frightened by the silences. He tells Walt he hears music and crying and is afraid of going mad. He disturbs Walt by singing unnaturally in the night:

"It isn't me," explained Tommy simply. "It must come out of the mountains, I think. They're very much older than we are, you know, and very much wiser: and perhaps they want to tell us things. But it's so sad — so awfully sad. I suppose it's the loneliness — hear that!"

Tommy has killed his dog, who could see things he couldn't see outside the hut. Walt has to leave him, and Tommy gets snowed in. When they return they find Tommy looking under the door of the hut, dead with a smile on his face.

Thus in New Zealand late colonial fiction there are ample examples of the negative influence of the wilderness landscape upon characters. While this

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8 G. B. Lancaster (Edith Lyttleton), The Tracks We Tread, New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1907, p.131.
trend could be dismissed as stemming from the popularity of the horror genre in fiction, such landscape descriptions are significantly generally realistic-naturalist, and appear to reflect an endemic experience of fear in the untransformed New Zealand wilderness.

The Influence of the Landscape.

The New Zealand landscape is an ever-present force in late-colonial literature. Although not always explicit, the landscape is an agent that colours and influences the action of plots and the feelings and behaviour of characters. This manifests itself by either the use of landscape as a realistic-naturalistic 'environment' inevitably influencing the characters as organisms within it, or by the more romantic-melodramatic use of landscape as both symbol of and emotional influencer of mood. Many of the texts combine, with differing emphases, both the realistic-naturalistic landscape and the romantic-melodramatic. The type of landscape that is most commonly used in this way in New Zealand late colonial fiction is the semi-transformed bush. Generally here I am giving examples of the interpretation of the semi-transformed bush landscape as a positive and/or negative influence on characters.

The strongest negative interpretation of the landscape comes in Sir George Makgill's *Blacklaw* (1914). Various landscapes in *Blacklaw* can be seen to strongly exercise effects upon the emotions and behaviour of characters, and the ugly half-finished environments in the process of transformation have an extremely negative effect. The novel begins with Blacklaw leaving his Scottish castle to become a settler in New Zealand due to his religious convictions: "I have long wished for a truer life — to carve out a home for myself out of the wilderness and live in peace face to face with God and Nature."12 His sons will go with him and be brought up as "honest working-men."13 However, themes of civilisation and savagery are related to the novel's various landscapes, as the struggle to transform his section brutalises Blacklaw. Now calling himself David Westtray, Blacklaw buys a worthless property at Muddy Creek. Poverty leaves him little space for religion and he degenerates, at the end of seven years being indistinguishable in speech, manner and appearance from the pauper settlers around him, although his gentleman character resurfaces at odd times. There is a huge contrast between the brutalised man at the end of the novel with the religious visionary of the beginning. Westtray is a harsh father who

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13 Ibid, p.50.
indoctrinates his children with religious baggage and puritan guilt, even making the boys clear land cutting timber on Christmas day. His patriarchy represses his children and alienates himself from them, with Johnnie and Teenie coming to bad ends. The bleak landscape of David Westtray's semi-transformed bush farm is contrasted with the picturesque haven of his brother John Westtray's established Canterbury high-country homestead.  

All the characters in *Blacklaw* are sensitive to and affected by the landscape. Jack, overseas and homesick, finds his recollections of his father and home are inseparable from the mountain landscape. Peter is particularly receptive to the landscape. To him the bush is a place of awe, which he never can enter without a sense of fear and being lost amid unknown perils, yet in Chapter X Peter dreams of another world, his Scottish birthplace, where there are no blackened stumps dotting the fields. His father angrily erases Peter's drawing of the Scottish castle from the cowshed wall and looks about him to where the dead trees, dusty fern hills and the cabbage tree by the gate stand up to tell him he is an exile. The dreary landscape and climate reflect Peter's adolescent mood in their seasons and storms. Betty finds the "half-finished" country disappointing after England, but recognises the spirit of the new country reflected in Johnnie:

> He, like the new country was not English . . . but he suited the land. There was about him just that half-finished feeling that was in the country itself. It was as though in him there were charred stumps and patches of half-cleared wasteland.

This is the same image found in Blanche Baughan's 'A Bush Section', in the line "the Burnt Bush within and without thee." Baughan's *Little Thor* possesses an internal reflection of an external landscape that is bleak and unformed, but with the hope of future potential. Makgill's Johnnie does not achieve his potential, and his eventual suicide is a reflection of the effects of a depressing landscape. It is significant that the characters most closely associated with the New Zealand landscape (John and Johnnie) commit suicide in bleak environments. John drowns himself in the treacherous and symbolic river, and Johnnie leaves a pathetic note asking someone to fill in his grave on the gumfields. Lawrence Jones states: "Makgill in *Blacklaw* shows the mentally blighting effects of

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13 Ibid, p.100.
growing up on a bush farm, the 'half-finished feeling' of the landscape of 'charred stumps and half-cleared waste-land' becoming symbolic of a depressed inner state. The novel ends with the Anglicised Jack winning Betty (a better prospect for her than the "half-finished" New Zealander Johnnie), and Peter leaving the country for his Scottish inheritance. Overall Blacklaw is a damning indictment of the negative psychological effects of living in the late-colonial New Zealand landscape.

In contrast, in Arthur Adams's Tussock Land (1904) the New Zealand landscape has a more positive effect on the characters. The landscape of the Otago and Southland ranges is portrayed in romance imagery, and it is only in this setting that the two main protagonists can achieve love. Aroha Grey, the beautiful part-Maori girl, "a type of this fertile virgin land," is strongly identified with the New Zealand landscape:

But this wide, wild tussock land was hers. It knew and accepted her. She was part of this wide sweep of hill and valley, she belonged to the great domain of creek and flat and gully and swamp. The scour of the ever-hurrying winds, the outpour of the ever-brilliant sun had made her what she was; something the wind and the sun and the keen quick air was in her soul.

The significantly named King Southern is equally a product of and shaped by the New Zealand landscape. King, an English-born urbanite, is at first uneasy growing up in New Zealand. A sickly child, he is healed by the New Zealand climate, and as a teenager he discovers both love and art in the natural setting of the Dunedin town belt. At university he takes solitary bush walks and learns to love the New Zealand landscape. However outside of the indigenous tussock-land environment Aroha and King are ineffectual as lovers. King feels the tussock-land is an oasis of happy sanctuary, but culturally cut off from the outside world. Even in the semi-natural setting of Dunedin's suburban town belt, King and Aroha are dysfunctional and misunderstand each other. In Australia, outside of his home environment, King is unsuccessful and following a series of failed relationships and the savage criticism of his paintings which is aptly compared to the stroke of a bushman's axe, King becomes homesick and returns to New Zealand, where again he is re-energised by the climate and given purpose by the challenge of landscape transformation. King's years of

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20 Lawrence Jones, 'The Novel' in The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, p.129.
24 Ibid, pp.78, 82.
work in the half-cleared North Island bush act as a regenerating influence upon him. King and Aroha are finally united at last on their original tussock ridge. The two future symbols of New Zealand can achieve requited love only within a wild, romantic and uniquely New Zealand setting.

In the novels of 'Alien' (Louisa A. Baker) the New Zealand landscape provides a suitably exotic background to her romantic and melodramatic plots. For example *Wheat in the Ear* (1898) contrasts the wild and temperamental Otira landscape with the civilised spheres of domestic home and school in Christchurch. In her novels the climax usually takes place amidst wild nature, and a natural-induced disaster such as a drowning usually is the catalyst for plot-resolution. Baker is an example of a writer who does not come down on either a positive or negative interpretation of the landscape. Of all the novelists, Baker makes the most melodramatic use of the landscape.

John Bell's *In the Shadow of the Bush: A New Zealand Romance* (1899) comes with a host of stereotypical characters such as swaggers, rugged bushmen and small farmers, and all the essential melodramatic plot-ingredients of love, murder, false identities, illegal whisky distillers in the bush and the inevitable bushfire. The significance of the novel lies in its title, being representative of a shared theme or assumption of the age among late-colonial writers. The bush provides a constant presence or background to the novel, colouring and influencing the actions and emotions of both good and evil characters who live in its shadow, a counter to the developing backblocks community that is making inroads upon its frontier vastness. Amidst the melodrama, *In the Shadow of the Bush* provides one of the best expressions of a time and place and has realistically captured and described the forward-looking atmosphere of the developing township. Bell, like Baker, does not come down on either a positive or negative interpretation of landscape, but manages to combine both melodramatic and realistic uses.

**Attitudes of Characters to the Transformation of the Landscape.**

The above selections show that in New Zealand late-colonial literature the landscape works as an agent having effects on the characters' feelings. But to better determine the perceptions of the period it is necessary to examine the effects of the characters as agents taking attitudes towards the landscape. Characters are placed face-to-face with the wilderness under the process of transformation and thereby are able to display a wide range of attitudes towards transformation.
Many characters of late colonial literature view the New Zealand landscape as a challenging environment to be transformed and/or domesticated. The landscape is a wild opponent and its subjection is epitomised by the popular term 'breaking in the land'. The challenge attitude, in effect an ideal, is strongly associated with masculinity and the work ethic. Significantly the heroes of almost all the late colonial novels embody the challenge attitude towards the landscape in some way. At its most extreme the challenge attitude is represented by G. B. Lancaster's 'real men' from *The Tracks We Tread* who glory in the personal danger of their work, risking their lives against the harsh and deadly mountain environment. The toll of living face to face with the untamed landscape has the potential to either make or break characters. Characters in the novels of Lancaster, Satchell and Makgill either excel in violence and self-destructive evil, or become heroic and enduring. The best example of the challenge attitude is Robert Hernshaw of Satchell's *The Toll of the Bush* who, with his young wife Lena, doggedly struggles to clear and work their bush section into a prosperous farm on the model of Major Milward's, despite setbacks such as the failure of their potato crop:

"I was looking at Thomas's place," said Robert ponderingly, "when I was up there with the cricket team last Christmas. It must have looked like this twenty years ago. It's green enough now... but that's not the only one, and they all say the same thing. They stuck to it year after year, and the life was hard, there's no denying, but in the end they — got — there."25

The challenge attitude is a central theme of Satchell, whereby characters prove their worth against the indigenous landscape. In Satchell, Nature is something vast and holy, a living force against which settlers can prove themselves in the struggle to transform or civilise it. Those who succeed are successful in life's struggles. The most successful characters are equal to the forces of nature and harness them, such as Major Milward, who started his farm from nothing and became rich.26 The challenge of the bush can bring out the best in characters. During his participation in the search in the bush for Geoffrey and Eve, Wickener is shown to be not the sinister villain we had been led to believe him to be, and likewise Pine, previously only seen as a comic Maori, becomes noble and dignified in his indigenous element and ends the novel as an affluent landowner. Those who fail in the struggle against the bush are the 'lost,' whose acts condemn them to death in the wilderness, such as Sven Andersen, a typical

26 Ibid, pp.147-149.
frontier outcast — both a foreigner and an alcoholic. Andersen attempts to redeem himself by becoming the best bushman in the country when he works on the new road, and this brief period of rehabilitation shows Nature's healing properties. Purifying and strengthening, Andersen's period of real work shows the struggle against Nature brings out peoples' best qualities, allowing him to die heroically. The title of *The Toll of the Bush* represents the costs of the struggle of transforming wilderness to civilisation, whereby Nature takes a supernatural retribution on those who pit themselves against it. In Satchell's novels the transformation of the landscape is not always desirable, depending on the character's point of view, but it appears that transformation is an inevitable process and a new order and civilisation must eventually be imposed on the settler frontier.

Opposite to the attitude of landscape as challenge is the landscape as terrible antagonist. This is represented by Robert's disaffected English-educated brother Geoffrey Hernshaw. Geoffrey is frustrated at the task of transforming the landscape:

"Is there any hope for the wretched country at all? Look at it!" he continued with a sudden angry scorn — "clay and scrub and precipices, with here and there an acre of orchard, and all the plagues of Egypt domiciled in it. What's the good of going on?"

The insignificance of the clearings, black from a recent burn or vivid green with the newly sown grass, dwarfed in relation to the immensity of the virgin landscape from which they had been hewn is described. Geoffrey observes it would take an army to convert the wilderness into a garden and complains of the futility of breaking in their land. Geoffrey is estranged from the bush and far prefers the established transformed garden-landscape of Eve Milward's home, Wairangi. He discounts the bushmen's belief in the *utu* of the bush as "vegetable vengeance" and scientifically dismisses their superstition. When Geoffrey and Eve are lost in the deep virgin bush, Geoffrey is repulsed by the bush, seeing the gorge as Dante's pit of hell.

Geoffrey Hernshaw's complaint of the seemingly impossible hopelessness of the struggle to transform the landscape is echoed in many novels. While Sir George Makgill's *Blacklaw* is the best comment on the human cost of the pastoral dream, victims of the depressing psychological effects of

26 Ibid, p.96.
living in a landscape in the process of transformation, or attempting to transform it, occur in various other novels. There are alcoholic and abusive bushmen in various temperance novels, such as Thornton's *The Wowser*. There are Satchell’s 'lost' gumfields characters, represented by the digger Bart, who when drunk reveals his name as Sir Charles Medway, or the alcoholic bushman Sven Andersen who is unable to provide for his family. Mander's *Allen Adair* describes the isolated women settler-wives along the river — the lonely and pregnant Mrs Sawyer and the sexually-frustrated Mrs Arden. Blanche Baughan’s short story *The Mountain Track* depressingly describes the death of Eva Symons and her child at the hands of an abusive husband, isolated on a hill farm and unsuited to the hardships of settler life.

A third attitude to the New Zealand landscape is as a resource to be exploited. This attitude is best shown by Tom Roland, the enterprising boss of a milling company, in Mander's *The Story of a New Zealand River*. Mander modelled Tom Roland's opinions on the felling of the kauri forests on those of her father Frank Mander.  

"There!" Roland put down the luncheon baskets he was carrying, and waved his hand airily at them. "Best bit of bush in the colony. Nothing to beat it outside of California. Those trees have stood there thousands of years. Might have stood there thousands more."

"And you are going to cut them down!" exclaimed Alice, as if it were sacrilege.

"You bet I am. Great job too. Takes some tackling." He was proud that he had dared to stake everything he possessed on this great adventure. He knew that he was being discussed in Auckland business circles as a bold spirit and as a coming man.

"I've told you what I think about it," said Mrs. Brayton.

"Rot!" laughed Tom Roland. "What would you have people live in in this country? Timber is cheaper than bricks. Those trees make houses for the poor. Somebody has to cut 'em down. Look at the people who can own their own houses in New Zealand. Why? Cheap land, cheap timber. Something you don't have in England..."

The opposing attitude is the landscape as romantic manifestation of the sacred — so that transformation may be sacrilege. At the sight of the kauri felling in *River* Alice has tears in her eyes and Roland cannot understand why

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she looks at him as if he had committed a crime. Esther and Wilfred in Satchell's *The Land of the Lost* also identify the kauri forest as sacred, when in Chapter XVII they ride into it. The trees are described as "majestic beings" and take on a life of their own:

They built for themselves mounds, and stood there, and nothing ventured within the sacred circle. No tree jostled them, no vine cast its arms about their feet or attempted to scale their sides; the demon parasite, on his way as a grain of dust through the air, shunned them and sought other prey.44

Esther and Wilfred are awed by the giant symmetrical pillars of the kauri. Esther compares the kauri forest to a cathedral, finding it strange that such a temple should be without a single worshipper. Wilfred replies the forest is the "Holy of Holies," where even the parson bird (tui) stays in the sun-warmed outer woods where food is to be found, sometimes singing of "the tranquil majesty of the abode of the gods." Esther loves the kauris because they are "so silent, so enduring, so strong." Later they encounter a Maori logging gang at work and are invited by the old chief to witness the felling of a giant kauri, one of the greatest within the forest, a sight they might never again have a chance of witnessing. The tree is evocatively personified. Esther learns the Maori bush-fellers are being unscrupulously treated by their contractor, her fiance Roller. Because Roller is exploiting the environment Esther loves, this is the point in the novel when their proposed marriage is seen to be temperamentally impossible, long before her personal action prevents it from taking place. The Maori, whose settlement is closely aligned with wild nature, are portrayed as noble. The chief is astonished at Esther's preference to eat and rest under the trees in the open air. As a Maori he loves nature and is startled at the unexpected bond, given the incomprehensible propensity of the pakeha to confine themselves within four walls. Thus the characters most closely aligned with nature are the best in the novel. Roller and Brice's attack on Jess and Hugh by fire, which leads to the destruction of twenty miles of magnificent forest, condemns them not only as criminals, but as despoilers of nature.

For Eve Milward in Satchell's *The Toll of the Bush* the bush is paradise and its destruction is undesirable. Like Esther, Eve has a pantheistic religious

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34 Ibid. p.97.
36 Ibid. p.178, 184.
37 Satchell, *The Land of the Lost*, p.103.
38 Wilson, pp.72-73.
response to the bush. She finds the transformation of the landscape regrettable and says she hopes she will not live to see the land cleared for settlement. Similarly Angela, in *Angela: A Messenger*, regrets the retreat of the bush on the Wairarapa, and the changes that the railway brought:

She told him of many changes. For slowly, with a serpentine trail, the railway crossed the rimu-covered hill and wound among deep glades and penetrated mysterious shrines of nature and blasted them. The villagers said how much brisker Fielding was getting already, but Angela mourned for the forest trees that were cut down. Day by day the battle went on between the forest and man — and the bush retreated to the shadow of the hills and even there many a hill and peak was grim with grey ghosts stretching dead branches towards the sky.39

Likewise in *In the Heart of the Bush*, Adelaide advocates a rejection of transformative progress, whereby Dennis MacDiarmid is persuaded by Adelaide to forego working for economic growth and the new agricultural technology and instead live a quiet and retired life with her on a small farm.40

Characters may see the untransformed landscape as a beautiful and sublime Arcadia. As in many novels, the hero of *In the Heart of the Bush*, Dennis MacDiarmid, is identified with the landscape,41 and the novel plays out a romantic compromise between the English-educated Adelaide and the rough bushman Dennis. All the romance takes place amongst a natural Arcadia. On Adelaide's honeymoon:

She would go away with Dennis into the very heart of his kingdom, where there was no Society and no Art and no Civilisation, only Nature; he was to show her all its wonders, palaces of clouds and temples of Alps, cathedrals of pine-forests and of rocky gorges and peaks. There she would find him, his own self, in his own element.42

In contrast, the English characters Horace and Evelyn Brandon cannot understand Adelaide's "super-exalted rapture" in the bush of her childhood home.43 Evelyn compares the backblocks to "those dismal things in Dante" (echoing Geoffrey Hernshaw in *The Toll of the Bush*) and Horace makes fun of the rough bushmen.44 Chapter V, 'The River of Images' is full of landscape-symbolism, particularly in Adelaide's perceptions of the 'appalling loveliness' of

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39 Edith Grossmann (Edith Howitt Searle), *Angela: A Messenger*. Christchurch: Simpson and Williams, 1890, p.53, see also p.2.
41 Grossmann, *In the Heart of the Bush*, pp.33-34, 45, 229.
43 Ibid, p.15.
the mountain scenery. Dennis and Adelaide cannot "live permanently up to the height of the Alps" and must settle down to everyday married life. This complete happiness or exaltation in the landscape is echoed in Archie and Ngaia's wilderness honeymoon while they search for gold in Vogel's A Maori Maid, although significantly in order to go face to face with the wilderness in the transformative extraction of gold, Ngaia has to dress as a man.

Some characters regard the New Zealand landscape as the rough antithesis to civilisation. The theme of civilisation vs wilderness is central to Satchell's The Land of the Lost, where characters are divided, representing both good and evil aspects of both spheres, and move between them. Harry Vogel's The Tragedy of a Flirtation (1909) centres around Lulu's view of the New Zealand landscape as it plays out the theme of civilisation vs wilderness. We see the tourist attractions of the North Island through the eyes of Lulu, an upper-class, strong-minded female character from London. From the comfort of the Hotel at Lake Taupo, she finds the scenery glorious, but shudders at being buried there year in and out, wet and fine. However, following a flirtation with her guide Alec, Lulu stays on to marry him. "How will the belle of the season cope tucked away on a New Zealand farm?" asks Nellie. Alec believes "She'll learn to love our life in the bush. She'll forget the glare and tinsel of London, and worship the great, silent bush, the open, rolling country, the freshness and the freedom, even as I love it." Lulu's image of a New Zealand homestead comes from her visit to a Canterbury homestead — she imagines the simple luxuries of horses, grooms, servants, pretty ornaments and pictures. She knows Alec's Wanganui bush farm is isolated, but pictures herself entertaining visitors, giving dances and becoming a leader of society. On their journey there she finds the bush exquisite and is happy. However the weather changes. Vogel gives brilliant descriptions of the mud, the endless bush and Lulu's wet misery. Alec is proud of the home he has cut out of the bush, but Lulu faints when she discovers it is to be her home. Lulu seeks to surround herself with luxuries, not realising the labour and difficulty of transporting the furniture through the wet and precipitous bush tracks. Eventually Lulu flees back to London, her letter telling Alec "nothing on God's earth would induce me to return

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Grossmann, In the Heart of the Bush, p.227.
48 Ibid, pp.175-178.
49 Ibid, pp.81-184.
Lulu's attitude is a rejection of the 'challenge' attitude. The transformation of the landscape is the making of civilisation from wilderness. Lulu's attitude is a refusal of the challenge because of the sacrifice of civilised amenities in making a new civilisation.

Civilisation represented by England is undermined by the superficiality of characters associated with that country in several novels, in particular in Edith Searle Grossmann's *The Heart of the Bush* (1910). Mr Horace Brandon, an Englishman and Adelaide's fiancé, states there is no country in the world like New Zealand for sheep, but it is uncivilised. He prefers Europe's culture and art: "There isn't a castle nor an old cathedral, nor even a thatched cottage in the whole colony. You can't seriously compare these weird mountains and wood with our grand old Rome, Venice and Florence." Brandon finds the intoxicating quality of the high mountain air demoralising, because it makes him feel nearly emotional and he regards emotion as a mental debauch.

Adelaide's English pretensions and her treatment of her childhood New Zealand friend (now farm manager) Dennis MacDiarmid provides a comedy of manners, as she mistakes him for a groom. She doesn't know how to treat him and is confused by his "democratic" behaviour towards her. She compares the farm with Horace's English-style homestead, where everything is done in an English manner. Following an expedition to the mountains with Dennis, Adelaide discovers she loves him, as she associates him with the landscape. Dennis notices that she seems out of love with England, and wonders how far Mr Brandon might be taken to represent his country. Eventually Horace graciously accepts defeat: "'I hope we may see you and Mr MacDiarmid in London some day.' He could not imagine any form of bliss for people who had no hope of ever getting to London." Dennis becomes estranged from his new wife when he tries to work to give her a European holiday, but her attitudes have changed to the point where she prefers to stay where there is "no Society, no Art and no Civilisation, only Nature." The untransformed New Zealand landscape wins out over British civilisation, and the pair can forever relive their wilderness honeymoon. Adelaide rejects her English fiancé Horace Brandon for rugged mountain-man Dennis MacDiarmid, and then, in a triumph of wilderness over civilisation, persuades him to abandon all his

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52 Vogel, *The Tragedy of a Flirtation*, p.239.
54 Ibid. p.11.
55 Ibid. pp.15-23.
56 Ibid. p.46.
57 Ibid. pp.80-81.
58 Ibid. p.124.
"golden chances" so that they can live happily in their "bush arcadia" together.60

Likewise in Ellen Taylor's A Thousand Pities (1901), comical treatment of colonial identity subversively undermines the preferability of England, in particular those characters who profess to be English:

Mrs Thompsitt, wife of the head shepherd at Ettrickdale, had lived for some thirty years in the colonies, but she never forgot that she was by birth an Englishwoman. The fact was to her the one redeeming point of her life, and her son Harry had, ever since his childhood, been taught to look upon his mother's birthright as an advantage in breeding and social distinction to which no mere colonial could hope to attain.

... Perhaps it was because she was an Englishwoman that she cooked the chops with an air of such gentility, and for the same reason wore while doing so a pair of old kid gloves.61

Mr Thompsitt, the intellectual bushman with aspirations of English gentility, wishes to get his poems published in London, suggesting a blue and gold cover with 'Poems, by the Thompsitt Tui' as the title.62 The genteel Mrs Laidley humorously describes a typical homestead of a New Zealand run.63 Esther McKenzie tells Ian Dungarvon, a young English gentleman who has come to work as a cadet on the Ettrickdale estate, that her idea of perfect happiness is to live in London, "far from these dreary sand-hills and lonely stretches of country where no sound is ever heard but the 'twit' of a bird or the bleating of the sheep."64 When Dungarvon, rejected by Esther, is returning to London, the coach driver says all the cadets leave because they are rejected by Miss McKenzie, and attributes this to the moleskins they wear, which make them look like colonial loafers.65

The general message of many late-colonial works of fiction was that you had to be of a certain hard-working calibre and worthiness to live in and appreciate the raw New Zealand bush landscape. G. B. Lancaster's The Tracks We Tread (1907) focuses on the courage and bravery of the men who work in the Otago high country. Ted Douglas, the station head-man, is described as "... strong, body and brain, and clean as the snow hills that bred him."66 The men of Mains station all deeply respect the landscape. Blanche Baughan's short story The Mountain Track describes how Eva is completely unfit for colonial life. She

63 Ibid, p.131.
65 Ibid, pp.122-123.
66 G. B. Lancaster, The Tracks We Tread, p.3.
has never done a stroke of work in her life and lacks the "grit" to learn: "In her right setting she would have been a creature of implicit charm; as a fragile flower is exquisite in a greenhouse.""^67 Within all the late-colonial romance novels, the British or characters affecting Britishness are often portrayed as unsuitable for or incapable of settler life — unscrupulous villains, unsuccessful suitors or comical characters, who although cultured (often these characters are associated with cities) come across as somewhat effete.

The New Zealand landscape cannot only be regarded as the antithesis to civilisation, but as a desirable escape from civilisation. Satchell and Mander's novels of the Northland are full of refugees from civilisation in the 'land of the lost.' Allen Adair rejects a life of prosperity in Auckland to live on his gumfields frontier and likewise Hugh Clifford gives up an inheritance to live close to nature on the gumfield and in doing so finds love and redemption as a man.\(^68\) Satchell's gumfields are a sanctuary for the 'lost', where people go to lose their identity and no questions are asked — among the criminals and dregs of society can be found the flotsam of English education and nobility, represented by the digger Bart who when drunk reveals his name as Sir Charles Medway, likewise Mander's Dick Rossiter is a fugitive from justice on Allen Adair's gumfield.

Some characters view the landscape as an aesthetic world to be captured in art. The parallel between art and the landscape is appropriate when in many descriptions of late-colonial New Zealand, writers were simply painting pictures with words. Many of these landscape descriptions resort to artistic terms in order to do justice to New Zealand's unique light, shade and colour (see Blanche Baughan's Poems from the Port Hills (1923), which emphasise light, colour, vision and panorama). Alan Mulgan described Satchell's The Land of the Lost as an example of "landscape painting."\(^69\) Many of the male characters in the romance novels particularly are artists or have artistic tendencies.

In Adams's Tussock Land, King Southern expresses his love of the landscape through art, a major theme of the novel. As King learns to appreciate the landscape in new ways, as a home rather than a colony, he learns to paint it and is inspired by the native bush. King's mother wonders why he paints the bush many colours when everyone knows it was all one sombre green.\(^70\) In other words she views the bush with the colonist's apathy, while

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^68 Wilson, William Satchell, p.147.
^69 Alan Mulgan, 'Literature and Landscape in New Zealand.' New Zealand Geographer. 11, April 1946, p.196.
^70 Adams, Tussock Land, p.70.
King is growing to see it as a New Zealander. In H. Musgrave's *Myola* (1917), the bush landscape is constantly described in terms such as 'exquisite' or 'enchanted' with an emphasis on the rich colours. Dion Cosway realises that no painter could attempt to mix those colours without shame of his own weak imitation.71

*The Untold Half* (1899) by "Alien" (Louisa Baker) shares similarities to both the above novels. Max Hawthorne, violinist and mountaineer extraordinaire, is similar to King Southern in that metaphors of the surrounding mountain landscape are associated with him. Ironically Max is blinded and loses the view of lake and mountains that were so important to him. Art, vision and the landscape are central themes of this novel, as Wynn Winter the famous artist arrives at Lake Manapouri, having heard travellers' tales of "this treasure-land for the artist, with its wonders of light and shade."72 He is enraptured with the landscape, but like Dion Cosway despairs because "if I could produce six feet of that mystery and splendour, suggest those vast heights, that limitless distance, these limpid depths, I should be famous!"73

"Alien," writing from London, wrote of her colourful landscape descriptions:

> Once when I described the sun setting on the hills and the golden light on the tussocks, etc, as we know it, one critic said it was utterly impossible; such colouring could not be. Then a correspondent of 'The Academy' who had been in New Zealand and knew about it, wrote vindicating me, and saying that it was quite correct description, confounding my critic.74

Finally many characters display a religious response to the landscape. In *The Tracks We Tread*, face to face with the harsh and extreme mountain environment, there is a feeling among the station men that in the pure landscape there is very little standing between them and God. Even Lou Birot, seemingly a character without a conscience and fearless, is revealed as dreading to be alone with Nature for this reason:

> For Nature is God, and man, very often, is of himself and the devil. Lou Birot knew this with the absolute certainty of a man who discovers a thing first-hand; and because he knew it he loathed the great merciless silences, and the dark secret gullies and the terrible purity of

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73 Ibid, pp.24-25.
74 'A Successful New Zealand Writer,' *The Press*, 23 August 1901.

'Alien' (so called because of her homesickness for New Zealand) suggested New Zealanders enjoyed reading dark, melancholy and pessimistic books, because their beautiful country and climate and happy life left their capacity for tragedy unsatisfied, and so they found it in art.
the uplifted snow-mountains that no touch of man could subdue nor
smirch.\footnote{Lancaster, \textit{The Tracks We Tread}, p.162.}

Lancaster describes the "raped bush"\footnote{Ibid, p.87.} of Purdey's logging camp. Here the
bushmen of Mains Station appear to hold an interesting attitude, recognising
God in the landscape, and therefore realising the implications of its
transformation:

No man bred in the streets and the sheltered ways may know
the glorious merciless joy that follows the first sob of the blade into
green unhandled timber. And though an axemen be past all but the
blurred memory, he will turn at that sound from all other music that
earth may hold. For the bush is the Eternal Artist whose work no man
makes sensuous or coarse, and to them that love her she gives that
intuition which gets behind mystery and unbelief to prove that God has
made in His own image the Almighty Peace which He lays on Nature
the round world through.\footnote{Ibid, p.89.}

In \textit{Angela: A Messenger} (1890), Grossmann writes with nostalgia for the
old colonial days before the railroad brought corruption and transformed the
landscape. Angela has an extremely strong love of the bush and affinity with
Nature: "She had an instinctive blind sympathy with the sublimity of nature.
The bushCalled to her with a wild fairy loneliness..."\footnote{Grossmann, \textit{Angela: A Messenger}, p.7, 9.} The description of her
house in the clearing evokes a symbiotic relationship between the forest and
people. Angele's brother John is dying of consumption, and living in isolation
immerses himself in the glory of the landscape.\footnote{Ibid, p.13.} Angela finds the Church
gives her feeling of religious rest in the same way that the landscape does,
leading her to join the Salvation Army.

In Mander's \textit{The Story of a New Zealand River}, (1920), Alice is initially
depressed by the bush and river landscape, but suddenly perceives its beauty
and God in it:

Something she had never suspected in herself rose up to
respond to it all. She had nothing of the gypsy in her, but she loved
beauty, more especially the beauty that was created — as she would
have put it — by the hand of God. And it was the hand of God that she
saw in that night, in that mountain, that bush and that river.\footnote{Mander, \textit{The Story of a New Zealand River}, p.21.}
Mrs Brayton, comforts the miserable Alice, telling her "Soon you will begin to realise the bush, and that mountain and the river. And they will mean more to you than you think." Note how Mander disassociates herself from her character's religious view with the phrase "as she would have put it." The agnostic Mander sees her characters as giving a religious interpretation to the landscape – she would not herself have used God to explain it.

Guy Thornton, on the other hand, provides an authorial validation of the characters' religious interpretation of the landscape. The theme of God in the landscape is best seen in Thornton's *The Wowser: A Tale of the New Zealand Bush* (1916). When the narrator becomes a Christian, his conversion is accompanied by descriptions of the landscape under sunrise, and the glories of the bush are equated with the glory of God. Later in the novel, at the sight of Mount Ruapehu and the surrounding forest, the Parson and the narrator are inspired to praise God, accompanied by a glorious choir of birds. However not all the characters can so easily perceive God in the landscape. Thornton describes the rough elements of the backblocks, who have nothing to do for entertainment except swear, drink and gamble. Some bushmen tell the Parson "Religion and the bush don't go together; a man can't be a Christian in the backblocks." This attitude doesn't receive authorial validation, but rather is shown by the Parson to be finally incorrect. The Parson wins the district's respect because he is practical, works hard and is prepared to defend God with his fists. Thornton equates hard work and the transformation of the landscape with Godliness; the reward being the development of a prosperous township and pastoral district.

Therefore there is a wide range of attitudes of characters towards the landscape and its transformation. These attitudes are often complex and contradictory, while some characters are associated with primarily one attitude, others manifest different attitudes in different situations. The heroes are almost all associated with the challenge attitude. Characters take into the environment a gender-determined element, so that the romantic, religious and aesthetic responses to the landscape are mostly from women. Male characters, as practical workers and transformers, commonly offer more utilitarian attitudes to the landscape (Dennis MacDiarmid's conversion is the exception to this pattern). The significance of this relation of gender to transformation, through

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Ibid, p.165.

female objection or male subjection of the landscape, is open to postmodern interpretation.

Authorial Attitudes to Transformation.

It is difficult to separate the attitudes of authors to the transformation of the New Zealand landscape from that of their characters. Often they will have characters expressing and embodying a range of attitudes but they will implicitly favour some over others. Authorial attitude can be seen as the underlying attitude(s) communicated by the text as a whole – sometimes by omniscient statement, but also by the plot and its resolution, by the tone of the whole. The underlying attitude (or sometimes even conflicting attitudes or tensions) is implicit in the judgements (explicit or implicit) of the characters and what they do, say and think. A romance plot, for example, implies approval of those characters that are rewarded with a marriage, a disapproval of the defeated rivals, etc. If the rival stands for an exploitative view of man's relation to nature and the hero for a transformative view, then the views of the author are clear.

Jane Mander's attitude to transformation in *The Story of A New Zealand River* is fairly explicit, and confirmable with biographical research. Mander's characters were often based on her neighbours and local identities, and expressed her personal observations and opinions, as well as those of others, on the removal of the kauri forest. In the kauri-felling scene in *River*, Tom Roland's views on the felling of the kauri forests are those vocalised by Jane's father Frank Mander, a prominent sawmiller. In the same scene Mander used the characters of Alice and Mrs. Brayton to express her personal views on the felling of the kauri. Later in London, Mander wrote an article condemning the milling of the kauri:

> We had our skyscrapers in those days, but they were trees, trees that walled off the rest of the world and held up the sky. They were also our antiques, I thought them as old as God. My first sense of terror, of rage at the ruin of beauty came from seeing them cut down.


Her description of the felling of a kauri is one of the most powerful passages in the novel. Afterwards Alice, Asia and Mrs. Brayton observe the stump being dynamited. Mander uses this scene as a comment on male dominance.

In her short story, *An Early Morning Walk*, Blanche Baughan, through the eyes of her character Millicent, describes the transformation of the landscape, as the narrative moves from established Canterbury farmhouse-arcadia to the "unsightly" upland settler efforts to carve farms out of the bush. Baughan laments the fate of the doomed surviving bush. I attribute this passage to Baughan's voice, rather than her character's, because her prose strongly mirrors the descriptions of burnt bush in her poetry:

Here and there, it is true, a clump of native trees might yet be seen, but even these were doomed, for Bush trees are gregarious, and will not long continue to survive without the shelter of their fellows; and for inches of such verdure there were acres and acres of the barren devastation. The great half-burnt skeletons of the forest, grey and black and bleached and piebald, stood gauntly up, as though in mute protest, from tawny hillside and green flat. They were splintered and shattered; at their feet lay multitudes of their brethren — enormous rotting logs, and the mouldering black stumps from which they had been severed; and it was only a question of time before they too would rest their ruins on the ground.

Later Baughan advances her personal and unique point of view; that there is beauty in the burnt bush landscape and, as in her poem 'A Bush Section', the burnt landscape represents a space in stasis, waiting to be filled with the imaginative labour of the future settlers:

Burnt Bush, to those that have ever lived in it, has a beauty all of its own — a curious beauty, lying in the very lap of ugliness. The great stretches of denuded tawny and russet-colour give room for the spirit to expand. They are spacious, sea-like still. Here and there, too, amid the solitude and the ruinous remains, a little grey iron roof, amid a handful of new trees from over the water, tells of Man — the successor of the forest he has destroyed. The whole land now lies waiting for his work, and there is room in the landscape for imagination, just as there is room, too, for every ray, every modulation of the light, and for the faithful reflection of every delicate interplay of shadow and shine.

In *Tussock Land* Adams observes the "dismal half-cleared state" of the land with its remaining burnt tree trunks; a sight which fills him with feelings of depression:

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88 Blanche Baughan, 'An Early Morning Walk' in *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven*.

89 Ibid, pp.119-120.

... blackened and bleached like ghosts, standing stark and grotesque amid a desolation of smouldering blackness; and for years afterwards those grim unconquered corpses of a century-old dominion stood stiffly up with naked and tortured limbs in terrible attitudes of agony, or pointing to the skies in a last uncomprehending protest. 91

This scene echoes Blanche Baughan's poetic and prose descriptions, in fact images such as this were a recurring theme for the writers of the period. However, Adams concludes by celebrating the transformation of the landscape, as King Southern is infected by his friend Charles Craven's pride and enthusiasm for the development of their back-blocks district. 92 Adams describes the transformation of the landscape and the prosperous development of the district. King becomes immersed in work and enjoys it. King and Craven no longer have any time for artistic creativity; possibly Adams is rejecting romantic attitudes towards nature in favour of utilitarian ones. During the five years King lives in the developing township of Waiau he comes to identify himself strongly with the fortunes of the district. The passage concludes "He wore thick-soled boots now." 93 Therefore Adams and Baughan lament the passing of the bush and are affected by the stark ugliness of the burnt bush landscape, but look forward to the responsible pastoral transformation of the landscape.

Determining William Satchell's attitude to environmental transformation is more problematic. If we read The Land of the Lost as a romance, Satchell's attitude could be seen as one of anti-transformation. Roller's exploitation of the environment that Esther loves makes him an unsuitable fiancé - his attack on Jess and Hugh by fire, which leads to the destruction of twenty miles of magnificent forest makes him and his accomplice Brice criminals and despoilers of nature. The characters most closely aligned with nature are the best in the novel and are thus rewarded at the end of the story. The heroine Esther's affinity with the kauri forest could be taken as an expression of Satchell's own views. In the tree-felling scene Satchell, using the omniscient author's voice, evocatively personifies the formidable tree, showing himself as unsympathetic to transformation:

To the rear, slightly in advance of the standing bush, stood an enormous tree, close on three hundred feet in height. He stood alone, erect, his branches evenly distributed on every side, his foliage

Adams, Tussock Land, pp.272-274.
Ibid, pp.276-277.
darkening the sky. Like a massive piece of masonry, clean, solid, absolutely without flaw, he stood, where he had probably stood for a thousand years, and where, uninjured, he might have stood for another thousand. But in the clean sound wood of his side the American steel axe had bitten deep and his life blood ran from the gaping scar.94

On the other hand, in context of the themes of the whole text, this passage could be seen as a recognition of the necessary cost of the ultimately good transformation. Satchell associates the transformation of the landscape with a sense of moral order. The gumfields wilderness is associated with "the lost"; the doomed outcasts from colonial society and the evil characters associated with 'The Scarlet Man.' The Land of the Lost concludes with Jess Olive's vision of the future transformation of the gumfields wilderness into settled farmland, giving the sense that an end of an era is approaching. It is this conclusive vision of a transformed landscape that Satchell implicitly endorses. Therefore Satchell's attitude to the transformation of the landscape is one of synthesis. Satchell regrets the felling of the kauri forest and is against the exploitation of the environment and the destruction of indigenous beauty. But he recognises responsible transformation as a necessary step towards the establishment of the pastoral paradise of the future in the Hokianga. When the last kauri has been felled and the last pound of gum has been extracted from the land it will not be left a desert – the advancing settlers will establish the "apple orchards and vineyards of the future" over which will rest the "peace of God."95

Didactic novels, such as Herman Foston's In the Bell-Bird's Lair, or, 'In Touch with Nature': A New Zealand Story (1911) and At the Front: A Story of Pluck and Heroism in the Railway Construction Camps of the Dominion of New Zealand (1921), present another common authorial attitude to environmental transformation. In these books the main character's moral development is achieved through hard work and profitable transformation of the landscape. For example in At the Front, Ralph Messenger, an accused man, begins the novel migrating to New Zealand and finds employment on a railway construction gang. Starting at the bottom, Ralph works his way to success and prosperity as he becomes an engineer, Mayor and M. P. for the construction camp which becomes a township, and eventually the Minister of Public Works who campaigns against liquor. His progress mirrors the transformation of the landscape to prosperity, indeed the development of Ralph's character

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94 Satchell, The Land of the Lost, p.103.
95 Ibid, p.207.
represents the development of New Zealand. Likewise in Guy Thornton's didactic novel of Christianity and temperance in the King Country, *The Wowser: A Tale of the New Zealand Bush* (1916), the rapid development of the town of Owhakuri from Godless shanty-town in a bush clearing to a booming prosperous and spiritual settlement can be followed, all in the space of 1905-1912. Thornton's attitude towards the transformation of the landscape is contradictory. His narrator loves the beauty of the bush and finds God's presence in it, yet the transformation of the wilderness by the removal of the bush parallels the path to Christianity. The sight of the miles of forest around Ruapehu inspires him to praise God, yet the same landscape is described as "acres of the finest milling timber in New Zealand." In another didactic novel, W. H. Koebel's romance *The Anchorage: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Farm* (1908), the hero, Caverton, begins as a hopeless and dishevelled drunk from London, but he gets a job on a station cutting manuka scrub, learns station work, and soon hard work and the landscape effect a change on his character and appearance, enabling him to eventually win the girl. All these novels take time to describe and extol the beauty of the bush, yet the underlying authorial attitude is that moral development and success is achieved through the conversion of wilderness into productive and prosperous landscapes. These didactic novels give rise to a difficult theological conundrum – God is to be discovered in unspoiled nature and yet God's purpose is the transformation of nature into the pastoral paradise (man's 'dominion' as ordained in Genesis). Thornton and Koebel appear to find no difficulty with this. Perhaps at this stage the general feeling was that there was plenty of bush both for aesthetic enjoyment as God's original creation and for pastoral expansion. During the period the conundrum perhaps was 'resolved' in practice by the setting aside of national parks and wilderness areas as exceptions to the transformative process.

Finally Katherine Mansfield comments on the transformation of the New Zealand landscape in her short story, *In the Botanical Gardens* (1907) in which the contrast between formal gardens and native bush in the Wellington botanical gardens represents the contradiction between English-modelled landscapes and indigenous beauty in the wider New Zealand setting. She describes the gardens as a combination of the artificial and natural, which is

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partly the secret of their charm. Mansfield contrasts the "orthodox banality of carpet bedding" with the cabbage trees, which are musical with "a curious, pattering native melody." The flower gardens are beautiful and populated, with a great many children, but then:

I turn from the smooth swept paths, and climb up a steep track, where the knotted tree roots have seared a rude pattern in the yellow clay. And suddenly it disappears — all the pretty, carefully tended surface of gravel and sward and blossom, and there is bush, silent and splendid....

Alone, Mansfield becomes absorbed by the beauty of the indigenous bush, the "Lotus Land." Her descriptions take the appearance of a transcendental experience. The references to the passing of the Maori, her self-description as "the thief of their birthright" and the weeping trees appears to signify that the forgotten bush-landscape is of the past, while the populated transformed garden setting where the children play represent the future of the country. But undoubtedly Mansfield's preference lies with the indigenous landscape. In the Botanical Gardens is Mansfield's rejection of transformation on a British model, an unfashionable expression of affinity with the beauty of indigenous nature, and a call for the recognition of an individual New Zealand past and future heritage. She concludes:

I pass down the central walk towards the entrance gates. The men and women and children are crowding the pathway, looking reverently, admiringly at the carpet bedding, spelling aloud the Latin names of the flowers.

Here is laughter and movement and bright sunlight — but behind me — is it near, or miles and miles away? — the bush lies hidden in the shadow.

Mansfield, as usual when writing on New Zealand culture, was gently critical but nonetheless loving of her country, a unique voice slightly ahead of her time.
FIGURE 10: Getting logs away on a timber wagon, Omahuta, 1913.
[Northwood Album, Hocken Library.]
FIGURE 11: “A small saw-mill was erected”

One of the illustrations from Herman Foston’s *In the Bell-Bird’s Lair, or “In Touch with Nature”: A New Zealand Story* (1911). Late colonial New Zealand novels were often accompanied by photographs of this sort, depicting the work of the transformation of the landscape.
CHAPTER 5.

HOME, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND LANDSCAPE IN NEW ZEALAND FICTION, 1890-1921.
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IN NEW ZEALAND FICTION, 1890-1921.

Home, National Identity and Landscape in Late Colonial Novels.

The New Zealand landscape (whether wild, semi-transformed or transformed) began to be identified with perceptions of Home and national identity in late-colonial novels. Arguments between Civilisation, represented by England and English society, and the uncivilised wilderness of backblocks New Zealand were played out in many novels. The period also saw a rise in consciousness of national identity due to New Zealand's performance in the Boer War. An often New Zealand-born generation of writers began to explore their colonial identity in literature, and landscape was the symbol they associated with national identity in these novels.

According to Wilson, Satchell's *The Toll of the Bush* (1905) reveals how much Satchell must have been appalled by the provincialism of New Zealand society in the 1890s after the sophistication of his London experience. Geoffrey Hernshaw, the English-educated brother, hates the life of the small bush farms on the river and the dull existence of the township: "the lust for something better is gnawing my heart out." He wants civilisation. Robert and Lena's craving for knowledge, education and literature may have been social criticism of the colony on Satchell's part. The successful characters in both Satchell's novels, such as Major Milward, have established homesteads and gardens on an English model. However, *Toll* is set against a background of Boer War patriotism. In the final chapter, Geoffrey tells Sandy the war has given England a waking up: the English Geographical Society has definitely announced New Zealand is not a suburb of Melbourne, and it is hoped that in the course of time that a boundary may be agreed on between this country and New South Wales. Geoffrey makes fun of Home perceptions of New Zealand, saying they have a fair idea of the monstrous creatures which people the forests. You can tell them of a sanguinary encounter between a moa and a tuatara and they will listen with bated breath. But the British public cannot accept the telephone — if you conclude by ringing up the doctor they will smile.

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2 Ibid, p.80.
incredulously. Major Milward tells young Mark Gird Columbus was not the
greatest sailor in the world, but Ui-te-rangiora who discovered New Zealand.
The novel ends with Major Milward proposing a toast to "the country of our
children — the Fairest Land in the World." The Major's toast to the future
would seem to indicate the landscape Satchell associates with national identity is
the transformed.

Boer War patriotism is a central aspect of Walker's *Zealandia's Guerdon*
(1902). Arthur Somerset, an Australian newly arrived in New Zealand, praises
the country as the Great Britain of the South, and then at the piano sings
Lawson's 'The Star of Australasia', which he has put to music himself — a song
about how the colonials will proudly die for the Empire. "Oh, Mr Somerset,
what beautiful manly words," exclaims Lucy. Somerset is pro-Boer War. In
contrast Osbern says why not let the Boers have the country if they want it, the
Empire has lots of colonies. He believes in living on his own farm in peace and
quiet. Somerset is disgusted at this insult to the Empire. The Senor schemes to
convert "Mr Surly Pig-Head (Osbern) from a pro-Boer into a right-minded
young gentleman of New Zealand," employing the patriotic Maxwell to regale
him with tales of military heroism, at which Osbern is moved.

When Aioitea drowns herself, Arthur joins a New South Wales
contingent and goes to Cape Town. The course of the war is described, during
which Arthur is promoted to sergeant for gallantry. Arthur is amused by the
efforts of the city-bred British soldiers to chop a tree down. He comments
"England is losing her open-air men." Horncastle Richards's letter gives a
civilian perspective of the growing public atmosphere of national pride:

I hear very good accounts of your chaps. Everybody is talking
about the usefulness of all the Colonial soldiers. There won't be any
more humbugging about our army being so small, and not caring to
fight for England and British independence all over the world. We've
hundreds of thousands of young active men, hardy enough for
anything. And they will turn into the real thing in a month or so. Take
'em out of the bush, the plains, the hills, in all sorts of shapes and sizes.
 Give 'em a kit, a horse, a rifle, and we can soon manufacture the A1
article. They're born to it, bless you, and a fine hardy lot they are.

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   1902, pp.32-34.
4. Ibid.
7. Walker, *Zealandia's Guerdon*, p.188.
Stanford, a soldier with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, and Arthur discuss the war and national identity, identifying it with the landscape and environment. The first thing Arthur warmed to in New Zealand was the fauna and flora, particularly the grey duck and the manuka. They say New Zealanders make such good soldiers because of the free, open-air life. They make good riders and good gunshots. They are fit for foreign campaigns and wild new country, being able to rough it. In contrast the British officers, products of Aldershot and swell mess dinners, cannot ride or shoot. "Wonder what they would do if they had to skin a sheep?" asks Stanford. Walker's interpretation of national identity or manhood is seen as forged by the struggle to transform the land.

In Adams's *Tussock Land* (1904) the theme of landscape and national identity is strongly linked. Both Aroha and King are symbols of the New Zealand landscape and the nation's future. Adams stresses the multicultural Aroha represents the beginning of a new race: "She was a New Zealander. This land and she were kin." She feels the Maori had hardly made their mark upon the land, and all the settlers' buildings were new, a cemetery being a rare sight: the land has no history. A new race, without a past, Aroha looks forward to the future of the nation. In contrast, King stands for an old race at its end, that but for its transporting might have trailed out of existence. Born in England, he grows up in New Zealand with a sense of displacement, homesick for the English landscape:

To him, the bleak bare, half-finished townships, set in the silence of the sombre, half-cleared bush, had in them no charm of the unknown future. He could not look ahead and see the sturdy cities rising swiftly up. The crude nakedness of the unstoried land appalled him.

However King comes to appreciate and love the New Zealand landscape. The climate vitalises him and he expresses this love through his art. *Tussock Land* also contains telling comparisons with Australian national identity and art in relation to the differing landscapes. The Australian landscape and light made it impossible to paint in old-world traditions. In order to paint Australia artists had to develop new impressionist forms. In comparison to "Australia's vast sombre monotony," New Zealand's scenic mountainous landscape, "a paradise

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13 Ibid, pp.31-34.
of majestic scenery,” was not conducive to creativity. Adams is gently critical, using Australian culture as a model for the future direction New Zealand must take to attain cultural independence, once it had completed the rewarding work of transforming the landscape, as represented by King’s period of work in the North Island bush town.

Makgill’s *Blacklaw* (1914) explores colonial identities through an examination of the effects of displacement from birthplace and the influence of landscapes. After exchanging his Scottish castle for backblocks New Zealand, David Westray becomes brutalised, and his children reflect the psychological effects of a depressing landscape under transformation. David Westray is torn between his two inheritances, on one hand is his rejection of Old World society and his dream of carving out a home in the wilderness, on the other is a feeling of exile, of which the landscape is a constant reminder. This makes for some irrational behaviour. In his dispute with Major Channel over shifting fences, Westray surprises the gentleman-landowner by arguing with him as an equal, but also acts in conformity with his colonial appearance by telling Channel it is a free country, swearing and fighting, to the delight of his boys.

Lord Blacklaw’s sisters satirically display Home attitudes towards New Zealand, confusing it with Botany Bay and thinking it has no society except convicts and cannibals:

“New Zealand!” exclaimed Margaret, looking up from the letter.

“Isn’t it somewhere near Australia?”

“Quite likely, my dear,” said Miss Westray, with a curl of the lip, “but I know so little of those impossible places.”

Peter and Johnnie have to defend themselves from being bullied at school for being "Scotchie." Peter is at pains to acquire a colonial drawl and lose the Scottish accent of ridicule, changing words like 'know' to 'knaow.' Meanwhile Jack Westray is educated in England, his parents sending him away for eleven years, their logic being people are coloured by their surroundings. When Betty returns to New Zealand, sophisticated from an English education, she is repulsed by her childhood playmate Peter, who has succeeded in acquiring the coveted colonial accent and whose practical colonial dress and hard-working life have made him look undesirable. She falls instead for the

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18 Ibid, p.192.
19 Ibid, p.271.
no-good Johnnie, who at least looks the glamorous picture of a hard-riding colonial. Eventually Johnnie and John Westray fall victim to the New Zealand landscape they are associated with, the English-educated Jack and Betty are paired off and Peter receives his Scottish inheritance. Blacklaw displays a wide range of mainly negative attitudes towards the New Zealand landscape and national identity.

Ebba Stelin's *A New Zealand Pearl* (1896) provides an upper-class view of New Zealand and comparison with the English landscape. The Wellesleys Hawkes Bay estate is surrounded by verdant fields and English trees and the house is described as "a grand old homestead, that told by every appearance the retreat of an English gentleman."20 The New Zealand scenery provides an ideal setting for the tennis, shooting, dances, riding and picnicking of the novel's leisured characters. Drayton (an English visitor) and Honor explore a small clump of native bush "left alone in all its native splendour" amongst "the daisy-bespangled paddocks," collect specimens of ferns and admire the vines. "How sublime — how magnificent in its native beauty New Zealand is; everything is so unaffected!" cried Drayton enthusiastically.21 Greta Bonde moves to Christchurch and is happy with her garden, entirely stocked with English trees and flowers.22 At her successful dance Alison Estmere tells Dick Tempest she would give the world to go home to England, just to see what the shocked dowagers would say at the forward colonial girl.23 When the ladies visit the shearing shed to see the men at work, Dick tells Alison she is quite in foreign parts. "Oh yes; it is a decided change to come down here and see you all up to your eyes in business," she replies.24 Evidently, for those wealthy enough the New Zealand landscape could be ignored except when convenient, in favour of the pretence of a genteel English lifestyle and the eminently preferable familiar landscape of Home. Likewise Anne Glenny Wilson's *Two Summers* (1900) doesn't develop beyond pretty picturesque descriptions of the scenery, with an emphasis on the English pastoral Arcadia, against which the quaint colonial manners and customs of the New Zealanders may sometimes be observed. However the second part of the novel, 'On the Other Side of the World' provides a description of an equally picturesque and stereotypical English landscape.25 Eventually the romantic couple Lindsay and Julia are

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21 Ibid, p.71.
22 Ibid, p.79.
23 Ibid, p.97.
united by their memories of the New Zealand scenery. In what are 
lighthearted romances, the critical contemporary New Zealand reader may find 
an uneasy sense of displacement — both Home landscapes appear irrelevant 
and surreal and the characters appear to belong to neither. Wealth perhaps is 
the price of this cultural confusion: those financially equipped to indulge in 
Home-landscaped gardens and travel must suffer from enhanced displacement 
as the price, yet Katherine Mansfield's *Millie*, whose situation is evidently less 
affluent, also displays the same displacement. The condition is symptomatic of 
a colonial society in general, rather than a reflection of social status.

**Home, National Identity and Landscape in Short Fiction.**

The short stories of the late-colonial period contain excellent material on the 
themes of Home, national identity and the landscape. In G. B. Lancaster's 
*Hantock's Dissertation* (1904) Hantock (a station man) and Lane (the manager) 
explain to an English visitor about the colonial character. Hantock tells him an 
Englishman is a product of centuries of civilisation, while a colonial is a product 
of the soil. Landscape is the key to the colonial character:

"There's a lot of the New Zealand river in her men; and there's 
a lot of the plains too. The great wide spaces, and the miles of blowing 
tussock, and the flax-swamps... and the glorious clean air that makes 
you fit to jump a house when it comes out of the hills where no man 
has breathed it yet."

Hantock states the rivers and the nor'-westerly winds are responsible for many 
New Zealand characteristics, and then there are the mountains:

"I've heard fellows say we can knock spots out of Switzerland for 
scenery. I don't know anything about that, but, mind you, there's a 
power and a kind of stern reticence about our back-country that leaves 
its mark on our men... The everlasting hills that make the backbone 
of our islands make the backbone of our people too."

Hantock admits that a New Zealander doesn't have much spiritual grace: "He's 
a Vandal, I think. He burns the bush and plants *Pinus insignis*; and he hasn't a 
decent picture-gallery in the two islands."

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50 G. B. Lancaster (Edith Joan Lyttelton), 'Hantock's Dissertation' in *Sons o' Men*, 
London: Andrew Melrose, 1904, pp.154-156.
Katherine Mansfield’s *Millie* (1913)27 shares the themes of colonial character derived from the landscape and high-cultural deficiency with Lancaster’s story. However Mansfield does not hold Lancaster’s confidence in a distinctive New Zealand identity, instead dealing with a problematic transitional identity fed by two Home sources. *Millie* depicts a rough, lonely woman at a backblocks farmhouse. Home and national identity are confused as we see the pictures on Millie’s wall. One shows a garden party at Windsor Castle, with Union Jacks and Queen Victoria. "I wonder if it really looked like that?” asks Millie. The other picture is a wedding photograph of her and Sid, with a background of fern trees, a waterfall and Mount Cook in the distance, covered with snow. To Millie both are equally unreal landscapes. Millie's maternal Home sympathies are roused by a fugitive: a "young English 'Johnny' who'd been on the station learning farming.”28 But when she sees him chased by her husband and his cronies, she schizophrenically reverts to the savage feelings encouraged by her environment and screams for his blood.29

The stories in Blanche Baughan’s *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven* (1912) are almost all concerned with issues of Home, national identity and the landscape. *Café au Lait* 30 is about a homesick old exile from Switzerland, Phillippe, who has lived in New Zealand for fifty years. A paddock reminds him of home in some ways, and although proud of his adopted country, he longs for the real thing: "O for the old Home landscape, for the old, familiar speech, for the dear, the true the real, the right old ways!” carried away in terrible nostalgia, Phillippe is thrilled to meet an old woman from his home village. But she reveals all the familiar scenes of his childhood have been changed. Phillippe determines to make the best of where he is, by setting up with the old woman in a little remnant of deported home, with the metaphor of Swiss coffee mingling with New Zealand milk they can take the best of both worlds and create an ideal future. The title of *Spring in Autumn* is an obvious clue to the story’s content; the tale of two immigrants, Peter and Catherine Ross, who took up tussock land, learned to farm, made a home and became prosperous. Baughan describes their seedlings — every one grown from a real English acorn brought out from Home by Catherine. Likewise their garden, orchard

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28 Ibid, p.66.
and herbs are all English. However what is surprising is their attitude to English birds:

Out of sympathy for Peter and his strawberries, Catherine has learned to detest the pilfering blackbirds — who, at Home and landless, once she loved. The other day, even, so she confessed to me in a whisper (a little bit shamefaced, like one having consciously done a rather unwomanly thing), with Peter's pea-rifle she actually shot one! impudently feasting before her very eyes, while Peter was in town; and she keeps, too, a dreadful little Bluebeard's Chamber of a box, full of dried blackbirds heads, for which she now and then proudly claims so many pence per dozen from the authorities.31

Given the large amount of sentimental verse written about blackbirds and other English birds (see poetry chapter), this is a radical departure. An Early Morning Walk ends with a multicultural vision of New Zealand's future, represented by a young Scandinavian girl driving a milk cart Viking fashion, "a sense of the wide adventurous sea" blowing in on Millicent's "impressions of country freshness and mountain glory."32 An Active Family describes the struggle to happy prosperity of another land-breaking family, all apples, oats and butter, but laments their narrow focus on work at the cost of lack of cultural and intellectual stimulation. The story is told of a Russian who visited New Zealand, and after observing people's working lives cried out "Oh! you live so bad, you do live so bad!"33 Baughan uses the metaphor of a growing child to illustrate the country's stage of transition: "It may be with healthy young nations as it is with healthy little boys, that the affairs of the soul interest them a very great deal less keenly than the affairs of the stomach — and, for the time being, rightly so." Baughan concludes by showing the family playing Schubert after a hard day's work, a foretaste of that mature society to come.34 Therefore the deficiency or lack of high culture in frontier New Zealand can be seen as the cost of concentration on material progress through the transformation of the landscape, but the desire for culture may be alleviated by the temporary selective importation of high culture into New Zealand. In the future New Zealand will be able to build its own version of English culture. In this, as in other areas, present imperfection is just a stage in the development towards a better future.35

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31 Baughan, 'Spring in Autumn' in Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven, p.102.
33 Baughan, 'An Active Family' in Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven, pp.139-140.
Red and Yellow and Ripe hammers home the messages of Baughan's previous stories. Mrs Nye has migrated to New Zealand with her son Ted nine months ago, and lives in an ugly new iron and treeless coastal settlement. Taking a day off, she goes inland, in search of autumn. She finds a valley where there are established English trees to satisfy her homesickness. In a real English stone cottage in an orchard, Mrs Nye meets an old lady who came to New Zealand forty-five years ago. They reminisce of home, especially of its ancient buildings. Ted and his mother compare the new country to a raw tomato, which will ripen: "Though 'ow a timber-an'-tin buildin' three 'underd year old is a-goin' to look — well, that I'm sure I can't say!"36 The characters of different generations represent stages in the identification with New Zealand as Home. The old lady, with her recreated English environment, conservative prejudices and set ideas, represents the homesick exiles. Mrs Nye, although homesick is open to change and recognition of the beauty of the new landscape, even the tin roofs and fences; she represents the present. Young Ted, with his rejection of England and happy enthusiasm for the new country, represents the future.

Finally two 1920 short plays by Alan Mulgan treat the awkward transition period in-between the neglect of the old Home culture and the rise of the new. The Daughter37 shows the transition period on a dairy farm, where life for the educated heroine is nothing but repetitive monotonous work in a society where "our world is just this one question — what are we going to get per pound for butter fat?," a society in which "one has to give up a good many things," represented by "that unread book and the stringless violin."38 For Love of Appin, set in a farm house in back-blocks New Zealand, ties together the issues of Home, landscape, national identity and literature. Angus Buchan was forced to leave Scotland when evicted by the Laird and fighting with the Laird's son. He appeases his homesickness with a book of Jessie Mackay's New Zealand-Scottish poetry (representative of opportunity for women in the new country). Mrs Buchan, a Londoner, is not homesick at all but thankful to escape poverty. She discusses her husband's homesickness with Harding, a New Zealander:

MRS BUCHAN: No, 'e's moody like. Were yer ever 'omesick, Mr Harding?
HARDING: Oh, Lord, yes Mrs Buchan. I spent two years in England and I enjoyed myself immensely, but many a time I felt I'd give anything for a sight

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of a bit of burnt bush and the smell of a tea-tree fire.\textsuperscript{39}

A drunken swagger arrives, who turns out to be the Laird's son, fallen on hard times. Mrs Buchan stops Angus and the swagger fighting, pointing out how well off they are in New Zealand: "... Anyway, you've climbed up and 'e's come down, an' yer can both meet as equals — you couldn't have done that in England. (Pause) You both take my advice an' make it up — not as Scotchmen, but as two New Zealanders."\textsuperscript{40} Hope is held out for the future when the characters will grow to love their own egalitarian culture in fat, prosperous New Zealand.

In conclusion, the late-colonial period of literature was too early for radical assertions of New Zealand national identity. Britain was still predominantly seen as Home, and English education, culture and civilisation were desirable. However the beginnings of an independent national identity can be seen, related to the landscape. The settlers were justifiably proud of their efforts in transforming the landscape, and in the novels it is perceived that the struggle with the wilderness produced a better class of man. This view was realised by New Zealand's performance during the Boer War of the 1890s, and some of the resulting patriotism found its way into the novels of Satchell and Adams. Whenever writers looked for symbols of national identity they found them in the New Zealand landscape. The most positive assertions of national identity are found in Adam's \textit{Tussock Land}, with its promotion of a distinct New Zealand race and future, and in Grossmann's rejection of British civilisation in favour of a New Zealand Arcadia. Perhaps the most effective enforcement of New Zealand nationalism through literature, however, was simply through the appearance of identifiably New Zealand characters in realistic New Zealand landscape-settings, as found in the novels of Satchell, Mander and Walker.

In the short fiction, the strongest assertion of national identity is Lancaster's connection between landscape and national character. Mansfield's \textit{Millie} deals with a confusing period of transition and questions the colonial sense of place in relation to idealised Home landscapes. Baughan's settler-era stories and Mulgan's plays deal with homesickness and the period of transition, but point towards a positive future and developing identity for the country.

\textsuperscript{39} Mulgan, \textit{Three Plays of New Zealand}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p.22.
Environmental Rationalisations and Nationhood.

The late colonial novels show that a common belief in a positive future and developing identity for New Zealand was strongly associated with environmental transformation. Conversely the aesthetic costs of this environmental transformation were often appropriated as justifications of progress; a necessary stage in the path towards nationhood. These attitudes were tied up with convictions of evolution and cultural Darwinism.

While most of the late colonial novels explicitly or subconsciously celebrated the struggle towards the removal of the bush and its conversion into prosperous farmland, these were accompanied by expressions of loss. Novels such as *In the Shadow of the Bush* and *Tussock Land* described the burnt bush as the "dismal wreck of a once superb beauty," but saw the destruction as a temporary phase on the way to the building of a pastoral paradise. Adams continues; "It was the curse of ugliness that inevitably hangs on progress. The bush with all its splendours, all its graciousness and coolness and shelter, had to go. The land was wanted for grass."

To step aside and question the contradictions in these assumptions — how could the removal of the native bush, the very landscape that made New Zealand unique, and its transformation into a better-than-Britain pastoral paradise possibly be the basis of national identity? The answer stems from various discourses prevalent in late colonial society. As this chapter has shown, writers were indeed concerned with exploring the idea of national identity, both through the outlining of the nation's future accomplishment and its present imperfections. A significant idea underlying the future national identity of New Zealand was a faith in evolutionary progress, often tinged with a cultural Darwinism. Satchell, influenced by Alfred Wallace, seems to have thought this through the most, as seen in his philosophical but non-New Zealand novel *The Elixir of Life* (1907). Thus in most of these novels there is a faith in human evolutionary progress. Lawrence Jones states: "This evolutionary ethic provides a goal for the process of colonization, and justifies the costs, including the regrettable but necessary destruction of the bush and the Maori, as well as human costs for the settlers themselves." When viewed in this light many of the contradictions within the late colonial novels make sense. Esther Hamilton's regret at the destruction of the bush in *The Land of the Lost* and Geoffrey Hernshaw's doubts on the costs of civilisation in *The Toll of the

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12 Jones, 'The Novel' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, p.130.
Bush are resolved at the end of both novels in the pastoral paradise of "the apple orchards and vineyards of the future" that Jess Olive forsees and Major Milward's toast: to "the country of our children — the Fairest Land in the World." Each novel ends in a better marriage looking towards that better future, as does Tussock Land, where the protagonist's multi-cultural marriage at the end is accompanied by references to the better, and distinctly 'New Zealand', future they would help build. Attitudes towards the decline or absorption of the Maori (too great a subject for my thesis) were also tied up in this ethic. As seen in late colonial poetry the decline of the Maori was commonly equated with the transformation of the landscape – for example Dora Wilcox's 'English grass' in 'At Onawe.' A common metaphor for the evolutionary transition of colonial society towards independent nationhood was that of the child, best expressed in Blanche Baughan's comments on the unattractive adolescence of new nations and the necessary costs of these.

It is important to realise that New Zealand was still very much regarded as part of the British Empire, and much of these evolutionary discourses occurred within an Empire framework. The Boer war theme of the period provided an interesting additive, whereby New Zealand was seen as having proved itself grown up enough to take its stand alongside the nations of Empire, but was also perceived as being superior in some ways due to the cultural strengths gained from proximity to the youthful struggle to build a nation. Closeness to the land and the hard work of transforming that same landscape were popularly professed to have produced a hardier breed of people compared to those grown idle in the softer old world, and this logically lead to assertions of national identity.

To sum up, a dominant set of attitudes emerges from the full range of the texts, along these lines:

1. The primary attitude to the New Zealand landscape is that of a challenge, to be responsibly transformed into the pastoral paradise. This ultimately overrides, but does not entirely negate other attitudes such as romantic, religious and aesthetic ones.

2. This process of transformation is associated with evolution — a creative anthropocentric version of Darwinism and often also with the development of the British Empire.
3. This process has its cost — the loss of the pristine beauty of the bush (debated against aesthetic and romantic attitudes), the difficult, culturally rough transitional stages of a frontier society, the human 'toll' and the destruction of Maori culture.

4. The result will justify the cost — 'the better Britain of the Southern Seas.'

5. The emergent New Zealand identity is a result of this process.

Yet there is still one major contradiction that lies at the heart of the whole literary treatment of landscape. On one hand the unspoiled indigenous landscape is valued for its effect in national character-formation and is the symbol of national identity (this is especially evident in poetry), but on the other hand the process of transformation is also seen as the primary forge of national character and identity. This unspoiled nature vs. transformed landscape, like the theological contradiction, might have been resolved during the period by the setting aside of national parks and wilderness areas as exceptions to the transformative process. Whether this questioning of the total transformation of the landscape arose from aesthetic, religious, scientific or preservationist concerns, the tension is very evident in late colonial non-fiction environmental writing, examined in the next chapter.
FIGURE 12: Cleared land, with Mount Taranaki in the background, c.1908. [Alexander Turnbull Library.]
FIGURE 13: The cover of a tourist pamphlet, 1919.
The burnt stumps of the previous photograph have been transformed into the
"Gardens of Taranaki." Poets such as Will Lawson and Blanche Baughan were
commissioned by the Government to write tourist guides to various New
Zealand localities. These guides, containing Tourist Department photographs
and statistics, are useful sources for the landscape historian.
CHAPTER 6.

LATE COLONIAL NON-FICTION
AS ENVIRONMENTAL TEXT.
Late Colonial Non-fiction as Environmental Text.

The late-colonial period saw the publication of several environmentally-significant non-fiction works. Several of these works were written by writers of poetry and fiction. As in late colonial verse and fiction, literary modes and tastes differed from those of today. The scientific writings on natural history were extremely popular and all were written in prose designed to be evocative as well as informative and communicated enthusiasm for their subjects. Many of the themes and attitudes of verse and fiction were also reflected in non-fiction writing, where good sources for environmental history can be found in scientific works on fauna and flora, descriptive travelogues and tourist writings.

Scientific Writings and Herbert Guthrie-Smith's Tutira.

During the late colonial period there was an output of literature on the indigenous landscapes of New Zealand, especially on flora and fauna. The Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute annually published numerous scientific articles under the section headings zoology, botany and geology. These, and many other locally-published scientific and more popular writings, were fundamentally descriptive, dealing with the soils, rocks, birds, insects, trees, shrubs, climate and so on. The colonial scientists and amateurs early on saw their observations as fieldwork adding to the world's general scientific knowledge, and later became concerned with fabricating New Zealand by creating an inventory of its phenomena. Either way, by particularising New Zealand indigency, these natural history writings further defined 'New Zealand'.

Aside from the scientific manuals, there were several works which, while basically handbooks, were extremely readable. Influential examples were F. W. Hutton and James Drummond's Animals of New Zealand (1904) and R. M. Laing and E. M Blackwell's Plants of New Zealand (1906). G. M. Thomson's A New Zealand Naturalist's Calendar (1909) combined reliable scientific data with enthusiasm for local flora and fauna. Gibbons exemplifies Leonard Cockayne's two different editions of New Zealand Plants and their Story (1910 and 1919) as having a widespread impact, due to its ecological perspective. Cockayne impressed on his readers both the special and unique nature of New Zealand vegetation and its relationship to the flora of other lands. New Zealand Plants was scientific but accessible to the knowledgeable layperson, and was an

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1 Gibbons, 'Non-fiction' in The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, p.62.
2 Ibid, p.63.
inspiration to amateur naturalists and popularizers of natural history for that and the next generation.3

The most important of these scientific works was Herbert Guthrie-Smith's Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station (1921). Alan Mulgan described Tutira as "not only New Zealand's greatest book, but as one of the world's great books."4 More recently Canadian geographer Graeme Wynn wrote on the significance of Tutira's microgeographical perspective,5 and American environmental historian William Cronon praised it as "one of the great English-language classics of environmental history."6 In this work Guthrie-Smith devotes over four hundred pages to a minute examination of every environmental aspect (botany, geography, geology, zoology, anthropology, ecology, etc) of the twenty-thousand acre Hawkes Bay sheep station that was his lifetime passion. Every living thing that made its home at Tutira — animal and plant, native and non-native, even the smallest invading weed became the subject for Guthrie-Smith's observation. No other book offers such a localised view of historical environmental changes and ecological interconnections. Guthrie-Smith's obsessive environmental documentation, of course, would not have become a classic if it were not extremely well-written; the book is completely absorbing and his enthusiasm for his subject is infectious.

A tension between progress and preservationism is evident in Guthrie-Smith's writing. His lyrical enthusiasm in Chapter XVIII of Tutira on improvements on his farm, from the original pioneer owners to himself, is an expression of a faith in progress and an excitement in being part of it. However this is in complete contrast to the doubts and fears expressed in the preface to the 1940 edition, where Guthrie-Smith questioned the ethics of his substitution of domestic breeds of animals for native birds and lizards, one flora for another, his contribution to erosion... should he have cleared the bracken and woods to raise wool on Tutira's hillsides, or should he have left the land alone to conserve and admire? "Have I then for sixty years desecrated God's earth and dubbed it improvement?"7 Also in 1936, Guthrie-Smith's Sorrows and Joys of a New Zealand Naturalist apologised in unequivocal terms for the destruction of

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3 Gibbons, 'Non-fiction' in The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, p.63.
7 Guthrie-Smith, Tutira, xxiii.
New Zealand's landscape and the writer's guilty pride in his role in that transformation. Guthrie-Smith's 'The Changing Land,' (1940) a centennial pamphlet for the Making New Zealand series was a litany of environmental abuses, but ends retrospectively with a celebration of the transformative changes typified by a pioneer farm, showing the endurance of the progress discourse.

William Pember Reeves: Environmental Historian.

While Guthrie-Smith's Tutira has been extensively written about and internationally hailed as an environmental classic, an earlier New Zealand landmark of great significance in the field of environmental history has been largely overlooked – William Pember Reeves's popular history of New Zealand, The Long White Cloud: Ao Tea Roa (1898). The first chapter of The Long White Cloud is essentially an environmental history text, containing descriptions of the landscape, vegetation and climate of the country. Reeves's history is singular because of its vehement and visionary assertions of early preservationism. When describing the destruction of the forests Reeves breaks out of his historian's objectivity, stating:

The process is inevitable and in great part needful, frightfully wasteful as it seems. But the forest reserves of the Colony, large as they are, should be made even more ample. Twelve hundred thousand acres are not enough – as the New Zealanders will regretfully admit when a decade or so hence they begin to import timber instead of exporting it. As for interfering with reserves already made, any legislator who suggests it should propose the motion with a noose around his neck, after the laudable custom followed in a certain classic republic.

By the 1924 edition of The Long White Cloud, Reeves was able to happily report that the forest reserves of the Dominion had wisely been increased, with the work of Sir D. E. Hutchins and the establishment of the State Forestry Department, and that more than seven million acres had been definitely or

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11 Ibid, pp.9-10.
provisionally declared state forests. The Long White Cloud was also unique amongst histories in that the appendix contained the author's famous environmental-message poem, 'The Passing of the Forest' (see the section 'Transforming the Landscape' in Chapter 1).

The Long White Cloud opened with a depiction of New Zealand's landscape. Reeves wrote with great feeling on New Zealand's forests, their transformation and preservation. He continued by writing with great authority on the Dominion's geography, climates, landscape features, rivers, light and colour, birdlife, and alpine scenery. The British colonisation or transformation of the landscape was discussed at length, with the introduction and acclimatisation of English species. The costs of negative introductions were noted, various weeds and pests including insects, thistles, watercress, sweetbriar and in particular rabbits, and the environmental effects of controlling them. Introduced species from other countries were noted. Generally Reeves was not harshly critical of the massive acclimatisation he details, excusing the introductions as necessary to fill the "void spaces" of the "the most completely unoccupied soil of any fertile and temperate land on the globe." However he noted a return to the cultivation of native flora by the generation of native-born New Zealanders. Reeves concluded "Much — too much — of its wild and singular beauty is being ruined in the process of settlement. But very much is indestructible. The colonists are awakening to the truth that mere Vandalism is as stupid as it is brutal," and reported the Government's moves for the preservation of scenery and birdlife.

The Long White Cloud was extremely popular, going through multiple reprints and several editions up until 1950. Reeves's 1898 advocation of conservation and preservation would have been radical, but by the 1924 edition his views would have become mainstream. The differences between the editions over the late-colonial period are significant for the attitudes to ecology they expose — for example on kauri forests in 1898 Reeves wrote:

So plentiful are they that, though fires and every sort of wastefulness have ravaged them, the Kauri Timber company can put 40,000,000 feet of timber through their mills in a year, can find employment for two thousand men and can look forward to doing so for another twenty years. After that ——! 16

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13 Ibid, pp.29-46.
14 Ibid, pp.35-38.
15 Ibid, p.46.
However by the 1924 edition Reeves reported that as early as 1909 the kauri forests had been in danger of disappearing altogether and the Government had taken steps to preserve them from total destruction: "But no effort of man can ever restore to their stately grandeur the primeval forests of New Zealand."  

Overall Reeves' history *The Long White Cloud* is a most important environmental text, an example of the attempt to synthesise progress and preservationism. His discernible changes in attitude over a period of time, as 'progress' becomes 'exploitation' (mirrored in the changes to the final verse of 'The Passing of the Forest'), are fascinating. Reeves' tension between unspoiled nature vs. transformed landscape is similar to Guthrie-Smith's. Initially Reeves is positive about progress, but like Guthrie-Smith expressed growing concern in later editions of his history. Significantly, Reeves' concerns were expressed sixteen years earlier than Guthrie-Smith's, although Reeves' fears arose from a desire for conservation and preservation. In 1924 Reeves was writing in immediate reaction to the visibly expanding fields of burnt tree stumps, the loss of the beautiful indigenous forest and the waste of timber – he did not foresee the later result of erosion that would become apparent in New Zealand and prompt Guthrie-Smith's 1940 recantation. Guthrie-Smith's concerns arise out of personal responsibility based on a farmer-naturalist's individual experience and observation, a focussed study of minutiae in a limited area. The advantage of *The Long White Cloud* as an environmental text is that it encompasses the environmental history of the whole country.

**Guy H. Scholefield: 'Forests and Profligacy.'**

William Pember Reeves (who broke out of his historian's objectivity when writing on the destruction of forests), wrote the Introduction to Guy H. Scholefield's *New Zealand in Evolution: Industrial, Economic and Political* (1909). The work is a survey of New Zealand's economic history. But Scholefield's chapter on the economics of the timber industry, 'Forests and Profligacy,' is remarkable for its vehement animosity against the wanton destruction of forests and the exhaustion of kauri resources. Scholefield's history of forestry is a history of resource waste. Scholefield writes of how the pakeha "simply wallowed in the destruction of the bush" – how if a settler required to build a *whare*, he would fell an acre of timber, if he wanted to plant potatoes or wheat.

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he would burn and fell and leave the timber to rot. Scholefield's prose becomes stronger as he rails against the timber industry:

It was a pitiful and wicked war. "Milling rights" meant simply and solely an executioner's warrant to pick out the eyes of the forest, to slay and ruin the rest, and then go elsewhere. In 1871 three million feet of timber were exported. In 1891 the figure was forty-two millions. There were 250 mills killing and slaying and burning and wasting. It was a reign of unbridled rapine and licence.

Scholefield's objections are generally economic, rather than aesthetic. "Prosperity and expansion were heedless of the economic future," wrote Scholefield. The timber mills were "wasteful and detrimental to the public estate." The word "waste" is frequently repeated.

Like Reeves, Scholefield was interested in the preservation of forests, although perhaps more in terms of conserving their future timber resources. Like Reeves he warns of the exhaustion of the resource, predicting the duration of New Zealand's milling forests at 50 years.

A sentence by Scholefield epitomises the recurrent problematic theme of the period: "In those days, and indeed up to the end of the century, the idea was held that every acre of bush that was taken up and cleared, even if the timber was destroyed by fire, was a national gain. That was the doctrine of progress." This is the attitude Reeves initially promotes then rejects in the amended final verse of 'The Passing of the Forest.' Scholefield's comment is also reminiscent of Phillip Carrington's poem 'Rangiora' in Alexander and Currie's 1926 Anthology:

And the ground is cleared and stubbed and burned and drained;
And each descending day
Is another chapter in history,
And another acre gained.

New Zealand Travelogues.

William Baucke's *Where the White Man Treads* (1905) invokes a similar type of Social Darwinism to Guthrie-Smith's in justifying the destruction of the bush
and the possible destruction of the Maori. The narrator, on a train journey observes the "creamland panorama" of the forest when:

Suddenly like a slap in the face from an unseen hand, where one had looked for fresh wonders of forest beauty, spread a settler's recent burn! Gaunt and charred, prone on their mother's bosom, lay the mighty monarchs of the woods. Giants whom the storms of ages had battered at in vain, the tireless pecking of a pigmy two-legged creature with an axe had conquered and laid low.

The old Maori woman next to him murmurs resentfully "There are his footsteps. That is where the white man treads." But Baucke in a later passage changes the meaning of the phrase — praising the transformative labour of the pioneers:

... the brave hearts who, undismayed by herculean labour and privation, lay the best years of their lives at the feet of their lives at the feet of the ages to come, a willing sacrifice — white men to the core, whose tread is broad and firm and everlasting.

Even if they appear ugly at first, the footprints are those of progress, not the destruction of the bush. Baucke's tone epitomises the assumptions of the age about progress, and his racial attitudes are determined by that attitude to progress. The Maori cannot stand in the way of progress and must be assimilated or die (as represented by Baucke's metaphor of the stream and the drain in his preface). The fact that this book was reprinted as late as 1928 indicates how much it stated what the age wanted to hear.

Baucke's work was transitionally an example of a popular form of writing — the descriptive travelogue. One of the best examples is W. H. Koebel's In the Maoriland Bush (1911), a descriptive travelogue of bush-frontier New Zealand in the form of a series of factual short stories. These may have been targeted at the 'Home' market, for those curious about conditions in the colony. Naturally the scenic beauty of the landscape, the transformation of the landscape and depictions of farming were central topics. Containing over three-hundred pages with supportive photographs, Koebel's In the Maoriland

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"Bush" is a generalised environmental text approaching the scale of "Tutira," but is poetically evocative rather than scientifically informative. Chapters such as IV 'The Death of the Forest,' which describes a bushfeller and his work, the cleared bush, burning and the after-result, are superseded by chapters such as V 'Some Incidents and Characters,' wherein humorous stories about station cadets are related. Overall, In the Maoriland Bush gives a generalised but extremely readable picture of the bush, farm and township landscapes, and all forms of farm and station work and recreation. There are chapters on mustering, shearing, harvesting and floods, interspersed with observations of rural New Zealand pastimes, characters and amusing anecdotes. The book concludes with 'A pastoral comparison' between the work of the New Zealand and English farm labourer, and was perhaps intended as an introduction for the British migrant.

Koebel's attitude to the transformation of the landscape is ambivalent. In 'The Death of the Forest,' Koebel is a frustratingly impartial observer. He begins by describing an idyllic bush scene. On hearing the sound of distant axes he clammers with difficulty through the undergrowth to reach a bushman's camp. Having observed a bushman, his axe technique and a successful 'drive', Koebel comments impassively on the sight of charred logs that will in time be hidden by grass. Even the "tremendous spectacle" of a bush burn cannot move Koebel out of his neutrality: "To the disinterested a gargantuan bonfire of the kind is to be remembered merely for the sight it affords." Koebel breaks into melodrama to describe a man trapped in a bushfire. He returns to the last stages of transformation in the making of a station – the sowing of grass and grazing of sheep among the stumps. "The progress of the pioneers is in full swing" remarks Koebel. He concludes the chapter by painting a picture of men fencing. With defined paddocks, "the land will have been born again; for the benefit of mankind this time, and only very indirectly for that of the sheep."

There have been numerous forms of the New Zealand descriptive travelogue from the initial stages of European settlement. One of the best examples from the late-colonial period is F. A. Roberts' By Forest Ways in New Zealand (1896), a beautifully presented tourist's travelogue of the countries scenic wonders. William McHutcheon's Camp Life in Fiordland, New Zealand: A Tale of the Sutherland Falls (1892) is an entertaining travelogue aimed at the urban outdoor enthusiast – an early expression of 'adventure tourism'.

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27 Koebel, In the Maoriland Bush, pp. 58-76.
Generally, focusing on natural scenic landscapes, these texts manage to avoid the unconscious contradiction inherent in fiction – praise of the unspoiled scenery and admiration for the transformation process. E. Way Elkington's *Adrift in New Zealand* (1906)\(^{30}\) is more promising. The whole of Chapter XVI is devoted to the techniques of bushfelling, burnoffs and the danger of bushfires. But Elkington displays a visiting Englishman's urbane objectivity. He is appreciative of Christchurch's Englishness, but also enjoys his wilderness life as a gumdigger and bushfeller. Elkington states bush-clearing is interesting work:

> ... and though I admire the sentiments of him who wrote, "Woodman, spare that tree," I can't help saying that there is something grand in felling, by your own exertions, a giant kauri-tree... I like to get my axe swinging nicely and feel it slipping into the wood, and see the chips flying right and left.\(^{31}\)

All these books were also informative about the Dominion's social, political and economic conditions. Generally they contained photographs throughout the books of the landscapes they described, often depicting the processes of transformation.

**Tourist Guides.**

During the late-colonial period the tourism industry became well-established, and pamphlets and tourist brochures were produced, some commissioned by the Government and written by prominent literary figures. While some of these tourist writings celebrated the industrious transformation of the landscape, it was naturally the unchanged scenery that they found inspirational and used in the promotion of New Zealand. An early tourist guide, Elsdon Best's *Waikare-Moana* (1897),\(^{32}\) mixed scenic beauty with Maori legend, informing tourists both about the various sights around the lake and at the same time the Maori history relating to them, in order to invest a historical interest on the landscape.\(^{33}\) The guide contains descriptions and photographs of the area, its fauna and flora, as well as contemporary Maori life.

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\(^{31}\) Ibid, p.262.


\(^{33}\) Peter Gibbons, 'Non-fiction' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, pp.60-61.
Blanche Baughan’s earlier non-fiction writings, some of which were originally published in London’s *The Spectator*, or released as booklets, were collected together as *Studies in New Zealand Scenery* (1916). Baughan’s collection contains seven scenic sketches: ‘The Finest Walk in the World’ (the Milford Track), ‘Snow Kings of the Southern Alps’ (Mt Cook), ‘Uncanny Country’ (Wairakei geyser valley and thermal district), ‘A River of Pictures and Peace’ (Whanganui river), ‘Summit Road’ (Port Hills above Christchurch), ‘Forest and Ice’ (Copland Pass) and ‘Stars Under the Earth’ (Waitomo caves). The guides offer detailed and beautiful descriptions of the scenery, fauna and flora of these regions, interspersed with Tourist Department photographs. When describing the alpine environments that she loved, Baughan’s language becomes particularly poetic, verging on the sublime. These ‘word-pictures’ show the same panoramic landscape technique and emphasis on light that can be seen in Baughan’s poetry. Baughan was a founding member and councillor of the first Forest and Bird society, and a conservationist approach is apparent in these writings. Baughan’s essays display a detailed knowledge of indigenous plants. Her interest in natural history had put her in touch with the eminent botanists Robert Laing and Leonard Cockayne, and she discovered a considerable collection of unrecorded alpine plants. Baughan was catering for a different public than in her poetry and fiction. While her poems and fiction focus on the transformed landscapes of the burnt bush and frontier farm and their future, *Studies in New Zealand Scenery* deals only with unspoiled scenery – ‘unimproved’ nature for tourists not pioneers.

Between 1918-1920, the poet Will Lawson published a series of tourist booklets in association with the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts and local district authorities. If Baughan’s tourist writings best promoted the

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52 Gibbons, ‘Non-fiction’ in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, p.54.
53 See my section ‘The living landscape’ in Chapter 2.
unspoilt wilderness, Lawson's tourist guides were very much documents of transformed landscapes, aimed at the modern motoring tourist, although, contradictorily, naturally the preserved scenic attractions of these districts were the main tourist drawcard. Lawson's booklets are useful environmental sources, not only because they present written and photographic pictures of the landscapes, history, flora, fauna, towns and recreational attractions of the districts concerned at the time, but also because of their factual and statistical descriptions of local agriculture, industries and land use. For example *Marlborough the Golden* (1920) contains a section on 'Climate and Fertility' which gives statistics on land use by acre. There are sections on all forms of local agriculture and industries; sheep-farming, cattle-raising, dairying, agriculture, fruit-growing, fruit-packing, seed-raising, lucerne-growing, fishing and whaling, water-power, manufacturing industries, forestry, petroleum prospects, poultry, bees, flowers and hunting.

**Conclusion.**

New Zealand late colonial non-fiction writing contains ample useful material and sources for environmental historians, including arguably some of the world's earliest and most significant environmental histories in the modern sense. As in literature, at the centre of the non-fiction writings is the contradictory theme of unspoiled nature vs. transformed landscape. This is apparent in the split in focus between Blanche Baughan's fiction and non-fiction writings. Baughan's poetry and short stories describe the emblematic transitional ugliness of the burnt bush and anticipate a future of prosperous transformed pastoral settlement. In contrast her tourist writings celebrate the unspoilt scenic wilderness. This contradiction is more coherent in Reeves' and Guthrie-Smith's environmental histories. Out of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, it is in non-fiction that the contradiction is most overt. Across all three forms most writers appear unconscious of the tension, but it is nonetheless there. Poets were divided between celebrating the removal of the bush and lamenting its passing. Fiction writers debated a variety of opinions or attitudes between characters within novels, and pointed out both the costs and future benefits of transformation. Few writers held to a coherent attitude, and this is highlighted

by the way Reeves and Guthrie-Smith's opinions changed over a period of time. There were two strands to New Zealand national identity related to the landscape. The first strand was the challenge of transformation ethic – a pervasive theme in literature that itself was crucially formative of identity. The second strand of national identity was related to the pristine indigenous landscape, manifested in literature through appreciation of the natural landscape's beauty, uniqueness and emblematic symbolism. This second strand was always existent, but became more popularised across the period with the transition of a settler to a settled society. These two contradictory strands could have collided, resulting in great national schizophrenia, if not for the fact that there was enough land in New Zealand for the two ideals to co-exist. Thus Bracken's 'God's Own Country' was able to complacently praise New Zealand as a land of peace and plenty, with both its pristine untouched and productive transformed landscapes alongside each other. Various compromises were reached, and the discourses took on parts of each other, so that national identity was seen as both stemming from the transformation of the landscape and from the experience of living in a pure untouched environment. The setting aside of national parks and reserves during the period was undoubtably one resolution to this growing disquieting atmosphere of doubt at the pursuit of the complete and irreversible transformation of the landscape. The types of non-fiction such as popular scientific writing on subjects such as botany and birdlife, and travelogues and guides spurred by the growing tourism industry, reflected a growing recognition and value of both pristine and pastoral New Zealand landscapes. The fact that a growing majority of New Zealanders were now urban dwellers also played a role in the acceptance of the landscape contradiction, but this will be seen in the next chapter.
FIGURE 14: The Ostler Farm, showing land clearance.
The Ostler farm, probably in the Taranaki region. Shows land cleared of bush in the foreground and a hut in the centre, with virgin bush land in the background. The effect of such bleak burnt bush surroundings made a profound impression on New Zealand writers, as evident in the works of Blanche Baughan and Sir George Makgill.
[James McAllister Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library.]
FIGURE 15: A farm house on land cleared by a bush burn-off, c.1905.
Taken in the Stratford and Taranaki district, possibly at Tututawa. All around
the house are burnt tree stumps. The new villa and sown paddock cleared of
stumps before the house shows a stage in the development of a bush farm.
[James McAllister Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library.]
CHAPTER 7.

URBAN LANDSCAPES
IN NEW ZEALAND LATE COLONIAL LITERATURE,
1890-1921.
Introduction and Statistics.

New Zealand late-colonial literature was characterised by an evident lack of urban settings, at a time when the country's urban centres were rapidly expanding and eclipsing the rural landscape and population. The reasons for this lack of, or avoidance of urban settings are well worth analysing in view of what they reveal about the self-perceptions of New Zealanders during the period. There is a unique and contradictory 'rural-urban paradox' in the treatment of urban environments in New Zealand late colonial literature – a result of inherited British and classical rural myths coming head to head with a growing national identity. This chapter examines the ways in which late colonial writers handled urban depictions in literature and necessarily adjusted the literary conventions of the rural-urban discourse in order to fit it to the New Zealand context.

Firstly it is important to understand the radical changes in settlement that took place during the late colonial period. Between 1890-1921 New Zealand's population was expanding. From 1861-1891 the population rose from 99,021 to 626,658. In 191 it was 1,008,468 and by 1921 it had risen to 1,128,913. Much of this population expansion occurred within the cities. In 1891 the populations of the four principal boroughs were Auckland: 51,127, Wellington: 33,224, Christchurch: 47,846 and Dunedin: 45,869. By 1911 Auckland had clearly become the dominant urban centre with a population of 115,750. Wellington (82,800), Christchurch (87,400) and Dunedin (67,200) were unchallenged as the next largest cities. The secondary urban centres were still very small, only Gisborne, Napier, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Timaru and Invercargill having accumulated more than 10,000 persons each. Hamilton, the regional centre of the rapidly developing and rich Waikato dairy country, had only 5,700 people in 1911. It was not until the advent of the motor vehicle as a common

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1 Results of the Census of the Dominion of New Zealand, taken for the night of the 17th April, 1921. Wellington: Marcus F. Marks, Government Printer, 1921, p.2.
necessity that accessibility improved and the future regional centres were able to grow to a significant size. An almost exact balance between the rural and urban sectors of the population had been achieved by 1911, just over 50 percent now living in towns of more than 1,000. This figure was a significant change from the conditions prevailing in 1881 when the urban population comprised only 39 percent of the total. By 1921 the Census observed:

The increasing population represented by dwellers in cities is plainly manifest. It is noteworthy that the movement, either non-existent or quiescent up to 1906, in that year commenced a swift rise, which is apparently gaining in momentum.

The great bulk of the urban population is contained in the four large cities, which comprise over one third of the total population of the Dominion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URBANISATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POPULATION OF FOUR MAIN URBAN CENTRES 1891-1921</td>
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<tr>
<td>European population of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christchurch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dunedin</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total European NZ population</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>CITIES AND BOROUGHS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European population of towns larger than 8,000 (other than four main centres) as a percentage of total European population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1.

Census, 1921, p.8.
TABLE 2.

In the 1921 census concern was expressed over the “somewhat disturbing feature” of urban drift, defined as "the gradual abandonment of rural life for that of the city and the growth of cities at the expense of their rural hinterland." The Census observed this was a global phenomenon, and was a natural tendency for manufacturing countries, "but for New Zealand, which is for the greater part a producing country, the indications of a strong urban drift are viewed by many with alarm."7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rural pop. %</th>
<th>Urban pop. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>62.34</td>
<td>37.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>61.16</td>
<td>38.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>57.05</td>
<td>42.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>51.23</td>
<td>48.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3.

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7 Census, 1921, p.7.
The shift from rural to urban was an indication of the growing diversity of economic activities as the towns became essential links in the processing of agricultural products and in servicing the rural population. As in other western countries, New Zealand was to become a highly urbanised society in the following years as rural electrification and mechanisation allowed agriculture to become more efficient and less labour intensive.9

The appearance of the New Zealand rural landscape showed increasing evidence of industrial transformation as well. The electric telegraph covered the country: in 1890 there were 5,148 miles of line and 12,812 miles of wire, by 1921 there were 13,724 miles of line and 51,643 miles of wire.10 In 1890 there were 1,813 miles of railways — by 1921 this had increased to 3,018 miles.11

Owing to the prevalence of the 'rural myth', little or no depiction of this urbanisation made its way into literature. Such was the strength of the myth that its influence on legislation12 and town planning was considerable — New Zealand’s cities and towns generally managed to avoid much of the ugliness and squalor associated with old world urban environments. By the end of the 1930s, the country was settled and established, its farm landscapes generally neat and tidy arrangements of fences, hedges and shelter belts. New Zealand’s timber-built towns and cities were extensive in area but were perceived as having clean environments, unsullied by the smoke and grime of industrial areas and lacking the depressing high density row housing or 'back to back' characteristic of British industrial towns,13 although in reality New Zealand towns were not all that clean, as Wood’s research into Dunedin’s sanitary environment proves.14

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"The Four Queens."

New Zealand urban landscape descriptions are sparse in late colonial literature, but certain trends emerge from what there is. Descriptions of New Zealand's four main urban centres reveal a number of shared observations and themes — a surprising consensus among writers in their opinions of the cities.

1. Auckland

Of the four main cities Auckland, the largest, unsatisfactorily has the least description. Jessie Weston's Ko Méri (1890) is set against a background of Auckland scenic landscape from sea to horizon, but like many novels avoids any urban description.15 A typical sample is:

Auckland rises gradually from its wave-indent ed shore, in Nature's attempt at terraces, possessing many features of an English country town in summer — trim white houses nestling in bowers of vivid green, brightened on this day, with the rays of an almost tropical sun; and suburbs stretching for miles into the country, and along the shore of the river, the glimpse of white growing less frequent, and the masses of living green of greater extent and beauty.

"Hills, knolls, mounds" relieve the landscape on all sides, some crowned with plantations of sombre pines, others adorned with villas set in gardens whose prodigal wealth of flowers clothe with a rich garment the earth which in a long-forgotten age panted beneath the force of heaving earthquakes and scorching streams of lava....16

The shores of the Waitemata, the North Shore and Rangitoto island are described and later the Domain and the view from Mount Eden, all with an emphasis on natural terms. "What a bountiful, genial mood possessed Nature in the execution of this masterpiece of her handiwork! All her treasures are lavished upon it — the bluest and clearest of all skies; the purest and lightest of air; island and lake; hill and dale; wood and creek..." exclaims Weston of the Auckland landscape.17 The novel depicts an idyllic, wealthy community living in a picturesque suburban environment.

Arthur Adams's 'The Four Queens (Maoriland)'18 also focuses on luxuriant nature and the cities' position in the landscape:

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16 Ibid, p.2.
17 Ibid, p.3.
Set all about with walls, the last fair queen
Over a tropic city holds her sway;
Her throne on sleeping Eden, whence through gray
And red-strewn roads and gleaming gardens green
The city wanders on and seems to lean
To bathe her beauty in the cool, clear bay,
That out past isle and islet winds its way
To the wide ocean.

Adams personifies Auckland as a young maidenly queen, whose deep dark
dreaming eyes reflect the strength and passion of the North. Hamilton
Thompson's 'Auckland'\(^\text{19}\) likewise depicts Auckland as mysterious: "the city of
mystery wherever the strange will flow." Thompson focuses upon Auckland as
a centre of commerce, with ships sailing in and out of the two harbours with
their cargoes of kauri, gold, fibre and gum, fruit, mutton and butter and grain
— "the wealth of the Southern Seas." John Liddell Kelly's 'Apostrophe to
Auckland'\(^\text{20}\) offers grandiose praises to the "Queen City" focusing on the same
aspects of natural beauty and prosperity. Finally E. L. Eyre's 'Auckland from
the Shore'\(^\text{21}\) describes the city across the harbour at sunset, a brief glimpse of
urban activity viewed from a distance:

The lamps are lit where tramcars run
Into the city's heart.
A steamer down the harbour floats,
And — toys upon a floor —
The gaily lighted ferry boats
Are gliding round the Shore.

Overall depictions of Auckland in late-colonial literature focussed upon the
region's natural beauty, with an emphasis upon hills and harbour. Fertile soils,
abundant flora and an ideal Summer climate are common themes. Auckland
was frequently identified as a queen of commerce, industry and prosperity; a
future world centre and port. All these tell us little about New Zealand's largest
city, the result being an impression of otherworldliness — a busy centre of
activity somehow separate from the rest of the country, mysterious and
incomprehensible, only glimpsed from the picturesque outskirts.

\(^{19}\) Hamilton Thompson, 'Vignettes' in *Ballads about Business and Back-Block Life.*

\(^{20}\) John Liddell Kelly, VI 'Apostrophe to Auckland' in *Zealandia's Jubilee.* Auckland:
Kelly and Baulf, Observer Office, 1890, pp.15-16.

\(^{21}\) E. L. (Earnest Leonard) Eyre, *The Road to Maoriland and Other Verses.* Auckland: The
Business Printing Works Ltd, 1912, p.16.
2. Wellington

Evidently late-colonial writers were not enamoured with the capital city. Edith Grossmann's *Angela* (1890) depicts the dark side of urban life seen in the Salvation Army and Rescue Home. Angela, working amidst the drunken and fallen women, misses "The fresh and wholesome air and the healthful living" of her rural home. Grossmann describes the unattractive city environment and climate:

The Rescue Home is not an attractive place — it has all the unhomely suggestions of a second-rate boarding house, bare and large, with monotonous rows of windows, it turns away from the harbour and throws a dull shadow over the little walk of damp slimy brick and the rank weeds and low gate in front. It stands in the dreariest of streets with inferior shops and houses around it all with a coating like its own, of dirt-stained dismal grey paint. And in these winter months Wellington put on its unloveliest aspect...

Then came that hateful Wellington weather; no rain, the hills bare and stony, the streets dusty, the smoke beaten about, a violent wind whirling about stones and dust — everything grimy and dismal and the air sultry and yet with an edge of bitter chill.22

Grossmann's Wellington is inhabited with the human flotsam of the urban environment: "— the blear-eyed drunkard leaning on a stick and drivelling, the cripple ragged and dirty with snarling lips, the hideous and deformed creature with knobbled features, the half-blind thing like a corpse that had died long since and had its last sneer fixed for ever, the painted graceful harlot..."23

Although part of the didactic genre, Grossmann's portrayal of Wellington is radically distanced from the touristic praises of Christchurch by other New Zealand writers. To be fair, Grossmann's descriptions of Sydney are even worse (Angela is murdered there) — again a portrayal completely opposite to the centre of art, culture and urban civilisation Sydney was promoted as in most New Zealand literature.

In contrast Katherine Mansfield's Wellington stories offer an idyllic vision of upper-class suburbia, although Mansfield critically undermines this by the intrusion of reminders of the wider society. *The Garden Party* (1921) one side of Tinakori Road ignores the other, where "The very smoke out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridan's chimneys."24

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23 Ibid, p.151.
upper-class complacency is disturbed by the death of a working class man in the cottages. In *The Doll's House* (1921) the Burnell children are not allowed to speak to the Kelveys with whom they are forced to mix with at school — daughters of a washerwoman and a jailbird, dressed by charity. The teacher has a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey comes up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers, and the rumour goes round the playground 'Lil Kelvey's going to be a servant when she grows up.' Kezia eludes the starchy social postures of her family by showing Lil and 'our Else' the forbidden doll's house.\(^5\)

Three poems on Wellington share an inordinate number of similarities, revealing much about attitudes to the capital. Arthur Adams's *The Four Queens* (Maoriland)\(^6\) states:

... The first is she  
Whose face is arrogant with empery;  
Her throne from out the wounded hillside steep  
Is rudely fashioned, and beneath her creep  
The narrow streets; and, stretching broad and free,  
Like a green-waving meadow, lies the bay,  
With blossom-sails and flower wavelets flecked.  
Elate she stands; her brown and wind-blown hair  
I1,10esa face with virgin freshness fair,  
As she receives, exuberant, erect,  
The stubborn homage that her sisters pay.

Note the similar phrases used in David McKee Wright's 'Wellington.'\(^7\) The consensus among poets seems to have been that Wellington was not a beautiful place, but Wright especially seems to dislike it:

Rugged she stands, no garland of bright flowers  
Bind her swart brows, no pleasant forest shades  
Mantle with twining branches her high hills,  
No leaping brooks fall singing to the sea.  
Hers are no meadows green, nor ordered parks;  
Not hers the gladness nor the light of song.  
Nor cares she for my singing,  
Rudely scarred  
Her guardian hills encircle her pent streets,  
Loud with the voices and the steps of trade;  
And in her bay the ships of east and west  
Meet and cast anchor.  
Hers the pride of place  
In shop and mart, no languid beauty she

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\(^7\) Ibid, pp.104-105.
Spreading her soft limbs among dreaming flowers,  
But rough and strenuous, red with rudest health,  
Tossing her blown hair from her eager eyes  
That look afar, filled with the gleam of power,  
She stands the strong queen city of the south.

The hills of Wellington are described as "scarred" and "wounded." Adams calls the city "rudely fashioned" and Wright states "no languid beauty she." Both poems comment on the narrow streets. Both use similar female imagery and personification — of an arrogant ruling queen, "rugged" and "rough". Hamilton Thompson's 'Wellington' calls the city "Picturesque though scarcely pretty" and his poem again contains many similar sentiments with phrases such as "lacking room", "full of youth and life and vigour", "harbour splendid" and "her to hold a golden key". It seems as if the poets searched for something positive to say about the capital city, but in honesty failed.

3. Christchurch

Christchurch, situated on the plain with its English-modelled cathedral, river and gardens, was a city which writers could genuinely enthuse about. In 'The Four Queens (Maoriland)', Arthur Adams wrote of Christchurch:

And one within a level city lies;  
To whose tree-shaded streets and square succeeds  
A vista of white roads and bordering meads,  
Until each suburb in the great plain dies.  
The clustering spires to crown her fair head rise,  
And for a girdle round her form she leads  
The Avon, green with waving river-weeds  
And swept with swaying willows. And her eyes  
Are quiet with a student's reverie;  
And in the hair that crowns her dreaming face  
There lurks the fragrance of some older place,  
And memories awake to die again,  
As, confident and careless, glad and sorrow-free  
She waits, queen of the margeless golden plain.  

The natural situation of Christchurch, in the Canterbury plains with the Avon river winding through it, undoubtedly made the city attractive. Arnold Wall's twin poems, 'The City from the Hills' and 'The City in the Plains' give aerial views of Christchurch:

Alexander and Currie, New Zealand Verse. p.103.
There lies our city folded in the mist,
Like a great meadow in an early morn
Flinging her spears of grass up through white films,
Each with its thousand thousand-tinted globes

Above us such an air as poets dream,
The clean and vast wing-winnowed clime of Heaven.

Each of her streets is closed with shining Alps,
Like heaven at the end of long plain lives.30

"I love thee, Avon!" exclaimed Henry Jacobs,31 adding because of the river’s English name and because his countrymen had made their homes along its banks. He envisioned in the future England’s sons would beautify the rough uncultured banks even more, with fields of waving grain and heaven-pointing spires. The English appeal of Christchurch found its way into all the writings. In Kathleen Inglewood’s Patmos (1905), Ruth explores the town, looking for lodgings:

The town, with its pretty houses and leafy gardens charmed her, and as many people assured her that it was like an old English town, she used to amuse herself imagining that she was walking through the streets of Cambridge, and that the grey stone cathedral in the heart of the city had been built by some pious Englishman centuries ago.32

In Wheat in the Ear (1898), Louisa Baker’s description of Cathedral Square at dusk is evocative33, but her description of wider Christchurch reads as if lifted directly from a tourist brochure:

Christchurch, the commercial centre of New Zealand’s finest agricultural district, has retained from its foundation a distinctly English educational and ecclesiastical atmosphere. At the West End are to be found stately and picturesque colleges; sylvan residences of church dignitaries and professors fringe the river in the vicinity of the famous museum and parks; fashion, science, art and religion are neighbours to the park gates, and the added charm of quiet reigns throughout, scarcely broken save by the soughing of wind among great green branches, and the deep-toned voice of a turret clock.34

On the other hand many writers commented on Christchurch’s disorientating flatness and long dusty streets. In Patmos, Ruth, exploring the city, learns to find her locality from the cathedral spire:

31 Ibid, p.104.
The Christchurch streets are endless. Some few do come to an unexpected and happy end on the banks of the river, or wind around its curves, but all the others — flat and wide and white and straight — stretch away into the distance as far as the eye can see. Fortunately for Ruth, as it was necessary to find rooms near the centre of the town, she never had to go very far along these endless dusty roads, but even so they tramped miles during their days of search.  

"Flat to monotony" said one critic — provoking Hamilton Thompson to write five stanzas extolling 'Christchurch' in rebuttal. Thompson described the activities one might do in Christchurch; enjoying the Avon from its banks or canoe, roaming Hagley Park, admiring the homes and gardens in Rolleston Avenue, seeing the view of the city and plains from Cashmere Hills, the gardens and visiting seaside Brighton and Sumner. Finally E. L. Eyre's 'Christchurch: A Query' also conveys an idea of idyllic popular activity in the city; cheerful people, sunny gardens, rose-clad houses, seaside bands playing, boatmen on the river, clever cyclists and dreamers on the Port Hills. This urban poem is unique, as it is written by a self-described "exile" from Christchurch, weary of the smoke of Auckland and whose "heart is back in Christchurch."  

From the references to Christchurch in literature, the collective atmosphere is that of an English-modelled city of great beauty in equally beautiful natural surroundings of plain, alps and sea. Descriptions of the city convey an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity, a place of idyllic recreation and relaxation, where even in an urban setting one can easily escape to an English parkland environment.

4. Dunedin

Like the other cities, descriptions of Dunedin in late-colonial literature are sporadic, ethereal and focus on natural rather than urban settings within the city. The best description of urban Dunedin comes in Louisa Baker's The Devil's Half Acre (1900) in Chapter XI, 'A City of the Hills' when Rose fleeing her goldfields home arrives in Dunedin's Exchange at night:

DUNEDIN — the Edinboro' of the South — lay under snow. The myriad lamps of its circuitous streets and terraces twinkled like golden stars through the crystal haze over the cosy city tucked between...
sheltering hills and harbour. Two fiery eyes of the cable-tram peeped from the ridge of High Street, and came swiftly down like some live thing descending noiselessly from the clouds. The hoof-beats of the horses in the tram meeting it at the Monument were soundless: it might have been a ghost city but for its light and the cheery voices of pedestrians who gave each other greeting, and the silvery chimes that shook their musical notes among the snowflakes over turrets and spires and towers — 30

As the bells echo back from the Southern Cemetery, Rose waits at the terminus in front of the Grand Hotel, where a friendly Scottish policeman helps her catch the horse-tram to Woodhaugh Valley. The tram carries Rose across the city and deposits her in the dark at the entrance to Woodhaugh valley, by the whisky distillery.40 But this brief glimpse of the city at night under snow is all we get — for the rest of the novel the urban setting is abandoned for the semi-rural picturesque idyll of the Woodhaugh Valley mill house and parsonage by the Leith river.

In Arthur Adams's *Tussock Land* (1904), Chapters IX and X describe King growing up in Dunedin, featuring the locations of Otago Boys High School, the Town Belt and Queens Drive and Otago University. Much of the romantic action between King and Aroha takes place in Dunedin, with their disastrous meetings at the railway station and Caversham tram terminus, during which South Dunedin is described:

They turned to walk together up the steep, hillside track. It zigzagged up the gully between a lane of little houses that either perched high on the steep bank above the road or peered quaintly up at it from the slope below. Above lay a little patch of native bush, dense and blue and cool. Below, as they slowly mounted, lay the wide stretch of Caversham, overbuilt with small cottages, the ozone-swept East-End of this metropolis of the South, and further away a line of yellow sandhills edged the limitless blue sweep of the Pacific. From the beach the long rollers boomed with a muffled thunder. It was a dreamy afternoon in December when all the land drowsed beneath the mellow heat of summer.41

However the novel's major romantic action takes place in the natural suburban setting of the Town Belt, and the lover's reconciliation can only be achieved symbolically outside the urban environment, on their wild Central Otago tussock ridge.

Poems about Dunedin also tended to focus on the natural settings of Town Belt, hills and harbour, within and surrounding the town. In 'Towards Otago', David McKee Wright wrote of Dunedin as a queen, rising bush-circled on her throne in her robes of green. Arthur Adams uses similar imagery in 'The Four Queens (Maoriland)'

And one is fair and winsome, and her face
Is strung with winter's kisses, and is yet
With winter's tears of parting sorrow wet;
And all her figure speaks of bonny grace.
High on the circling hills her seat has place,
Within a bower of the green bush set;
And 'neath her feet the city slopes — a net
Of broad-built streets and green-girt garden space.
Above her high the suburbs climb to crown
Her city's battlements; and in her thrall
Lie sleeping fiords, and forests call her queen.
About her waist she wears a belt of green,
And on her gleaming city looking down,
She hears the Siren South for ever call.

Other depictions of Dunedin in poetry are even more other-worldly. Thomas Bracken's 'Dunedin from the Bay' begins by rejecting the glories of Europe's cities in favour of Dunedin seen from the bay. Dunedin is described as a lovely maiden seated in her grotto by the shore, her virgin breast bedecked with flowers and ferns. Bracken alternatively describes Dunedin as "A fairy, round whose brilliant throne / Great towering giants stand... / Their helmets hidden in the clouds, / Their sandals in the spray" and "A priestess of the olden time... / On Nature's altar... / Surrounded by grim giants, robed in mantles green and grey" The poem is just what you'd expect from Bracken — grandiose sentiments, with no urban description, but ample praise in terms of natural metaphors, using foreign mythical and classical imagery. Jessie Mackay's 'Dunedin in the Gloaming' is pure Tolkien-esque epic, reading like a Nordic saga — I quote the first two and last stanzas of ten:

Like a black enamoured king whispered low the thunder
To the lights of Roslyn, terraced far asunder;
Hovered low the sister cloud in wild warm wonder.

O my love, Dunedin town, the only, the abiding,

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Who can look undazzled up where the Norn is riding,—
Watch the sword of Destiny from the scabbard gliding!—

Sleep you well, Dunedin town, though loud the lulling lyre is;
Lady of the stars terrene, where quick the human fire is,—
Lady of the Maori pines, the turrets and the eyries!

In late-colonial literature, Dunedin was primarily represented as a place of atmosphere, both beautiful and grimly mystical, steeped in transported heritage and heightened by the weather and surrounding landscape.

5. Generalised urban landscapes

There are two poetic depictions of non-specific city environments in the Anthologies, whose themes are significant. As the following sections of the chapter on rural perceptions of urban life in late-colonial New Zealand will show, cities were frequently symbolised by images of busy moving crowds and ugly hard streets. Mary Colborne-Veel’s ‘Saturday Night’46 begins:

Saturday night in the crowded town;
Pleasure and pain going up and down.
Murmuring low on the ear there beat
Echoes unceasing of voice and feet.
Withered age with its load of care,
Come in this tumult of life to share,
Childhood glad in its radiance brief,
Happest-hearted or bowed with grief,
Meet alike, as the stars look down
Week by week on the crowded town.

Colborne-Veel continues by attempting to comprehend the meanings of the speech of the multitudes and the stories of each individual as they each appear under the glare of the gaslight. Among all this activity, oblivious of their surroundings wander two lovers.

J. H. E Schröeder’s ‘The Street’47 appears as the solitary most explicit depiction of an urban environment in the 1926 anthology. In this poem the ugly urban street is transformed by the night:

Long hours the asphalt, grimed, blistered and old,
A haggard monotony of weary gray,
Smoulders in dull hostility. The day

With challenging splendour, arrogant blue and gold,
Mocks at the humbled ugliness; a bold
Vagabond wind flings in its face his stray
Litter of insult; urchin dust-whirls play
Their fitful games in the gutters... But, behold —

The dust falls, and along the purpling street
Night strews her silence: cool and still, the air
Enfolds the throbbing hours in a soft
Forgetfulness. The kindly shadows meet
In noiseless converse, and the lamps aloft
Caress with silver pavements suddenly fair.

Generic New Zealand Provincial Towns.

Depictions of New Zealand small town landscapes in late-colonial literature occurred fairly frequently, although rural settings were overwhelmingly dominant. As the chapter sections on the transformation of the landscape have shown, there was an attitude of pride towards the development of bush settlements into prosperous rural townships. Also, unlike the cities, New Zealand country towns were worth writing about — geographers Cumberland and Whitelaw explain:

... regardless of the relatively small proportion of the urban population living in them, the country towns and special centres have assumed characteristics which reflect their origin and functions and which make them an intrinsic and characteristically significant element in the New Zealand landscape. In their appearance, the combination of activities that take place within them, and the people who live and work there, they display features which are peculiarly indigenous to New Zealand.48

Olssen argues for the emergence of a distinctive and stable small town rural New Zealand society during this period19 and Hamer goes some way to explaining the uniform characteristics of the New Zealand provincial town by discussing the various reasons for its development, its services and functions.50 Take Isabel Peacocke's description of "Taihoa" — a central South Island township:

At the foot of the range Taihoa — township by courtesy — straggles unpicturesquely for a mile or so on each side of the railway line.

The tiny wooden box of a railway station, dwarfed by its huge red-painted galvanised iron goods-shed, seems to form a nucleus for a huddle of promiscuous buildings which have grown up about it; the inevitable general store and post office combined, a smithy with its cheerful red furnace glowing and snapping to the musical clink clink of iron on iron, a saddler's shop, a small weather-board church, and an unpretentious public-house with a livery stable behind it. These, with a few other odds and ends of half-stocked shops of indefinite trades and a dozen or more dwelling-houses, comprise the "township," while farther back, fruit farms and waving crops, with a background of wooded mountain, offer a pleasant relief to the eye in search of the picturesque.  

The township is distinctly 'New Zealand' and, if the smithy and saddler's shop are exchanged for a garage and automotive business, the picture is still completely recognisable today. Peacocke goes on to describe Nick Daunt arriving by train — the slowest in New Zealand — and some of the landmarks and inhabitants of the township's main street; the general store and shopkeeper, Maori children and an old Maori woman. Other novels have settings of fictional or generalised provincial small town settings: John Bell's In the Shadow of the Bush (1899) is set around the Wellington bush district township of Bloomsbury. Bell describes the businesses in Bloomsbury's single main-road street, and the development (or non-development) of it and other similar "paper" townships. Much of the action of In the Shadow of the Bush, especially that concerning the more unscrupulous characters, centres around the township's Hotels — the rough and disreputable Cosmopolitan and the more distinguished Criterion — whose appearances, accommodation, reputations, landlords and occupations of customers are variously described. The prologue to Alfred A. Grace's The Tale of Timber Town (1914) depicts a generic New Zealand township from day to night, commenting on the effects of such an environment on the community, as the residents 'play at living.'

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54 Rollo Arnold documents the similar development of Kaponga, a successful government paper township, during the 1890s. The bush was cleared by contractors, sections were sold and within three years Kaponga was transformed from a speculative paper township into a lively settlement of homes, businesses, public institutions and utilities — the town becoming a vibrant centre of the district network. [Rollo Arnold, Settler Kaponga 1881-1914: A Frontier Fragment of the Western World. Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997, pp.122-125.]
Specific Provincial Towns in Literature

Contemporary depictions of several New Zealand provincial towns occurred in late-colonial verse and fiction, briefly documented here from south to north.

Invercargill received bad press from those who wrote about it. Dugald Fergusson commented on its "dreary" wide streets. The "stand-off" aspect arising from the distance of streets between the rows of houses, combined with the cold, bleak wind which sweeps along them and blows the dust all over the place gave him an unfriendly impression, and he comments that the cold streets of the rising town could be much beautified if the council planted their sides with trees. In 'The Song of the Rolling Stone', Hamilton Thompson humorously disparages Invercargill:

The town is like a barber's shop — you'll find it near the pole;  
And if you want a whisky there you'll need to pawn your soul.

It's too dry a town for me, chaps,  
Too dry a town for me;  
They pointed out their water tower,  
What good was that to me?

Invercargill someone told me, owned the gas lamp farthest south,  
I didn't care a straw for that, what struck me was the drought,  
For biggest thirsts and broadest streets in Maoriland it takes  
A rank in local wonders just a bit behind the Lakes.

Kathleen Inglewood describes picturesque Akaroa and the view from the steep streets of Lyttelton. The 1906 anthology contains poems by David McKee Wright on 'Nelson' and Clara Singer Poynter on 'Picton Harbour by Night'. In the North Island, Arthur Rees' *The Merry Marauders* (1913) provides a humorous view of a number of central small towns, seen through the eyes of a tipsy and accident-prone touring theatrical company. Hamilton Thompson's 'Vignettes' cover Wanganui, New Plymouth, Napier and Gisborne. In 'Devonport: A Few Remarks', E. L. Eyre comments humorously on the local attractions of his home town such as the football grounds, the Sunday gambling that take place in the scrub until the cop chases the players,

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56 Thompson, *Ballads about Business and Back-Block Life*. pp.89-95.
60 Thompson, *Ballads about Business and Back-Block Life*. pp.116-118.
the recreation grounds where couples go, the appalling local band and the township's insufficient two pubs, concluding Devonport is the finest spot in the country... despite the band. Finally Jane Mander's *The Strange Attraction* (1923) describes Dargaville, an accurate and often critical picture of the emerging northern town and surrounds, set against the atmosphere and activity of the local pub, newspaper office and an election campaign.

Overall late-colonial depictions of urban and provincial town New Zealand are sparse and all too brief. Rural settings dominated literature. Some reasons for this pastoral preference in the face of urban and suburban residential reality are discussed in the following section.

The Rural Myth in Literature.

"It had always seemed to him as though people and politicians in the cities were playing a great game, and as if the only real life were lived in the back-blocks and on the farms...." This sentiment seems to express the popular attitude of New Zealand late-colonial writers in their depictions of the nation, where the literature was overwhelmingly rural and depiction of cities sparse, inadequate and strangely ethereal. This cultural phenomenon was by no means confined to New Zealand — Raymond Williams discusses how British society was rapidly transformed from rural to predominantly urban-dwelling with little dependence on domestic agriculture, stating:

For it is a critical fact that in and through these transforming experiences English attitudes to the country, and to ideas of rural life, persisted with extraordinary power, so that even after the society was predominantly urban its literature, for a generation, was still predominantly rural; and even in the twentieth century, in an urban and industrial land, forms of the older ideas and experiences still remarkably persist.

The British rural myth was transported to New Zealand and owing to a number of social and environmental factors became firmly established here — well documented by Miles Fairburn, who analyses New Zealand's aversion to cities during the late colonial period and the entrenchment of the 'rural myth' in

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New Zealand society and legislation. Using some examples of late-colonial literature as evidence, Fairburn examines the imported moral visions which compiled a belief in the threatening forces associated with the city. After statistically examining the post-1890 transition from a rural to urban society, Fairburn states:

... the New Zealander was confronted with a terrible dilemma: his ethos was rigidly rural while his social structure became urban. Although he believed everything connected with the city was bad, it was there increasingly that he searched for security and opportunities. Urban employment fulfilled his material aspirations while rural life was the fulcrum of his values. His spiritual home was in the country whereas his physical nourishment came from the city. Under these stresses one would imagine that the New Zealander, like his American counterpart in a similar period, would have been forced to develop a city culture that fitted his urban social structure. The lesson of the American experience was that the power of the agrarian myth diminished under the pressure of urban realities.

What made the New Zealander unique, however, was that nothing like this happened. The myth remained intact because he forced urban realities to conform with his rural culture.

The rural myth in New Zealand was enforced by various social and legislative institutions. Fairburn attributes the prevalence of the rural myth to a number of sources, such as land and labour legislation, the promotion of closer settlement, education reforms, state housing and town planning. Hamer points to the anti-urban rhetoric of the Farmers' Union, directed at the evils of large cities, as a strong influence on politics. Olssen and Isaac discuss the vocalisation of the myth by the Department of Health and associated organisations during early twentieth century alarms over urban slum conditions in God's Own country. All of these institutions tapped into the contemporary assumption that poverty, filth and moral degeneracy were features exclusively of urban society. Rural society was thought to be virtuous, clean and morally upright. In reality many of the country's social problems were exacerbated in rural areas. In any case, according to the prevalent myth, sub-standard rural living conditions would doubtlessly be dismissed as the

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66 Ibid., pp.9-10.
69 See also Tom Brooking, 'Use it or Lose it: Unravelling the Land Debate in Late Nineteenth-Century New Zealand.' *NZJH*, 30, 1996, pp.141-163.
simple joys of a pioneer life close to Nature. Maori were ignored in this discourse.

According to Fairburn all these sources of the rural myth were directed at an Arcadian ideal, embodied in the small family farm and the suburban home and garden. Fairburn concludes the formation of the new urban frontier left the basic social assumptions of New Zealanders largely intact and unchanged. However, Fairburn also concludes that New Zealand’s failure to discard this rural spirit — a hangover from their British heritage — retarded the development of national identity; a statement which he supports by quoting Reeves’s *A Colonist in His Garden*. I disagree with Fairburn. As my research on the literature of national identity has shown, there was a gradual transition away from such Home-fixated works by a movement of writing in response to the New Zealand landscape, producing a rural literature and station verse that was the predecessor of the cultural nationalism that emerged in the literature of the 1930s. I would argue that the rural myth (and its portrayal in literature) was highly constructive in the development of a national identity.

Therefore, the primary reason for the lack of urban settings in literature can be attributed to a widespread social and cultural belief in the country as a rural Arcadia, promoted by the legislation of various governments. New Zealand was colonised on the vision of availability of land to migrants, a vision later upheld during the 1890s by the Liberal government with McKenzie’s breaking up of the great estates and the establishment of the New Zealand small family farm. When cities were associated with old world problems such as poverty, overcrowding and a wide range of social, political and moral ills, people must have seriously questioned if this was the way they wanted their country to develop. The pastoral myth was attractive enough to over-ride the rapidly increasing urban reality. It is interesting to observe the ways in which writers concurred with this rural ideal. For example the censuses show that between 1891-1921 employment on the land diminished (due to revolutions in farming), while urban occupations in areas such as commerce, finance, industry, the professions and public administration ballooned. However writers continued to solely portray rural workers — farmers, stockmen, rabbiters and bushmen — carving out a living by pitting themselves against the wilderness. The novelists celebrated the transformation of the landscape into productive prosperous farmland with thriving townships, new roads and railways supporting the frontier activity, but contradictorily failed to extend this

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78 Isaac and Osseen, 'The Justification for Labour's Housing Scheme: The Discourse of 'the Slum'' in Brookes, ed, At Home in New Zealand, pp.8-9.
transformation of the wilderness to the next logical development: urban growth. Jane Mander's Allen is excited about his part in the "procession of events in the transmutation of bushland into prosperous farms, of isolation into settlement, of lonely tracks into railway lines." Logically Allen is supportive of the same material progress that initiated the growth of the city, but for Allen the city is a place of restrictions and undesirable society. The portrayal of cities as squalid, morally corrupt and not a place of 'real work' is mentioned by many late-colonial writers and this anti-urban animosity will be examined in the following section.

Rural vs Urban.

In understanding the attitudes of New Zealanders towards their cities between 1890-1921, much can be gained from an examination of literature. Even when a novel makes a rare foray into an urban setting, it appears as if the authors are going out of their way to avoid any urban description, concentrating on the natural and garden aspects of the urban scene. As seen in the 'Dunedin' novels, in Louisa Baker's The Devil's Half Acre (1900) a brief glimpse of urban activity is soon superseded by the picturesque idyll of the Woodhaugh Valley mill house and parsonage by the Leith river, and in Arthur Adams's Tussock Land (1904) the majority of Dunedin action takes place in the natural setting of the Town Belt. Baker's A Daughter of the King (1894) opens in Christchurch city but the scene is that of a park, through which the Avon winds under the shadow of drooping willows, bird sing, flowers grow in a hundred beds and all is aglow with the sparkle and joy of summer life. Apart from the chiming of a deep-toned clock from its tower, we would not know we were in a city environment at all, and indeed soon the action is transported to Governors Bay — eight miles from Christchurch among the hills, where Florence grows up in an idealised hamlet or village complete with cottages, flower gardens, a rustic bridge spanning the brook and an old-fashioned churchyard. E. L. Eyre's poem 'Cambridge Town' best epitomises the attitude of New Zealanders to city living and lifestyle. Despite the title, the poem is actually situated five miles away from the township, in a 'sub-rural' paradise:

72 "Alien" (Louisa Alice Baker), A Daughter of the King. London: Hutchinson and Co, 1894, pp.11-12.
74 E. L. (Earnest Leonard) Eyre, Cuttin' Flax and Other Verses. Tauranga: C. F. Oliver, Printer, 1918, pp.18-19.
The breeze is in the clover, the birds sing in the boughs;
The sun-browned happy drover is droving lazy cows;
The lark is up in cloud-land; his joyful song we hear
Across the newly-ploughed land; it fills our hearts with cheer.
The cities we are scorning; we shun all folk who frown
All on a summer's morning, five miles from Cambridge Town.

Eyre continues in this vein, describing how gay a farmer's life is as "we ride the long lanes down / In motor-car or buggy, five miles from Cambridge Town."
This is an explicit expression of Fairburn's sub-rural Arcadia ideal. The homesteads of Cambridge Town are deftly hidden among clumps of pines, not intruding on the landscape. Eyre concludes:

Go! Tell your narrow schemers who live in city lanes
To come and join the dreamers upon these hills and plains.
Give us no office dusty, no files upon the wall,
No ledgers dull and musty: the farm life suits us all.
The life we were intended to lead, is where the wide
Green fields are deftly blended with the bush-clad mountain side!...

The rural vs urban debate in literature ranged from implicit reference to open anti-urban hostility, but it was all one-sided: overwhelmingly writers preferred rural environments over urban. Arthur Adams's *Tussock Land* (1904) plays off the romance between sheltered rural Aroha Grey and educated urbanite King Southern. King, waiting for Aroha on the platform of Dunedin railway station, avoids her when his friend comments on her countrified appearance: "She's prime dairy-fed, all right!... Just consigned from the back-blocks... she ought to have come in the frozen meat trucks." It takes half a lifetime and failure in urban Australia before King can realise his relationship with Aroha in the tussock-land wilderness. Louisa Baker's romances explore similar themes. *Wheat in the Ear* (1898) is set in the rural idyll of the Canterbury Plains near the Otira Gorge, where Joan grows up. Later she goes to Christchurch to be educated at Gerton college. Joan uniquely bridges both rural and urban environments; she loves the solitude, light and colour of the land as long as she can conditionally go back to town — she likes crowds. The rural-urban debate is played out between the two suitors who fall in love with Joan: the urban academic Professor Stanton and the rural handsome young station cadet David Aubrey (Joan watches him breaking in a filly). Joan chooses the Professor, but their marriage is un consummated (the inference being that city men are not only incapable of 'real work' but also impotent!). Joan pursues her academic

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career in the city and David turns up to one of her readings and symbolically throws her a spray of gorse. Eventually Joan's two rivals are trapped in a flood and the Professor drowns, enabling her to be reconciled with her rural lover. The pattern is reaffirmed in The Untold Half (1899) where the rural-urban suitors are represented by Max Hawthorne, "man of the mountains" and Wynn Winter, a famous urban artist. In Allen Adair (1925), according to Fairburn, Mander presents the view that human happiness is derived from a family haven in civilised nature. Fairburn also points out that the novel comments on women's ambiguous role in the taming of the wilderness:

On one side, as Allen, the hero discovers, the female presence ('the girl in blue waving from the front door') is essential to transform wild nature into the garden, for women symbolise that touch of homeliness which stems the lonely savagery of men when they live too close to the soil. On the other side, the female presence can tilt the life close to nature towards the artificial society represented by the city, as women are more inclined to 'fussiness' and the attractions of over-refinement than men. As the plot itself demonstrates, Allen's wife, Marion, is incapable of fitting into the spontaneous community, possesses little sensitivity to the beauty of nature, and longs only to take up her place in fashionable Auckland society, the expectation of which had first led her to marry Allen.

The rural-urban theme is explicit in Allen Adair. Allen knows he would never be contented in a city — indeed he has a real fear of going back to town: "... of being caught in its eternal evenings indoors, its insidious pressure towards human groupings that bored him to death, artificial groupings according to business or set, its feminine conspiracy about making men sociable, its petty obligations, its myriad ways of compressing a man and choking the air out of his lungs." Allen wants his children to grow up in the country — to be able to appreciate beauty. "The town was all very well. He liked it for short periods. It gave him the sense of contrast and glorified the country in comparison." Following his father's funeral, Allen is sickened at his female relatives scrambling for possessions: "All this he felt to be the work of the town upon the human spirit." He conceals the fact from Marion that he can afford to live in town. Allen is much happier with his simple country existence, possessions and (male) companionship, as he tells Dick Rossiter:

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78 Ibid, p.4.
'I can't stand the town,' said Allen defiantly. 'Can't breathe down there. The harbour's all right and all that, but the city itself, too small, too cliquey. It antagonises me... but this place... I feel religious in the country, good, when I'm riding about in it, can forget the things that hurt me... You know what I mean.'

The most vehement anti-urban assertions came from the Otago writers. G. B. Lancaster's *The Tracks We Tread* (1907) opens with a rejection of New Zealand's coastal towns, "where men talk with their kind from over-seas, and put their fingers, eagerly and very ignorantly, on the throb of the great world's pulse." The towns draw men from the inland into them, where they stay for a while until "the flutter and the drumbeat sicken them and their feet ache for the spring of the tussock again. So the saddle takes them back, and the pick, and the call of the sheep, and the tin-roofed townships, whither all roads set as wheel-spokes to the hub." Set on a back-country South Otago station, the novel celebrates the qualities of endurance and physical courage of the station men and especially their skill and pride in work: "No man bred in the streets and the sheltered ways may know the glorious merciless joy that follows the first sob of the blade into green unhandled timber." Lancaster conveys that the station men, working face to face with the wild environment in situations of extreme personal danger are closer to God and infinitely greater than mere town-dwellers.

In Hamilton Thompson's poem 'The Pleasures of the Uplands' a visitor to a rural township from the city questions how the inhabitants pass their time, when it seems there is nothing to see or do. The country townsman's reply to the ignorant urbanite, informing him of all the entertainment, activity and beautiful sights to be seen takes five stanzas:

But when a man gets used to it he'll never more abide
The haughty ways of city folk and all their empty pride;
And if he meets the stony glare of any city snob,
He'll barrack for the country town, I'm game to bet a bob.

Thompson's 'The Song of the Rolling Stone' is narrated by a Central Otago station man, who, tired of hills, tussocks and snow, packs his 'bluey' and travels down to Dunedin. However after walking round the asphalt till his feet are sore, lonely and sick of seeing unfamiliar unfriendly faces, he concludes:

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84 Ibid, p.89.
85 Thompson, *Ballads about Business and Back-Block Life*. pp.57-60.
City life is not for me, chaps,
The city's not for me;
It's all right for those who like it,
But it's not the place for me.

He and his mate decide they can't stand the city — "any more than could a sheep," so with a last epithetic "Bloomin' toffs in cuffs and collars / Well, they're not the sort for me," they decide to leave. The same anti-urban sentiments are found in David McKee Wright's verses. 'The Rabbiter' is a reply to a townsman who has sneered at his profession. Wright speaks of the healthy pleasures of an honest outdoor working life, concluding:

So you can do the talk and sneer — "a dirty savage life" —
There's clean-lived chaps among the men who wield the rabbit knife;
It isn't sun and mountain air that lead to sin and crime,
There's blackness in the city night, but not in morning rime;
And if you take them as a class the rabbiters will show
There's better feeling on the hills than in the town below.

'The Man from the Tussocks' tells of a back-blocks man who because of his honest country values and rural ingenuity has been a great success in the city, beating the urbanites at their own game. His talk is uncouth, but there isn't a smarter businessman in town, to the surprise of the smooth-tongued city men who think he's simple:

And sought as a friend — why, he's worth a dozen
Of any sample of smug town cousin;
For his heart has still got the country beat,
And his hand has the country clasp when you meet
(Blow, winds, blow!)
And there ain't his like to be found in the street.
(Give the boys of the tussocks a show!)  

Late-colonial literature consistently portrayed cities as dangerous, untrustworthy places. In Satchell's The Land of the Lost (1902) the city is the place of the "confidence man, the Spieler, the fille de joie, the predatory cabman." In E. L. Eyre's poem 'An Auckland Legend,' three men who think they will have an easy time mugging a new-in-town English swell have the

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86 Thompson, Ballads about Business and Back-Block Life, pp.89-95.
88 David McKee Wright, Wisps of Tussock: New Zealand Rhymes. Oamaru: Andrew Fraser, 1900, pp.24-25.
tables turned on them." Again, this fearful distrust of the city is one of the inherited literary traditions of the British rural-myth. Within the New Zealand late-colonial romances, the pattern is repeated again and again of the triangle between the honest man of the mountains or soil, the unspoiled country girl and the wicked sophisticated urbanite who seeks to corrupt her. In Isabel Peacocke's *The Guardian*, Gay goes to the city where her childish purity is tested by the attentions of an urban scoundrel, Dion Westaway — a married man who has abandoned his wife and seeks to make Gay his mistress. Similarly in Vogel's *A Maori Maid* the profligate town character Cyril tries to persuade Ngaia to leave the station and become his mistress:

'Say 'yes.' Once in Wellington, heigho for a long, bright life. Never mind the governor or anyone else. It's just a question of going off together quietly. You'd be able to live in town. You only vegetate here. Say you'll come, Ngaia, say you'll come."

Generally New Zealand cities were not considered desirable places to be. Poets within cities produced verses longing for the country. In M. C. Keane's 'Two Voices' the narrator in Christchurch is distracted by the call of two siren voices of the landscape — one West from the mountains, the other East from the beaches. He concludes miserably: "It is cold in this my city, and the music all is lost." Mary Colborne-Veel's "The Rainbow" is an even more interesting comment on the view of cities. In this quasi-religious poem Colborne-Veel writes she is weary of urban life:

Heart sick was I of all the storm and striving  
That marks the abode of sad humanity;  
The tiny strife for good, the sorrows riving,  
The unresful, care-thronged city by the sea.

She looks over the harbour to where the hills divide like gates to another life. Beyond them she can see the mountain peaks, pure and distant, but this only serves to remind her that "The muddy, trampled streets were all our knowing,  
/ And all fair pleasant things set far away." However a rainbow, God's message, bridges the rural-urban divide. Heaven is equated with the distant landscape, hell and painful earthly life with the city.

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"*Lyre, The Road to Maoriland and Other Verses.* pp.28-29.
"*Alexander and Currie, New Zealand Verse.* p.91.
The single voice of dissension to this glorification of the rural over the urban comes from E. L. Eyre in 'The Bush (From a Gumdigger's Point of View)." Eyre overturns the rural myth in literature by commenting:

Instead er writin' of ther town, er of ther local push,
Ain't it strange ther city poets mos'ly write about the bush?

His sardonic narrator exposes the realities of the glorious outdoor life the city poets praise. The only scenery is grey scrub, the "rivers rippling o'er their sandy bars" are muddy creeks, there are no glorious songbirds — just flies, and the "careless hearted" bushmen are gloomy, grumpy, broken, slow and alcoholic. He invites the city poets to come out and join him in the clay and scrub — "Fifteen miles from any homestead — twenty miles from any pub."

Eyre was by no means a conventional poet, writing on down-to-earth subjects such as rugby and the popular issues of the day. An unpretentious town-dweller, Eyre in his verse provides some of the most significant and illuminating views on the New Zealand rural-urban viewpoint. Five of his poems concern the country or wilderness as a place of recreation, a retreat from the pressures of town life. 'Camping Out' is introduced by a brief explanation of New Zealand's most popular pastime:

It is a common thing for Christchurch people to camp at Sumner or New Brighton, seaside resorts not far from the city, during the summertime, sleeping in their tents at night and returning to business in the daytime.

The poem is about "seven weary city men," revelling in their escape from the turmoil of the town on a camping holiday:

And then, our breakfast o'er, it's aboard and travel down —
Leaving tents securely fastened — by an early tram to town;
For we cannot shirk our duties that within the city lie,
'Mid the rumble of the traffic — tramp of people passing by!
Ah, the dreary streets and dusty — they are hateful to us all;
All day long across the office soft sea-voices seem to call;
Scene through window: brown verandah, sparrows
  fighting in the spout —
But nightfall finds us once again at Sumner — camping out.

In the Waitakerei Ranges begins by describing the narrator's view from a rise in a kauri forest:

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2. Ibid, pp.41-44.
But twenty miles east is a large busy town
Where people uneasily move up and down
Shuffling all day in the dust and the heat,
Cooped in by brick buildings, the slaves of the street;
The tired, toiling people — but say, what am I?

I fancy I catch in the breeze a reply:
"You are just a town man from the same Auckland side,
And you’re out on the range for a holiday ride."

Yes, breeze you are right; I’m a trespasser here,
But I love your fair bushland, the air is so clear;
There are no dusty alleys to choke one with smoke,
So pray, for awhile let me join the bush folk,
To learn, as the scenes all around me I scan,
How mighty is Nature, how puny is Man,—
How the dusk-shades are weaved with a hand that is deft
Ere I turn back again to the world I have left.

’In the Bush,’77 ‘Ploughin,‘98 and ’The Lone Grey Water‘99 contain similar sentiments; cities are associated with dust, smoke, crowds and uproar, while the country provides a preferable recreational retreat if one is not lucky enough to work there, although the latter poem recognises that writers must work in the towns to make a living.

The Greater Urban View.

When it was necessary for New Zealand late-colonial writers to use an urban setting they invariably chose an Australian city as their preferred destination. In Mr Obseba’s Last Discovery (1904), George Bell, never one to stint on praise of New Zealand in his socialist commentary, looked towards Australia for an urban model. In Mr Oseba’s lecture on the nations of the world in search of a utopia:

He dwelt with evident pleasure upon the development of the cities of the continental colonies as splendid centres of wealth and population.

In describing Australasian cities, he declared that Sydney was the most beautiful city on earth, having a society which, for culture and character, equalled those of any other country.100

Lyre, Future Times and Other Rhymes, p. 54.
Lyre, The Road to Maoriland and Other Verses, pp. 22-23.
Lyre, Cuttin’ Flax and Other Verses, p. 28.
The cities of Australia were the obvious choice of urban setting for New Zealand late-colonial writers, being easily accessible, centres of culture which were well-known by many New Zealand writers, new enough and sufficiently geographically distant to be free from the perceived urban problems of Britain and the old world. In Arthur Adams' *Tussock Land*, King is determined to go to Sydney to pursue his artistic career; New Zealand has nothing to offer him. Aroha's argument that the cathedrals of the New Zealand bush are more beautiful than the buildings of Europe goes unheard. In Louisa Baker's *Another Woman's Territory*, Howard Grey goes to Melbourne to become a successful novelist, likewise in *A Daughter of the King* the action shifts to Melbourne. Such views perhaps reflect the difficulties experienced by late colonial New Zealand writers — the country was too new, too small to support a full time living from writing or painting, lacking an (urban) intelligentsia or audience, too focused on work to pay attention to culture, lacking reputable local publishing outlets until the 1930s. Australia provided what New Zealand lacked, and Adams and many other writers crossed the Tasman.

The characters who go to Australian cities do not necessarily fulfil their ambitions there. Adams' and Baker's characters all undergo setbacks, failure and much personal torment in Australia (although this is to be expected of the melodramatic genre) and plots return to the New Zealand wilderness for resolution. Australian cities in New Zealand literature were generally depicted in two ways — positively as centres of culture and negatively as the corrupt metropolis. Grossmann's Sydney in *Angela* is the best example of the corrupt metropolis. Louisa Baker's attitude to Australian cities is more ambivalent, combining both positive and negative virtues. In *A Daughter of the King* Florence and Ralph visit Melbourne prisons, asylums and a Chinese opium den, yet Baker's Melbourne is neither good nor bad. Florence's 'investigations' into the seamy side of urban life are concerned with the quest for the source of women's power. Obviously the depiction of women in Chinese opium dens in New Zealand cities could not be tolerated in literature, yet conversely Baker's characters all must make the move to Australian cities to achieve the artistic fulfilment and success that cannot be found in New Zealand. The cultural and social benefits of urban environments came at the cost of undesirable urban evils.

Therefore the New Zealand rural-myth view was responsible for an overseas urban preference, leading writers to avoid domestic urban environments. Other reasons may have been that there was a feeling New

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Zealand cities were lacking in character compared to greater established overseas metropolises; that overseas cities would provide a more exotic or romantic setting for literature. The Four Queens' section of this chapter shows that New Zealand cities did have identifiable civic characters or personalities. New Zealand's seaside cities were popularly acknowledged as beautiful, but were regarded as nothing in comparison with the capitals of Australia and Britain in architecture, culture or society. It was the town vs country conflict repeated on an international scale, where this time New Zealand was like Adams' pretty but embarrassing provincial girl from the back-blocks. Hamilton Thompson's 'The Song of the Rolling Stone' makes fun of the major New Zealand cities, while Frank Morton's 'Troilets Made in Maoriland' is a more biting attack on a number of Southern cities and provincial towns — including Invercargill: "The chins and skies and scowls are black...", Balclutha: "Dear Lord! that train is never coming!", Dunedin: "There is (alas!) no hope for me/ No sky shines through these clouds appalling!" and Oamaru: "They've scattered tracts and banished beer / And drenched the town with melancholy." New Zealand writers, mainly being published and read overseas, tactfully chose not to overly laud their cities, rather to focus on the natural landscapes that made their country unique and attractive.

English urban environments, or the human products of them, are treated very differently in New Zealand late-colonial literature. The theme of English urban civilisation vs wild rural New Zealand was played out in a number of novels. In Grossmann's The Heart of the Bush (1910) Adelaide has to choose between Mr Horace Brandon (representing London and English civilisation) and Dennis MacDiarmid, a New Zealand bushman. Similarly in Vogel's The Tragedy of a Flirtation (1909) the theme can be seen in the incompatible romance between the British society-figure Lulu and Alec the bushman. Makgill's Blacklaw (1914) explores the negative effects of displacement from Britain and a back-blocks colonial upbringing. In Musgrave's Myola (1917), the superficiality and moral corruptness of British upper-class society is exposed. Generally the cities of Britain conveniently provided New Zealand late-colonial literature with a supply of humorously superficial characters or morally-corrupt villains; the purity of the rural New Zealand landscape wins out every time. As seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the New Zealand landscape can be viewed as the antithesis to (British) civilisation. The New Zealand wilderness is a challenging beautiful but hostile environment, against which the migrant or 'new chum' must prove his

"Thompson, Ballads about Business and Back-Block Life. pp.89-95.
or her worth. Morally-corrupt villains associated with urban environments perish under the landscape's natural retribution, with drownings and bushfires. Those who prove themselves worthy in the transformative struggle with the wilderness are rewarded with love, prosperity and the right to call themselves New Zealanders if they so choose.

Conclusion: The New Zealand Rural-Urban Paradox.

The treatment of urban environments in late colonial New Zealand literature is problematic. New Zealand inherited the rural-urban literary myth from Britain, but in the colonist's efforts to create a better Britain through both social and environmental reconstruction the myth became more deeply entrenched. The popular portrayal of the myth in literature (e.g. urban animosity in station verse) can be seen as a measure of the colonist's success in creating a pastoral paradise. On the other hand New Zealand strongly identified itself as part of the Empire — this meant that many would naturally and unquestioningly view New Zealand's cities as inferior to those of Home and in particular London as seat of the Empire, others would regard New Zealand's cities as ports of the Empire, but not as individual cities in their own right. So paradoxically New Zealand was proud of the new free and independent cities it had worked to create, but on the other hand these cities were seen as culturally inferior to those of the old world. These complications meant that late-colonial writers had to adjust the literary conventions of the rural-urban discourse in order to fit it to the New Zealand context. Raymond Williams states of the traditional rural-urban discourse:

> On the actual settlements, which in the real history have been astonishingly varied, powerful feelings have been generalised. On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication light. Powerful hostile associations have developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times.\(^{104}\)

Yet in New Zealand literature, the desirable urban centre of learning, education and light is generally overseas (Louisa Baker's *Wheat in the Ear*, where Joan goes to Christchurch to pursue academia, is the exception). New Zealand literature

\(^{104}\) Williams, *The Country and the City*, p.9.
had to ignore the positive connotations of the city and concentrated on the hostile associations. The social and environmental engineers in the process of creating New Zealand desired a pastoral Arcadia based on the family small farm. Cities were too closely associated with the problems of the old world to be the focus of New Zealand's idealised future. Thus the literature of the late colonial period overwhelmingly ignored urban environments in exchange for the portrayal of rural settings, except to disparage urban-dwellers as part of the anti-urban discourse. This explains the paucity of urban environmental description in New Zealand late colonial literature. However, out of the urban material we have, it is possible to categorise three ways which were acceptable discourses for writers to portray urban environments:

(a) the provincial
(b) the garden city
(c) civic convention

'The provincial' refers to the depiction of small-township rural New Zealand that was the common setting of many late-colonial novels. These townships were sufficiently familiar and characteristically indigenous to allow them to be used as a colourful setting. Depictions of the rural township also allowed the expression of national pride, through recognition of the transformative work that had gone into their development, and promotion of a prosperous future.

The 'garden city' formula can be seen in a number of the depictions of cities, whereby urban description is avoided in favour of natural and garden settings. This arises from the suburban planning movement in New Zealand that was a reaction to urban expansion. Fairburn states the myth remained intact because New Zealand forced urban realities to conform with rural culture. With the economic failure of the small family farm vision and the rise of an expanding city economy, the city architects and state housing legislators achieved a compromise – the concept of the garden suburb. Thus city working families could enjoy the escape of practical affordable homes and quarter acre sections, aesthetically graced with lawns, hedges and trees. Thus New Zealand largely avoided unsightly urban multi-unit housing and overcrowded high-rise blocks. In the literary depictions of the cities the action invariably takes place against a background of natural beauty, in city parks or reserves (e.g. Weston's Auckland Domain or Mount Eden, Adams's Dunedin

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Town Belt), often on the outskirts of or overlooking the city, which itself is only a superficial background. Christchurch, with its imitative British parkland appearance, came in for special praise from the writers, while Wellington, perceived as poorly planned, incurred their censure.

Finally in describing urban landscapes, writers overwhelmingly resorted to traditional 'civic' conventions. This is best seen in the poetry relating to the four main centres, Adams's 'Queens.' Faced with the problems of the urban discourse, New Zealand writers almost universally resorted to the clichés of Victorian civic convention, avoiding at all costs the realistic-naturalistic conventions that were dominating British and American depictions of urban landscapes in the period. This choice probably related to civic pride, a sense of progress and a disinclination to see the urban world as a causative environment (as is implicit in realism and explicit in naturalism). One characteristic of the civic convention is the personification of the cities as women, usually queens. Such a convention precludes much urban detail and ensures praise (unless the poet is going to write of an ugly women — depictions of Wellington do not go this far, although the 'Wellington Queen' is certainly more striking than the others). A good example of civic pride occurs in Bracken's poem 'Jubilee Day'. The poem contains all the grandiose sentiments of the period — ocean queens, sleeping virgins and 'the British banner and the Starry Cross.' Wellington is praised for its wealth, commerce and its "transformation grand!" on the landscape. Auckland comes in for a full page of extravagant but essentially meaningless praise: 'Freedom has few such homes upon the earth / Oh, lovely city of the sunny isles." Christchurch rhymes "English lanes" and "City of the fertile plains," while Dunedin, "Stately city of the hills," is honoured as a centre of craft, commerce, industry, trade and abundance. Another Bracken poem, 'The Emigrant's Welcome,' repeats another common message of civic pride: the absence of Old World urban ills:

No wretched dens, nor crowded lanes,  
Where squalid starvelings hide,  
Disgrace our pure untainted plains  
The road to wealth is wide.

John A. Lee's description of 1890s Dunedin in *Children of the Poor* is a radical comparison with Bracken's Dunedin, but Lee was writing from the 1930s when the depression disillusionment encouraged the use of realist conventions.

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Lee describes the slums in detail and moralises on the detrimental effects of the urban environment on their inhabitants.

While New Zealand writers were stuck in confining traditional 'civic' conventions, British and American writers were producing a very different urban realistic-naturalistic convention. Typical examples Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896), Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900). These novels are a depressing predictable succession of urban squalor, poverty, alcoholism and petty crime. During the 1930s Sargeson and Mulgan used realist conventions to depict New Zealand towns as constrictive and uninspiring. But New Zealand did not produce an urban social problem comparative to the depressiveness of the overseas realist urban literature until 1960, with Noel Hilliard's *Maori Girl*.

In conclusion, portrayals of urban landscapes in New Zealand late colonial literature were problematic. The unspecific treatment of urban landscapes related to the urban myth in a somewhat paradoxical way: on one hand national pride insisted that New Zealand had cities of worth (thus the 'queens' convention), but on the other hand the rural myth insisted that rural life was superior — thus the full, somewhat Arcadian descriptions of rural life. In the context of national pride in progress, the cities were praised, but in generalised terms, and often within acceptable images (e.g. the garden city). In the context of the rural myth, the countryside was strongly and favourably contrasted to the city. Then, in a different provinces vs. metropolis context, New Zealand cities were seen as small in contrast to Sydney, Melbourne or London. However this contrast could cut the other way when rural New Zealanders were contrasted to corrupt city-dwellers. Writers trod a fine line in adapting the generalised rural myth to fit the New Zealand context, yet at the same time being consistent with the ruling New Zealand myth of progress. A division is apparent in the treatment of the rural-urban discourse. Firstly there are writers who use the rural myth in a way not essentially different from the English (or even the classical – see Horace) pastoral way, with a generalised country life = good vs. city life = bad contrast. This is implicit in most of the melodramatic romance novels and explicit in the station verse. Secondly, there are writers like Mander, Adams and Lancaster, who develop the contrast to frontier vs. city, glorifying not rural retirement and simplicity so much as rural effort, the character-forming battle to transform nature and build a new pastoral society. Perhaps this second group of writers are closer to American than English models, with much in common with frontier writers like Willa Cather or Hamlin Garland. This discourse was influential and lasting, and a conscious
attempt to subvert it did not occur until David Ballantyne's *The Last Pioneer* (1963).
FIGURE 16: Main street, Taihape, 1894.
A developing bush township, as portrayed in John Bell's *In the Shadow of the Bush*, 1899.
[Alexander Turnbull Library.]
FIGURE 17: Taihape by 1911.
Showing the rapid development of the township, from the one-street bush township of the previous photograph. A railway, post office, hotel and various businesses are identifiable. The bush has retreated and the area is a successful dairying region.

[Frederick George Radcliffe Collection: Alexander Turnbull Library.]
CHAPTER 8.

COLONIAL COMPARISON: ENVIRONMENTAL LITERATURE OF NEW ZEALAND, AUSTRALIA AND CANADA.
COLONIAL COMPARISON: ENVIRONMENTAL LITERATURE OF NEW ZEALAND, AUSTRALIA AND CANADA.

Introduction.

This chapter is a comparison of New Zealand’s late colonial literature with that of Australia and Canada – the two colonial nations which share the most evident similarities with New Zealand – in terms of an assessment of the effectiveness of their environmental literatures. Some immediate questions arise. How did different environments produce different focuses in or modes of literature? Were Australians and Canadians aware of the process of transformation and did they celebrate it in the same way as New Zealanders? Did Australia and Canada produce a literary documentary of environmental transformation of the calibre of Mander, Bell or Satchell?

New Zealand environmental literature of 1890-1920 resembled Australian and Canadian environmental writing of the time in sharing several large value frames and goals common to white settlers in the British Empire. There were a number of general similarities between the three countries. All three were colonial nations with frontier landscapes – New Zealand’s and Australia’s frontiers to be found internally, Canada’s to the North. During the period 1890-1920 these frontiers were pushed back by pastoralism and settlement, all three countries undergoing major environmental transformations. Attitudes to indigenous peoples of all the countries were ambivalent in the face of this progressive expansion. All three countries shared remarkably similar literary records, with common styles, themes, myths and genres. During the period all three countries made the complicated transition from Victorian modes of literature to new forms and themes, often by a new wave of native-born rather than exiled writers, who found new vernacular language in which to express their national individuality.

Other countries with comparative possibilities for such a study have been rejected for a variety of reasons. South Africa, a colony which shared a similar mass agricultural transformation, was not a white settler society like New Zealand, Australia and Canada. The United States is eminently suitable for comparison in terms of environmental transformation and literature – this can be seen in the concepts introduced in Henry Nash Smith’s study of the American agrarian myth and its growth and modification in literature in *Virgin*
However, the United States was neither part of the British Empire, nor was its settlement applicable in timeframe. As seen in the theory section of my general Introduction, work has already been done on American environmental literature, although little on that of other countries. I felt there was a genuine need for a comparative study of colonial themes in environmental literature. New Zealand, Australia and Canada, with their broad similarities and little explicit research existing on the topic, were the obvious choices.

However there are also certain significant geographical and social differences between the three countries. The most obvious difference is size. Australia and Canada have what can be described as hostile landscapes in comparison with New Zealand's. Climate was an important concern for Australian and Canadian settlers – every Canadian winter was a major potential disaster – while New Zealand's advance was comparatively uninterrupted by ecological and environmental disasters. Canadian literature was strongly regionalised. Australia developed a definitive urban literature, while New Zealand lacked a major metropolitan centre. Australia and Canada both aggressively promoted the creation of a national literature, while New Zealand's interestingly developed naturally, independently and over a comparable period of time. What departures these differences encouraged in the individual environmental literatures of the three colonies will become apparent in this chapter.

Common Colonial Concepts.

The stages that poets went through in establishing, defining and assimilating their cultures and landscapes were remarkably consistent between the three countries. Take the Introduction to an 1889 Canadian anthology, *Songs of the Great Dominion*:

The poets whose songs fill this book are voices cheerful with the consciousness of young might, public wealth, and heroism. Through them... you may catch something of the great Niagara falling, of brown rivers rushing with foam, of the crack of the rifle in the haunts of the moose and caribou, the lament of the vanishing races singing their death-song as they are swept on to the cataract of oblivion, the rural sounds of Arcadias just rescued from the wildernesses by the axe....

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tone of them is courage; – for to hunt, to fight, to hew out a farm, one must be a man!... Canadians are... the descendants of armies, officers and men, and every generation of them has stood up to battle....

Canada, Eldest Daughter of the Empire, is the Empire's complettest type?

The extract illustrates perfectly a period of national consciousness – the distinctiveness of the Canadian landscape expressed in the picturesque landscape poem, the dying-native theory, patriotic pride in the masculine transformation of the landscape by pioneers, but still viewing the nation as part of the Empire. The sentiment of the Introduction, with its formulaic rhetoric, is completely interchangeable with and identical to that of Alexander and Currie's 1906 New Zealand Verse anthology, and every Australian anthology of the period.

New Zealand, Australia and Canada shared similar trends in the literature, especially poetry, their writers produced. The colonies were settled by displaced persons who brought their language and preconceptions with them. Not surprisingly, the poetry they initially wrote was not startlingly original or innovative. Much poetry of the three countries was retrospective, as settler poets nostalgically reproduced the poetic conventions of their childhood. Ken Goodwin states of Australian literature:

'Writing in Australia obviously began as a literature metaphorically in chains, the shackles of British expectations of what a colony and its writing should be. New South Wales was a colony founded before the Romantic revival had made an impact in Britain, and it is not surprising that in modes of writing, as well as architecture, the new colony clung to eighteenth-century Georgian models long after they had fallen out of fashion in Britain.'

Within all three countries, much early verse has often been dismissed on the assumption that they contribute nothing to the development of a national consciousness. Of course, criticising colonial poets for modeling their work on great English poets such as Tennyson instead of conveniently meeting the requirements of a nationalist agenda is ridiculous. It is true that much of the colonial verse of the nineteenth century was mediocre and that early

William Douw Lighthall, ed, Songs of the Great Dominion: voices from the forests and waters, the settlements and cities of Canada. London: Walter Scott, 1889, xxi. This anthology was part of the 'Canterbury Poets' series which included Alexander and Currie's New Zealand Verse.

Leonie Kramer states:

There is no reason to suppose they would have written better in a different cultural environment. There is no reason why exile, or a sense of dislocation or of being alien should not produce good poetry; indeed one of the curious features of the colonial period is its failure to deal adequately with such subjects.4

However, the colonial writers who wrote on Victorian themes were simply producing what a majority of the national consciousness demanded at the time, expressing sentiments they considered appropriate to the occasion. Reading the verse and books in the spirit which they were written their contemporary readers judged them differently. If all early Australian, Canadian and New Zealand poets had restricted themselves to the subjects of landscape and environment, their work would have been so severely limited in range as to restrict interest in their work to all but a handful of patriots. The point was well made in 1895 by an Australian, E. A. Badham, who commented on calls for the sole usage of the popular vernacular in Australian literature: "we should, no doubt, considerably hasten the birth of our National Literature, and when it came it would have the further advantage of being distinctly Australian for the Australians, for it is quite certain that no civilised nation would condescend to notice its existence."5 All literature has value of some sort, one needs to look beyond the quality of the verse to the cultural message within. As Margaret Atwood states:

Those who do not like Victorian poetry will not like Canadian Victorian poetry any better; but those prepared to accept its conventions may find much to interest them. Through it they may observe a culture in the process of establishing and defining itself, assimilating a landscape that at first seems alien to it.6

Canada and Australia, with their greater populations, were much more prolific producers of literature than New Zealand – for example between 1880 to 1920 more than 400 Canadians published over 1400 volumes of literature.7 As in New Zealand, in Australia and Canada knowledge of the fiction of these years has become fragmentary. Only two-thirds of the Canadian fiction

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5 E. A. Badham, 'An Australian School of Literature'. Cosmos. April 30, 1895, p.417.  
published in these years is available in Canadian or American libraries, with a similar situation in Australia; New Zealand with its Hocken and Alexander Turnbull collections has a better record of preservation. The reasons for this loss of literature are partly because with the passing of time almost all of the literature has disappeared from library shelves and partly because literary historians judging by contemporary standards in university departments of English have dismissed all but one or two books as less than first-rate. Multinational takeovers of Australian publishing companies have made it difficult to obtain earlier texts, even of established classics. However there have been recent moves by universities and libraries to place many out-of-copyright Australian and Canadian works on the internet.

As in New Zealand, from 1890 there was a wave of fiction in Australia and Canada, produced by a generation of native-born rather than migrant writers. During this period writers created images of life that still linger in the literature of their respective countries, and still persist abroad. Between them, the three countries were extremely literate, with Canadian and Australian book consumption estimated to have been the highest in the world. The period produced a climate favourable to writers. Literature was cheap and widely available in a variety of sources, such as daily and weekly newspapers, literary journals, magazines, periodicals and books, providing the turn of the century colonial reader with poems, short stories, sketches, romances, serialisations and novels. New Zealand and Australia were being fed by the vast literary British market, while Canada was being fed by both British and American sources. Much colonial literature was published overseas.

Colonial literary tastes were similar too. There was a strong vein of sentimental and sensational melodrama running through the fiction of all three countries. The social problem novel was widely written and read, with themes such as religion and temperance common. An international popularity for historical romance fiction inspired colonial writers to romanticise their pioneer periods or indigenous peoples. Canadians especially possessed a strong appetite for local colour or regional fiction. The rural myth prevailed in the literature of all three countries, although Australia and Canada developed a distinct urban literature to counter the myth. The most striking phenomenon of the period was the popularity of short fiction, especially in Australia and Canada, resulting from demand from turn of the century magazines. The *Bulletin* firmly established the Australian short story tradition. Gordon Roper comments on how the qualities of the short story form – emphasis upon

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situation, action, static character and atmosphere – predominated in Canadian long fiction.9

W. H. New’s comparative study of Canadian and New Zealand short fiction, *Dreams of Speech and Violence*, outlines similarities in the short story form of the two countries:

Nowhere else within the Commonwealth have the major English-language prose writers been so consistently drawn to write in the genre; nowhere else has the novel featured so tangentially (until recently) among the major fictional accomplishments.10

In order to explain the preference of the short story within Canada and New Zealand, New examines the similarities of the challenge that writers in the two countries faced. Both societies saw themselves in terms that derived from elsewhere: “Celebrating their own roots, they simultaneously have felt ‘marginalised’ by the culturally powerful presence of their British heritage and their nearest neighbour (the United States, Australia).”11 During the period newspapers and magazines were popular outlets for publication, with Canadians publishing in American magazines and New Zealanders in Australian ones. Both Canada and New Zealand were in the process of shaping a politically and culturally united society out of trading post and agricultural economies. In both societies a stable and upwardly-aspiring, largely Protestant, deeply Scots-influenced middle class was setting up the mores of the New World. In both countries educated women were influential on the literary scene during the nineteenth century. By the 1890s, when Duncan Campbell Scott and Katherine Mansfield (important early shapers of the short story in each society), were producing their first books and sketches, there was already a substantial body of writing and a growing local tradition behind them. The type of prose being attempted in Canada and New Zealand also showed similar patterns – most popular were romantic fictions set in local landscapes (often a cross between the authentic and the stereotypical, depending on the author’s experience). Much of the literature was intended for a ‘home’ audience, rather than a local one.12 At the same time as writers were seeking an appropriate literary form for the stories they wanted to tell, there was a determined effort in both societies to find a literary means of coming to terms with the specifics of the local experience:

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10 Ibid, Preface, ix.
11 Ibid, p.20.
Initially it was a matter of faithfully recording the empirical facts of the environment, and the efforts for a long time were substantially the same in both places, so that with the exception of details (Indian or Maori, maple or pohutukawa, moose or kiwi, the trapline or the sheep station, the bush or the backblocks) the writing could exchange places without altering particularly in texture. Yet by World War 1, the two cultures – and the two literatures – would be markedly different, and writers had by then begun to document the nuances of voice and attitude that were to mark their separateness as a culture as well as to record the specifics of flora and fauna that marked their separateness of territory.

The literary activity of the turn of the century was not sustained in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, largely dying out around the time of the First World War. It was not until the mid 1930s and 1940s that concentrated activity comparable with that at the end of the nineteenth century occurred in all three countries. James Belich attributes the condition in New Zealand literature c.1900-1930 to ‘recolonisation’ – an early twentieth century taming down of late nineteenth century proto-nationalism. Perhaps the early flowering of literature was the fulfillment of an early hope, rather than the herald of a long summer.

Vernacular Writing.

Australia shared a modified pastoral landscape with New Zealand. As the landscape underwent enormous transformative changes, as in the Wild West of America there had to be a language and a myth to describe that process. With a new sense of belonging, there was a new need for a new vocabulary to fit the landscape. The words that had been used to describe the husbanded English countryside were neither adequate nor accurate for the Australian wilderness. The scale of things was different; as in New Zealand new terminologies were needed to describe landscapes and farming. Vernacular language was central for the bush balladists, but the use of the vernacular in Australian literature developed considerably earlier than elsewhere in white settler colonies. Within a couple of generations of settlement, returning Australians in London were noticeable for their differences – in attitude, physique and above all speech.

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13 New, Dreams of Speech and Violence, p.21.
Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* (1888, serialised in the *Sydney Mail* 1882-3) was not only significant as an exciting bestseller, but for Boldrewood's pioneering use of a colloquial first person narrator, and the Australian vernacular as a literary style. As Frank Sargeson pointed out, Boldrewood did this a year or two before Mark Twain published *Huckleberry Finn* (1884).16

In Canada the best examples of use of a deliberate vernacular are found in the poems of Robert Service. *In Songs of Sourdough* (1907), *The Spell of the Yukon* (1907), *Ballads of a Cheechako* (1909), *Rhymes of a Rolling Stone* (1912) and many subsequent volumes, Service mastered the art of combining a gruff voice with a streak of sentiment in a series of fantasies about Northern life. There was a French-Canadian dialect tradition, employed by Quebec writers such as William Henry Drummond. Canada also shared a Scottish dialect body of literature with New Zealand.17

### Rural Myths and Urban Literature.

Australia and Canada share with New Zealand literature a strong rural myth – their literatures depicted a rural culture, while urbanism was the reality for the greater part of the population. However Australia and Canada went on to develop distinctive traditions of urban literature, while New Zealand retained the myth.

The development of the Australian 'bush spirit' and its relation to national identity has been well documented in Russel Ward's influential *The Australian Legend* (1958) and many subsequent works.18 In Australia, rather than matching the geographical and demographic development of the nation, literature evolved in exactly the opposite way, with the bush ethos developing before urban writing established itself as the major force. As a result, the Australian landscape and its literature have had profound effects on the urban imagination, to the present.19 As in New Zealand, a large number of Australian 'bush' writers were urban-dwellers, even though Australia has always had an

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urban literature genre. The success of large agricultural, pastoral and mineral ventures enabled substantial numbers of Australians to become urbanised. As a result, from the latter part of the nineteenth century onwards, Australian literature has reflected an opposition between the interests of country and city-dwellers. The expression 'Sydney and the Bush' is a product of urban preference for the easier life of a city and contempt for the discomforts and lack of pastimes in the bush.

Likewise in Canada, because many city groups shared an agrarian vision or rural imagination, their writing did not initially represent the world in which most Canadians lived. However, W. H. New points out that during the period the most forceful checks on misrepresenting or mythologising Canadian society came from Canadian urban writing: "... it was from Canadian urban writing, from works concerned with woman's status in society, from satiric writing, from philosophic challenges to the romantic ideal of progress and from criticism of the clerical establishment, that the most forceful checks on literary sentimentalism derived."

'Australasian' writing.

Much early New Zealand literature was classified as 'Australasian.' The Sydney Bulletin, founded in 1880, assumed the role of patron to New Zealand literature under the editorship of various expatriate New Zealanders such as Arthur Adams. Some ten percent of its content in the 1890s, including 150 short stories, was contributed by New Zealanders. A popular anthology *Australian Ballads and Other Poems* (1890) contained a number of New Zealand poems. The editor Douglas B. W. Sladen explained that although the New Zealand poets were not native born Australians they were household names in Australia. He praised several of them as very high-class, in particular "Austral" (Mrs J. G. Wilson), Domett, Thomas Bracken, Alexander Bathgate, J. L. Kelly and Mary Colborne-

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Many of these poets published in the journal with the significant name *The Australasian*. Likewise in the introduction to Thomas Bracken’s *Musings in Maoriland* (1890), Sir Robert Stout classified New Zealand poetry as Australasian, listing poets who were predominantly Australian. Stout rated Bracken as an Australasian, having lived in both Victoria and New Zealand.\(^{25}\) After the key date of Australian Federation in 1901, however, the Tasman world began to split in literature as in everything else. The 4000 poems and 700 short stories published by New Zealanders in the *Bulletin* fell out of New Zealand literary history.\(^{26}\) This early closeness resulted in New Zealand literature sharing many of the themes and myths of Australian literature. Australian bush ballads provided a model for New Zealand station verse, and several writers attempted to emulate Lawson and Paterson’s famous contrived *Bulletin* debate in the poetry columns of the *Otago Witness*.

**Australian Identity and Literature.**

A sense of Australian national identity was called for from the 1890s. H. M. Green’s *History of Australian Literature* (1961) labelled the period 1890-1923 as one of ‘self-conscious nationalism’\(^ {27}\) – reflecting the then current emphasis on the 1890s as the period when Australian literature changed from being a colonial to a truly national one. Fiction writers began to depart from generic conventions of romance and melodrama and from the construction of the reader as essentially a British consumer looking for exotic and colourful tales of the colonies. Writers like Henry Lawson, Miles Franklin and Joseph Furphy were more interested in depicting what was ‘Australian’ from an insider’s point of view. The Australian landscape and ideas about the Australian national character moved to the foreground in fiction around the turn of the century.\(^ {28}\) Interventionist publishers such as A. G. Stephens played an important role in promoting writers whose work addressed more overtly the issues around


nationhood. The Bulletin came to be identified with Australian nationalistic poetry and fiction. The bush was the best source of a characteristic Australian individuality and the literature of the Bulletin popularised and often romanticised bush life. Suzanne Falkiner states:

In the 1890s the Bulletin was Australia's most significant literary journal. It encouraged a sense of nationalism, along with cultural chauvinism, by encouraging its contributors to dispense with European models of writing. This was in line with its political stance: support for republicanism, a democratic franchise, land taxation, state education and penal reform, as well as less attractive nationalistic impulses such as isolationism and racism against non-whites. The journal was a cradle for the bush ethos.

The Bulletin was hugely influential, with a circulation that increased from 10,000 in 1880 to a peak of 80,000 in the 1890s. It was founded at the time when the Australian population was predominantly urban (to a much greater extent than England or America), but much of its fiction as well as tone was set in the bush, and this caused it to be known as 'the bushman's bible'. Despite the fact that more than two thirds of the population lived in urban areas, the popular view of the way of life in the bush represented by writers such as Paterson and Lawson was held to be the same attributes that defined the typical Australian.

Of course it is misleading to say that overnight around 1890 Australian literature moved from romance conventions to 'bush realism' or to credit the Bulletin solely for the movement. But the 1890s was the period when nationalist and obvious Australianist tendencies were most stridently articulated, and the Bulletin was at the center of a literary climate dominated by the short story, with its emphasis on objectivity and realism, social and political awareness, humour and directness of statement, from which a distinct 'Australianity' emerged. Involved in this movement were writers of short fiction such as Henry Lawson (master of the sketch technique), Steele Rudd (creator of the comic Dad and Dave tradition), Barbara Baynton (whose stories conveyed a rising apprehension of the bush) and Joseph Furphy (whose message to the Bulletin advising them of his manuscript has become famous:

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"Just finished a full-sized novel, title, *Such is Life*, scene Riviera and Northern Vic.; temper, democratic; bias, offensively Australian.")

In poetry the bush balladists were seen to represent the essential spirit of the nineties, the voice of the authentic 'Australia.' The bush ballads were not essentially even good verse, but they were human documents which gave popular level currency to a genuine image of Australia. The bush ballads were populated by a host of stereotypical Australian characters (i.e., stockmen, settlers, gold diggers, battlers and squatters) and dealt with basic Australian themes (i.e., man against nature, man against the law, mateship). The two most famous balladists, Lawson and Paterson, were what historians have termed 'literary balladists' – educated writers who became interested in the bush song tradition. During the 1890s Banjo Paterson's *The Man from Snowy River* sold in tens of thousands at a time when the population of Australia was less than that of London, and most people could quote at least a verse or two. Vivian Smith writes of Paterson:

> With the unfailing skill and flair for the typical that even today makes it possible for a commercial artist to stamp the image of a product on a decade, Paterson projected a view of the Australian male from the outback – independent, anti-authoritarian, courageous, sardonic – which served the nation's need for a self-image and which fed into some of the self-feelings of the Australian now enshrined in the images of Anzac.54

However, what arose from the genuine needs of the time gradually became a stereotype itself, with its own rigid artificialities. The world Paterson portrayed was one that was already passing. The bush ballad became a constricting tradition that later Australian poets had to deconstruct so they could find the truth of their own experiences and new formal ways of expressing them. Literary historian Suzanne Falkiner states:

> When the nationalism of the late nineteenth century and the federation period died down, and the sentimentality and patriotism of the bush ethos finally began to go out of fashion, writers were once more permitted to represent the bush (or at least the more unmanageable parts of it) with apprehension and dislike. Australians began to admit they were city dwellers, and to find an identity in so being.55

> Whether the attitude was one of acceptance or rejection, the landscape was extremely prevalent in all Australian fiction of the period. The landscape and climate is a background presence to almost every rural Australian novel.

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Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* (1901) begins with descriptions of and is set against the great drought of 1895. Australian literature is full of natural disasters and the casualties of the pastoral dream, with the literary images of the deserted homestead and the isolated grave being common. This also occurs in New Zealand literature – see Blanche Baughan's poem 'The Old Place', or all the recurrent bushfires in novels – but New Zealand literature inclines to success in the struggle against the environment. Land burnt in a bushfire would just produce lush grass next season. In his Preface to *New Zealand Short Stories* (1930) O. N. Gillespie differentiated New Zealand from Australian short fiction, partly in terms of the relative ease of the landscape transformation in New Zealand. In the face of an unforgiving environment, 'You can't win' became a popular Australian expression; the prospect of failure and strategies for dealing with it became essential to the Australian character. The intractable countryside and climate, the ever-present possibility of crop failure, stock disease or other unforeseen natural disasters that could arise without warning, taught Australians they could not count on anything ever succeeding for long. This gave rise to a stoicism and laconic expectation of the worst that finds its echo in a lot of humorous writing about the land – two good examples are the ironic and sometimes cruel comedy of Steele Rudd's *On Our Selection* (1899) and P. J. Hartigan's (John O' Brien) poem 'Said Hanrahan' (1919) in which Hanrahan expects to be 'rooned' shortly by either too much rain or not enough.

Falkiner states the fact that much early Australian humour derives from the pastoral experience is a reason for its divergence from the American variety. American humour is based on the expectation of success, while Australian humour is based on one of failure, and as a result success is often not popularly received. In America, according to the migrant ethos, hard work, the grace of God and a benevolent climate would lead to prosperity. In Australia, by contrast, it often seemed that the achievement of years could be wiped out capriciously in a single day. The unique elements of Australian humour are perhaps best described as deriving from an English tendency to ironic understatement, combined with the perceived extravagance of the landscape in dishing out personal setbacks. The Australian (and New Zealand) reputation for ingenuity is a result of life in a country where people were sparsely scattered with few resources. The inherent contradiction of this lies in the fact that the Australian pastoral industry became one of the most successful and

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efficient in the world, perhaps because of the very adversity that had to be overcome before there could be any expectation of lasting success.\textsuperscript{37}

**Canadian Identity and Literature.**

Margaret Atwood states "Canada shares with... Australia and New Zealand the historically recent experience of a collision between a landscape and a language and social history not at first indigenous to it, with each side altering the other."\textsuperscript{38} As in Australia, the audience for fiction in Canada expanded during the 1890s. At the turn of the century with the influx of some three million new immigrants into the country, a wave of prosperity and expansion, the growth of cities and an explosion of Canadians writing about the Canadian scene, the market for Canadian fiction grew rapidly. The nationalistic mood which led Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier to predict that the twentieth century would belong to Canada led a number of Canadians to make special demands on Canadian fiction writers. Canadian periodicals and public speakers called for the creation of a unique Canadian literature which would promote a national consciousness.\textsuperscript{39} Similar to Australia and New Zealand, from 1880-1920, Canada produced a wave of literature in response to a changing environment, written by a wave of writers who were predominantly native-born in the Canadian provinces just before or after Confederation. Most of the new writers grew up in a time when the frontier was being pushed back and there was much talk about the need for a native literature to represent the new nation. However the Great Canadian novel did not emerge. Instead of 'Canadianess', from the subjects and values expressed in fiction it appears that writers most strongly identified with being native to a small town or rural community, such as Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island or Southern Ontario. Local colour was in strong demand and during this period Canadian literature became heavily regionalised.\textsuperscript{40} Given the multicultural composition of Canada and the fact that literature was being fed by so many sources (French, English, Scottish, American, Native-Indian, etc) it was not surprising that Canadian literature developed in this way. Northrop Frye

\textsuperscript{38} Margaret Atwood, 'Introduction' in Margaret Atwood and Robert Weaver, *The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986, xv.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p.253, 282.
states the question of Canadian identity is not a 'Canadian' question, but a regional question, related to the conditioning of various radically diverse landscapes upon the creative imagination:

And what can there be in common between an imagination nurtured on the prairies, where it is a center of consciousness diffusing itself over a vast flat expanse stretching to the remote horizon, and one nurtured in British Columbia, where it is in the midst of gigantic trees and mountains leaping into the sky all around it, and obliterating the horizon everywhere?  

However, linked to local colour and regionalism, was the popularity of outdoors or frontier fiction – one of the great staples of Canadian writers after 1900. The environment in literature represented a moral crucible in which to test manliness, strength, courage and heroic resources. Nature or the environment was also a subject or setting that stated Canada's distinctiveness from English or American models of literature. Hence the outdoors or frontier story was seen as quintessentially wholesome and Canadian. An example is the popular romances of Ralph Connor, such as *Black Rock* (1898), *The Sky Pilot: A Tale of the Foothills* (1899) and *The Man from Glengarry* (1901). Connor was a devotee of muscular Christianity, and his novels test the strength of civilisation against hard pioneering circumstances. New Zealand literature, too, includes literature of this sort, such as the novels of Guy Thornton and Herman Foston, but they concern the transformation of the landscape. In Canadian literature the test of civilisation against the landscape is often mere survival. In some cases the wilderness setting was only used as a backdrop for adventure, in others it was used to communicate the mystical redemptive quality of nature. Canadians also led the way in the popular animal story. The fascination that the mock Indian writer/naturalist 'Grey Owl' was to work on the public in subsequent decades showed the Canadian willingness to accept picturesque visions of wilderness life and native people as empirical realities.

**New Zealand Identity and Literature.**

Despite the drawbacks of initially being classified as Australian, being published and predominantly read overseas, and not having an indigenous outlet of publication such as the Sydney *Bulletin* to aggressively endorse a national

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literature until the Caxton Press in the 1930s, New Zealand's literature of national identity developed naturally, independently and reasonably quickly. This and similarities in literary modes and themes with the other countries suggests that between 1890-1920 New Zealand was tapping into a colonial consciousness - a desire to assert one's nationality in literature. At least half the New Zealand writers of the time still saw themselves as part of the Empire, but expressed national pride and looked forward to increasing independence in both nationalism and literature. Unlike the Australians no-one was attempting to write a novel that was 'offensively New Zealand' - Maoriland writers were rather content to let a New Zealand voice find itself in time. New Zealand literature shared an emphasis on the natural landscape as the symbol of national identity with Australia and Canada. The fact that New Zealand was too geographically compact to produce a regionalised literature like Canada's was not a disadvantage in the development of a national literature. A deliberate self-conscious attempt to create a New Zealand national literature did not occur until the 1930s, but this could not have occurred without the groundwork established by the late colonial novelists and poets. A later generation of writers were able to tap into the ideals of landscape and national character established in the station verse.

A retrospective attempt to compare the three colonial experiences of New Zealand, Australia and Canada occurred in New Zealand expatriate G. B. Lancaster's (Edith Lyttleton) last three novels: Pageant (1933), Promenade (1938) and Grand Parade (1943). The books, which had enormous international success, each followed the fortunes of several generations of a family in early Tasmania, New Zealand and Nova Scotia. Within these 'dominion-historical' novels the theme of developing colonial identity is central, and many of the discourses relating to landscape and transformation are vocalised.44

Hostile Landscapes and Literature.

Landscapes were the major determinants of written literature in Australia and Canada. Both Australia and Canada shared vast landscapes that were adverse to human habitation and this has had a major impact on themes within literature. The quest to discover what lay at the heart of the Australian continent provided a natural metaphor for the search for Australian national identity. Thus, drawing from the landscape, writers in Australia emphasised

such themes as the search for identity by a wanderer or explorer, the establishment of a habitation or a family line, the quest to recover the past, the sense of being an outcast and the threat of impending violence – very similar themes can be found in Canadian literature. Ken Goodwin states:

The urge to settle the country, to tame the frontier, to acquire such tracts of land as the Old Country could not provide and to found a dynasty was both a historical fact and a literary commonplace – as it was in the prairie literature of Canada.

The quest to recover the past has been a major theme of both Australian and Canadian literature. Margaret Atwood discusses the dual nature of the Canadian North, by which on one hand the wilderness was being opened up to settlement, on the other the North had become a fetish to those who no longer lived in it but were eager to prove their authenticity and manhood by stepping back into it: "I say 'back', because to enter the wilderness is to go backwards in time; which may account for the relentlessly elegiac and archeological streak in Canadian literature." Goodwin attributes certain repetitive stylistic qualities in Australian literature to the landscape itself:

Australian literature has within it frequently an air of infinitude, timelessness, changelessness, endless space, the still moment out of time, and the endless progress through space. It is, once again, a characteristic found in the Canadian prairie novel.

Judith Wright states that Australian writers have never fully been at peace with their landscape:

... in Australian writing the landscape has, it almost seems, its own life, hostile to the inhabitants; it forces its way into the foreground, it takes up an immense amount of room, or sometimes it is so firmly pushed away that its obvious absence haunts us as much as its presence could do.

However Australians and Australian writers, "with a particular type of characteristic bloodmindedness" began to "develop a perverse attachment to the continent's intractability" and adopt an edge of good-humoured contempt for those who chose to live in more temperate climes. The best-known...
example is Dorothea Mackellar's poem 'My Country' (1911) – a rejection of both an idealised English landscape, and also of an ideal of literature which allowed that little that was not essentially English had literary merit. 'My Country', with its trundling rhymes, is identical in sentiment to much New Zealand verse:

The love of field and coppice,
Of green and shaded lanes,
Of ordered woods and gardens
Is running in your veins...

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror—
The wide brown land for me.\(^{50}\)

The poem is a transitional one, a self-conscious reaction of what had come before. True Australian literature emerged when writers could write poetry out of a genuine and original impulse to portray the landscape, in the spirit that New Zealand's Blanche Baughan wrote 'A Bush Section.' A good example of a portrayal of a hostile Australian landscape is Barcroft Boake's 'Where the Dead Men Lie' (1891):

Where brown Summer and Death have mated—
That's where the dead men lie!
Loving with lust unsated—
That's where the dead men lie!
Out where the grinning skulls bleach whitely
Under the saltbrush sparklingbrightly;
Out where the wild dogs chorus nightly—
That's where the dead men lie!\(^{51}\)

Likewise, the Canadian landscape has had a significant impact on literature. Sarah Corse writes:


\(^{51}\) Barcroft Boake, 'Where the Dead Men Lie' (1891) in Geoffrey Dutton, ed, *Australian Verse from 1805: A Continuum*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1976, p.79. Boake was born in Sydney, and worked as a surveyor, boundary rider and drover. On a droving trip in 1889 Boake wrote "If only I could write it there is a poem to be made out of the back country... for there is romance – a grim one – a story of drought and flood, fever and famine, murder and suicide, courage and endurance..." This was the seed of 'Where the Dead Men Lie.' Boake published his poems in the *Bulletin* from 1890, but in 1892 at the age of 26 Boake hanged himself with his stockwhip in the scrub, a victim of the landscape.
... the Canadian character is enmeshed within its social and familial worlds, haunted by an isolating and malevolent Nature, and therefore cooperative with and defined by society. This social reliance and fear of the hostile wilderness are reflected in a literature that critics and literary historians have described as characterised by a struggle for survival within an entrapping family and an environment of violent and intractable wilderness.

As in New Zealand and Australia, much early Canadian poetry was an attempt to come to terms with a dismal and alien landscape, and moves towards an acceptance. Margaret Atwood describes the individual ordeal that each Canadian poet must go through when grappling with the world as given: "In Canada the given has not always been immediately perceived as friendly, which may have something to do with the weather. Though the angel that must be wrestled to the ground is huge, cold and forbidding, our poets have sometimes recognised it as an angel nonetheless." Northrop Frye describes the source of Canadian poetry as the unusually exposed contact of the poet with nature which Canada provides: "Nature is seen by the poet, first as unconsciousness, then as a kind of existence which is cruel and meaningless, then as a source of the cruelty and subconscious stampedings within the human mind." Unlike American poetry, which has a tradition of celebrating the cult of rugged outdoor life which idealises nature, Canadian poetry consistently portrays nature as sinister and menacing. Canadian poetry and fiction are full of horror and characters being driven insane by the landscape. Atwood writes: "Canadians are fond of a good disaster, especially if it has ice, water or snow in it. You thought the national flag was about a leaf, didn't you? Look harder. It's where someone got axed in the snow."

In Canadian poetry geology and meteorology are far more dominant motifs than botany, unlike Australian or New Zealand poetry. Images of permafrost and granite bedrock, blizzard, mountain and glacier are repeatedly set against the state of being human and made to take its measure. The poet who best expressed the hostility of the Canadian landscape was Wilfred Campbell (1858-1918). 'The Winter Lakes' describes the bleak "world of death far to the northward lying."

55 Atwood, Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature, pp.11-12.
Lands that loom like spectres, whited regions of winter,
Wastes of desolate woods, deserts of water and shore;
A world of winter and death, within these regions who enter,
Lost to summer and life, go to return no more.  

Other poems by Campbell such as 'How One Winter Came in the Lake Region' (1890), 'The Sky Watcher' (1891), and 'An October Evening' (1893) contain similar images of cold, timelessness and an unforgiving landscape.

New Zealand, despite its more benign climate and picturesque landscape, still shared certain themes in literature with Australia and Canada such as the effect of a bleak wilderness and fear in the landscape (for example Satchell's sentient and retributive Nature, Mansfield's Woman at the Store, McGill's Blacklaw and the descriptions of the descent into madness that affects people lost in the New Zealand bush in Watson's The Web of the Spider, Vogel's A Maori Maid and others). However New Zealand literature does not carry this theme to the extent of the other two countries. Expressions of peace, tranquility and appreciation of beauty are far more common in New Zealand literature. With the expansion of settlement in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, the sense of the land's hostility was coupled by the challenge ethic – a sense of its possibilities for agricultural, pastoral and mineral wealth. It is just in New Zealand that any initial threat of the landscape was almost completely eclipsed by the challenge ethic. The underlying sense of oppressive dread has remained in Australian and Canadian literature.

**Literature of Environmental Transformation.**

Australia was colonised before New Zealand and as a result its major period of environmental transformation occurred earlier, although by 1890-1920 it was still ongoing. As in New Zealand novels, landscape and climate are extremely central to almost all the Australian novels with rural settings, and there is ample documentation of environmental transformation. However, unlike in New Zealand novels, expressions of conservation, preservation or regret at the loss of the indigenous landscape were very rare. Falkiner states:

> Attitudes to the conservation of wildlife and the landscape in Australia have historically been governed by the degree of control or mastery European man has felt over his environment. Unlike the Australia

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Aborigines, who over thousands of years evolved a belief that their own survival was closely related to the continuing natural well-being of their surroundings, and that this was best achieved by harmonious coexistence, European man was not prepared to give any quarter to the landscape until it had been subjugated into providing an existence for him on his own terms.58

The Australian continent was seen as possessing seemingly inexhaustible resources: land for pasturage, timber for building, iron and gold for the taking and wildlife for recreational hunting. If the environmental dangers involved in their exploitation (droughts, bushfires, floods, aborigines, diseases and isolation) were overcome, these seemed only to justify their right of conquest. Expressions of regret only came from isolated voices. Scientists factually documented what they saw, administrators saw the landscape in terms of its effects on the success of the colonial venture, and colonial novelists wrote of the local environment as a colourful and novel background to their tales of adventure. Few were prepared or able to assess the impact of settlement. This luxury only occurred after the turn of the century when settlers felt in control of the terrain they were describing and less threatened by it.59

Rosa Praed noted the depredations of close settlement on the landscape in a story entitled 'The Old Scenes' (1899):

And the dead trees! They too have become half a nightmare, half a fascination. These are not the few scattered clumps of 'rung' gums, which used to show here and there round a head-station or stockman's hut, in picturesque contrast with the mass of grey-green foliage. All along the railway lines there are miles and miles, paddocks full, whole tracts of these livid corpses of trees, which stand bolt upright, stretching forth long naked arms, that twist up and down and interlace each other in weirdly human fashion. At first their deadliness seems a mystery, and then one remembers that it is the Free Selector now and not the Squatter who rules the land; and that because of him is its greyness. For it is all grey, all the same dull, dead monotony of colouring – grey two-railed fences, brown-grey grass, grey-green leaves – where there are leaves – yellow-grey sawn-wood houses; grey shingles, grey skeletons, grey ashes, where the skeletons have been burned and the soil made ready for crops of corn and vines and millet and cotton, and all the other good things which the Selector eventually produces. But it takes a long time to dispossess the gum-trees, which are the inheritors of the ground.60

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Voices of writers more intimately at ease with the Australian landscape began to be heard. Jeannie Gunn's novel *We of the Never Never* (1908), describing station life, sold over half a million copies and awakened people to the charm as well as the hardship of bush life, although sympathy to the environment was still largely restricted to fauna and flora that were imported or were economically useful. Australians, it seemed, did not develop an affinity with their landscape in literature until much later on – at least the 1940s. As late as 1938 H. G. Wells observed the massive destruction of the Australia forest by fires and remarked "Australia remains indifferent to the waste of its magnificent timber."³⁶¹ New Zealanders, with their more picturesque landscape by inherited European standards, were much quicker to develop a preservation ethic in literature.

Canadian literature contains ample depictions of the transformation of the landscape. Like the Australians, Canadian settlers set about the task of profitably transforming the landscape:

Most left New England because they were expelled or Britain because they were poor and hoped to better themselves. What Canada had to offer was seen, when anything was seen at all, not as the kingdom of God upon earth but as a chance at economic independence and pastoral domestic tranquility as evidenced by Goldsmith's *Rising Village*. From this perspective, anything that interfered with the reproduction of a European tamed nature was best got rid of...⁶²

The railways opened Canada to a flood of westwards and northwards migration to the new provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba during the closing years of the nineteenth century and the opening decade of the twentieth. The new West offered many themes for environmental fiction — homesteading, farming, ranching, railroading, mining, timbering and acclimatisation. Moreover, the opening of the Canadian West coincided with a rapidly expanding market in American and British magazines for red-blooded outdoor fiction. This fiction appealed strongly to a generation conscious of urban growth and the growing complexity of national life. Consequently the Canadian literary map expanded almost as explosively as did the West itself, and environmental transformation was well-documented.⁶³

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The first fiction to be concerned with the relation between the land and the settlers who came onto it was Ralph Connor's *The Foreigner* (1909), which dramatised the problems of migration. Nellie McClung and The Reverend Anthony Gill's stories (1910-1912) deal with small farm life, migration and homesteading with realism. Douglas Durkin's *The Heart of Cherry McBain* (1919) is set in a railroad construction camp, with considerable feeling for the country. The early railroading days in the Canadian West are shown in Cy Warman's books (1898-1906). Harold Bindloss' romances *Ranching for Sylvia* (1912) and *The Girl from Kellar's* (1917) convey a sense of the farm environment and its moulding effect on characters. Robert Stead realistically portrayed his Alberta country in novels such as *The Homesteaders* (1916) and *The Cow Puncher* (1918). Stead peaked with *Grain* (1926), set in Manitoba in the nineties, one of the best studies of the transition from pioneering life in the West – the same transitional New Zealand period Blanche Baughan documented in *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven*. British Columbian writers such as Ralph Connor depicted miners and mining in several novels between 1898-1906. Bertrand William Sinclair successfully portrayed West Coast life in fiction in several novels, of which the best environmental text was *Big Timber* (1916) – set in British Columbia and concerning the conflict between big timber interests, run by men in a hurry and careless of employees and nature, and small timber men of integrity and with a deep affinity with their woods. Several poets also dealt with environmental themes: Duncan Campbell Scott's 'At the Cedars' (1893) and William Henry Drummond's 'The Log Jam' (1897) are dramatic monologues that deal with log-rafting accidents. Most of these 'environmental texts' were set in individual regions and were often more concerned with depicting a social issue of the time rather than creating a sense of landscape, but this sort of fiction was one of the primary agents which established an image of Canada in the minds of Anglo-North American reading public.

One of the best Canadian environmental texts of the period was Martin Alledale Grainger's classic *Woodsmen of the West* (1908). Like New Zealand's Jane Mander and William Satchell, Grainger knew his lumbering community, having worked for several years as a miner and logger in British Columbia – settings and characters were obviously drawn from first hand experience.

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3. Martin Allerdale Grainger (1874-1941) was a true colonial character – he was born in London, grew up in Australia, was educated at Cambridge, and went to the Klondike and Boc war before his British Columbian logging experience. When his wife-to-be
Woodsmen of the West is a factual depiction of the life of the West Coast logger. The events are few and simple, but through Grainger's technically proficient narrative art the reader is directly plunged into them: the hardships of logging, the trips up and down the Inlet, battling the waves and the weather, and above all, the central dramatic tension between Carter and Mart, the narrator. Mart, built upon Grainger himself, is skillfully and economically presented as the sensitive, perceptive amateur woodsman. But Grainger's finest achievement is the complex and absorbing character of Carter, the logging boss. Grainger combined an accurate, detailed factual picture of the woodsmen of the West with a close analysis of complex men to produce, in a gripping narrative, one of the finest pieces of local and psychological realism in Canadian writing.67

Australian and Canadian literatures were similar to New Zealand's in that they were conscious of a period of environmental transformation and generally were positive about it, expressing their enthusiasm in the same terms of profit and progress found in New Zealand literature. A significant difference was found in New Zealand's Anglo-orientated attitude. New Zealand saw its transformation in terms of creating the better Britain of the South – there is no evidence that transformation was commonly talked of in this way in Australia or Canada. Indeed, New Zealand's relative ease of transformative advance perpetuated an Anglo-orientated identity. Without the dramatic difficulties faced by Australia in establishing pastoralism, New Zealand's transformation of the landscape into a Britain of the South was both believable and achievable. Conversely, it was in New Zealand that changing attitudes over time towards environmental transformation were most apparent. The reason for this was that New Zealand was fast approaching its limited frontier, while Australia's and Canada's horizons were still unreached by white settlement during the period.68
possess limitless timber to be logged and lands for expansion of settlement. Australia's indigenous landscape was so un hospitable and unaesthetically distanced from Western ideals of beauty that expressions of conservation and preservation generally did not occur in literature decades later than in New Zealand. Looking beyond our period, the same concerns about unchecked transformation can be seen appearing in Canadian and Australian literature from the 1930s onwards. Canada was similiarly active to New Zealand in implementing the solution of reserves and national parks. In later Canadian literature especially, a preservational ethic can be seen as a result of desire or nostalgia for a prevalent wilderness-frontier ideal, one that was created and perpetuated by literature itself. New Zealand's literature of environmental transformation shared with Canada's a cult of masculine challenge or struggle, but the challenge of progressive transformation of the wilderness in Canadian and Australian literature was coupled with survival in the face of a harsh environment.

**Whither the Sea?**

One environment is noticeably absent in New Zealand late colonial literature - the sea. Canadian fiction of the 1890-1920 period has a strong tradition of writing about the sea - tales of maritime adventure or portrayals of the fishing industry. For example Bertrand Sinclair's *Poor Man's Rock* (1920) is a realistic picture of the salmon fishing industry, featuring honest pictures of complex characters in locales which Sinclair knew well. Norman Duncan produced numerous successful books for children such as *The Adventures of Billy Topsail* (1906) and a collection of sea-based short stories, *The Way of the Sea* (1903) in which he reached a high level of storytelling, representing the lives of the fishermen and seal hunters of the bleak shores of Newfoundland and Labrador in their fight with the merciless forces of nature. Dr Wilfred Thomason Grenfell of the Royal Mission to Deep-Sea Fishermen wrote several didactic novels, *The Harvest of the Sea* (1905), *Down to the Sea in Ships* (1910) and *Tales of the Labrador* (1916), out of his medical-missionary experience aboard the fishing boats.69
Despite being an island, New Zealand seemed to look inland for its landscape (as did Australia too). The beach, of course, was the setting for much New Zealand literature, such as Katherine Mansfield's 'At the Bay' and Blanche Baughan's 'Sumner Estuary'. Nationalistic poems provided empty cliches about Zealandia, Queen of the Southern Ocean, virgin waves and pure seas. Will Lawson, with his nautical poetry about steamers and engine rooms with titles like 'Greasin" or 'Stokin'', was a sort of antipodean mechanical Masefield. Another Wellington poet, Boyce Bowden, was the one true New Zealand sea poet of the late colonial period – his poems such as 'The Sea Road', 'The Waterside', 'The Coastland' and 'The Fisher Track' all promote the attractiveness of a sea-life as an escape from the undesirable city. As Bowden states in 'The Ocean Ways': "the building of a nation is the building of its ships," and his "Johnny Bowlegs" characters are immune to the "bushland odours on the breeze" that steal out from the land.70 Otherwise the ocean is visibly absent, even the Pacific islands which should have offered ample opportunities for melodramatic adventure fiction.

Perhaps there was a feeling among settlers that New Zealand was too distant from the rest of the world, that there was no returning Home. The settler poets initially wrote nostalgic verse calling over the seas to Home and New Zealand-born Jessie Mackay sent her little souvenir books From the Maori Sea (1908) and Land of the Morning (1909) back to Britain. The writers turned their backs to the sea and their gaze inland to the bush and mountains. Their futures lay on the land, and it was to this they turned their attention in literature. Another reason might be that New Zealand readers were already saturated by popular British naval and nautical adventure fiction. Britannia ruled the waves and New Zealand authors looked for a domain which they could write about in their own terms.

The answer perhaps lies in the little-known poems of Katherine Mansfield. Mansfield was a writer who, from her combined perceptive critical position of distance and love of New Zealand, always managed to put her finger on the pulse of national consciousness, and is the one person who wrote explicitly about the sea. In Mansfield's 'Sea' (1911) the sea is a cruel being who mocks, shows her teeth, stretches out her long green arms, snarls and beckons "Come closer."21 In 'Sea Song' (1913) Mansfield writes "I will think no more of the sea!" The sea is a disturbing memory of her far away home that has

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nothing to do with her any more. Memory is imaged as an old woman, weeping and searching for something lost on the shore.72 'Waves' (1916) depicts a tiny God, content in his lovely country. The God of the Sea mocks the tiny God for his pride, and covers the land with the curl of his fingers... the tiny God begins to cry.73 In other words, to late colonial New Zealanders, the sea was a little frightening, a disconcerting reminder of home and an uncomfortable symbol of New Zealand's insignificance in the world. While late colonial writers ignored the uncertain sea, Allen Curnow notes how coming to terms with the sea-coast was a dominant theme and imaginative symbol for the next generation of provincial poets.74

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the colonial literatures of Australia and Canada share a documentation of environmental transformation with New Zealand literature. There are differences in approach arising from different landscapes and climates, and attitudes. The landscape in Australian and Canadian literature is often perceived as hostile. The strength of the rural myth in New Zealand prohibited the development of an urban literature during this period. There was an apparent Australian delayed development of affinity with their indigenous landscape in literature, their national pride arising from hardship in the face of climatic adversity rather than from appreciation of natural beauty. New Zealand developed a strong theme of national identity in its literature, despite not being pushed in this direction as in Australia and Canada. Without a divisive regional identity, New Zealand writers created a unified landscape as the symbol of national identity in literature.

Both Australia and Canada have ample material for an environmental literature, and doubtless a closer examination of some of their less-popular or forgotten literature would reveal much more. However, New Zealand provides a more coherent model for a study of environmental literature. New Zealand has geographically diverse landscapes, yet has the advantage of being too small to have produced definitive regionalised literatures. A manageable-sized body of literature, and a concentrated period of exploitative transformation that was reflected as a dominant theme of the period's

73 Ibid, pp.47-49.
literature, makes New Zealand the ideal study for environmental literature, and one of global interest.
FIGURE 18: A Taranaki dairy farm, c.1900.
[James McAllister Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library.]
FIGURE 19: A typical bush farm at Uruti in North Taranaki.

[New Zealand's Heritage, 4, 1577.]
FIGURE 20: The desirable results of transformation.
The Wells farm, near Huirangi, began as a pioneer bush section in the 1880s and was transformed into a prosperous dairy farm during the 1890s. A homestead, exotic trees and shelterbelts and fields of verdant grass show the realisation of the pastoral dream, but Mount Taranaki is a reminder of the New Zealand setting.

[New Zealand’s Heritage, 4, 1576.]
CONCLUSION.
CONCLUSION.

Gone are the tussocks, fern and flax,
The bush has yielded to the axe;
We've flocks and herds on hill and plain,
And fertile fields of waving grain.1

This thesis shows that late colonial literature (1890-1921) reveals much about attitudes to the environment during New Zealand’s most rapid and profound period of landscape transformation. New Zealand’s late colonial literature offers a superb wealth of material for the environmental historian.

Peter Holland’s identification of the importance of poetry in providing answers to questions about the transformation of the landscape that cannot be answered within the fragmentary historical record has been more than vindicated.2 Late colonial verse is invaluable for understanding the feelings of New Zealanders towards their landscape. From the period’s extensive poetic sources we can identify a range of prevalent attitudes and responses to the landscape. Alexander and Currie’s 1906 New Zealand Verse anthology is a most significant work because its selection of poems so completely represents the environmental issues and attitudes of the age. Holland states: “Poetry marks the steps which New Zealand society has taken in its evolution from colony to nation.”3 The abundance of environmental themes within poetry shows what a giant step the transformation of the landscape was in the creation of New Zealand national identity. Across the period a gradual and tentative growth in national identity was perceptible in verse. While many settler poets wrote verse expressing homesickness for their Home landscapes, other settler and first generation New Zealand poets reached an appreciation of the indigenous landscape. The ways in which certain poets discarded traditional nostalgic styles and themes of poetry in order to come to terms with the new landscape or do justice to it is a fascinating charting of a nascent national identity.

National identity in poetry became inextricably associated with the New Zealand landscape. In transforming the landscape, New Zealanders were creating their own national identity. Key poems like Blanche Baughan’s ‘A Bush Section’, Alan Mulgan’s ‘Dead Timber’ and Edward Tregear’s ‘New Zealand (A.D. 1899)’ each emblemed the transitional ugliness of the burnt


Ibid.
bush and anticipated a future of prosperous transformed pastoral settlement. Various discourses concerning the justifications for the destruction of the indigenous bush are revealed by these poets. For example Baughan points towards the future potential of an adolescent nation. For Tregear transformation is fulfilling God's plan of a settled productive landscape. Mulgan's early poem 'The Empire Builder' from the 1906 anthology celebrates transformation for the glory of the Empire, but his later 'Dead Timber' from the 1926 anthology symbolises the burnt bush as the inspiration for a nation's cultural identity – illustrating the shift in national identity across the period. The original transformative aim of the colonists: 'The Britain of the South Seas', when supplemented by Boer War patriotism metamorphised into a 'Better than Britain' attitude, and towards the end of the period a perception of New Zealand as a future nation in its own right began to emerge.

While many poets celebrated the transformation of the landscape in verse, as symbol of the creation of a nation, a great number of poets wrote verse lamenting the loss of the indigenous forest. A paradox of national representation appeared in verse. Poets of national identity vacillated between the contradictory visions of symbolising New Zealand as a transformed profitable pastoral paradise or by its pristine untransformed landscape. They reached an unconscious compromise, whereby they extolled both pastoral and pristine landscapes, epitomised in Thomas Bracken's poem 'God's Own Country.' The theme of the transformation of the landscape was extremely central to the period, despite the complex and often contradictory points of view, and poets wrote some of the period's best and most heartfelt verse on the subject.

While poetry provides profound insights into ideologies of landscape with a few deftly chosen words or images, New Zealand late colonial fiction offers more concrete material for the environmental historian. Virtually all the novels of the period provide extensive depictions of landscapes and landscape transformation. Certain key novels can be classified as environmental texts – whereby authors such as William Satchell, Jane Mander, William Walker, Arthur Adams, Herman Foston and John Bell wrote factual, first-hand documentary records of environmental transformation, often based on personal experience. The novels cover a comprehensive range of New Zealand's geographical regions and terrains. There is ample material on environmental disasters and common frontier hazards such as bushfires.

When the novels of the period are viewed as a whole, a range of common attitudes or responses is apparent. The wilderness landscape of the
untransformed bush was frequently represented in literature as a silent source of depression, solitude and terror — an impression surprisingly absent in most of the poetry. Semi-transformed landscapes in fiction could work as agents, effecting the action of plots and the feelings and behaviour of characters. Characters also worked as agents, displaying a range of attitudes to the landscape and its transformation. The most predominant attitude was the 'challenge' of the transformation ideal, embodied by the heroes of almost all the novels. Grouped around the prevalent challenge attitude were views of the New Zealand landscape as a terrible antagonist, as a resource to be exploited, as a romantic manifestation of the sacred, as the antithesis to English civilisation, as a desirable escape from civilisation, as an aesthetic world to be captured in art, or as a sacred place revealing the presence of God. Thus a single novelist, such as Satchell or Mander, could create a number of characters representing various attitudes towards environmental transformation and vocalise all sides of the debate. Authorial attitudes to the transformation of the landscape can also be identified, usually implicitly but often explicitly.

In fiction, as in poetry, the links between landscape and national identity are fundamental. While Britain was still predominantly seen as Home and New Zealand as part of the Empire, the beginnings of an independent national identity can be seen in fiction, related to the landscape and pride in transformative effort. Hard work transforming the wilderness was believed to produce a better class of man, and this was ratified by the performance of New Zealanders in the Boer War. These discourses were expressed in many novels. Short-fiction by writers such as Mansfield and Baughan depicted a confusing transitional period, pointing towards a positive future and developing New Zealand identity.

There is a central contradiction at the heart of the whole literary treatment of landscape and identity. New Zealand national identity was produced during the re-creation of a British landscape, at the cost of the removal of the indigenous landscape that was viewed as the symbol of national identity. This can be explained by a prevalent belief in evolutionary progress and type of cultural Darwinism that provided a goal for environmental transformation — the pastoral paradise. This justified the environmental and human costs of transformation. Human costs were the demise of Maori (related to the transformation of the landscape) and the negative psychological 'toll of the bush' on settlers, caused by struggling for a living amidst ugly transformed environments (best illustrated by Sir George Mackay's *Blacklaw*). The paradox is that on one hand writers valued exposure to the unspoiled indigenous landscape for its effect on national character formation and for
providing the symbols of national identity, while on the other hand they viewed the process of environmental transformation as the primary forge of national character and identity.

An examination of themes in late colonial non-fiction somewhat clarifies the contradictions found within fiction and poetry. New Zealand's late colonial non-fiction produced some of the world's environmental classics, such as Herbert Guthrie-Smith's *Tutira* and William Pember Reeves' *The Long White Cloud*. In both Reeves' and Guthrie-Smith's work, across the period in various editions, a change in attitude towards a questioning of the total transformation of the landscape arising from conservative and preservationist concerns is evident. These non-fiction works more-coherently voice environmental concerns at the rapid and irreversible transformation that were appearing in fiction and verse. It is also in the non-fiction, scientific and touristic writings that the unconscious tension of the representation of national identity through either scenic indigenous or settled transformed landscapes is most apparent. Poets were divided between celebrating the removal of the bush and lamenting its passing. Fiction writers debated a variety of opinions or attitudes between characters within novels, and pointed out both the costs and future benefits of transformation. Few writers held to a coherent attitude, and this is highlighted by the way Reeves and Guthrie-Smith's opinions changed over a period of time. The two contradictory strands of emergent New Zealand identity (the transformative challenge ethic and the unspoiled splendour image) might have resulted in great national schizophrenia, if not for the fact that there was enough land in New Zealand for the two ideals to co-exist. Whether a questioning of the total transformation of the landscape arose from aesthetic, religious, scientific or preservationist concerns, the government helped resolve the unspoiled nature versus transformed landscape problem during the period by the setting aside of alpine national parks and wilderness areas – areas that were unsuitable for pastoralism in any case.

The fact that between 1890-1921 a growing majority of New Zealanders were now urban dwellers also played a role in the acceptance of the national identity and landscape contradiction. The rural myth and the anti-urban discourse (that which insisted rural life was superior), was perpetuated in New Zealand literature against the face of reality. National perception in turn fed on this rural myth in literature. The popular portrayal of the rural myth in literature (for example urban animosity in the station verse) can be seen as a measure of the colonists' success in creating a pastoral paradise. New
Zealanders perceived themselves as a rural-dwelling people and national identity was overwhelmingly imaged with the countryside. To acknowledge the existence of old world urban social problems in New Zealand would undermine national identity. Writers adapted the conventions of traditional rural myth to the New Zealand context and it became more deeply entrenched. New Zealand literature was characterised by a lack of urban settings, with certain discourses in which it was acceptable to portray urban environments when necessary, such as the provincial town, the garden city, the civic ‘queens’ convention, or often the use of an Australian metropolis. Thus, although it was understood that New Zealand’s cities were small and uncultured in comparison with the Empire’s greater capitals, in the context of national pride in progress, New Zealand could be seen to have cities of worth.

Finally, a comparison of New Zealand literature, 1890-1920, with its contemporary literatures of similar colonies Australia and Canada, affirms many of the trends and attitudes within New Zealand literature, but also highlights certain unique attitudes to environment and transformation that arise from different landscapes. In terms of literatures of national identity, New Zealand shared an emphasis on the natural landscape as the symbol of national identity with Australia and Canada. A New Zealand literature of national identity developed reasonably similarly to that of the other colonies, but without deliberate self-conscious attempts to create one. Australian, Canadian and New Zealand environmental literatures were all conscious of a period of environmental transformation and generally were positive about it, expressing their enthusiasm in the same terms of progress and profit. New Zealand’s Anglo-orientated transformative vision, and ease of transformation in relation to the less-forgiving environments of Australia and Canada might have delayed the development of an independent identity. But New Zealand’s limited frontier and picturesque scenic beauty hastened an appreciation of natural landscapes and resulted in expressions of preservation and conservation in literature, some years before Australia and Canada. New Zealand shared with the other colonies a literary cult of masculine challenge in the struggle with the landscape. A landscape more tolerant to settlement meant New Zealand was able to achieve an affinity with its landscape and a resulting national identity. Canadian and Australian national identities arose from survival in the face of harsh and unique environments – appreciation of natural beauty came later. A manageable-sized body of literature, and a concentrated period of exploitative transformation that was well-documented as a dominant theme of
the period’s literature, makes New Zealand the ideal study for environmental literature.

In terms of adding to the historiography, this thesis has shown the prevalence of the transformation of the landscape theme within literature. Using literature as a source for environmental history has opened valuable new perspectives on attitudes to the landscape, its transformation and perceptions of national identity.

Many significant works contributing to a national literature have been rediscovered or re-evaluated. In poetry, one of my most interesting discoveries is William Pember Reeves’ revisions to the final stanza of ‘The Passing of the Forest’ over the period. I have also discussed the misrepresentation of Edward Tregear’s ‘Te Whetu Plains’ by anthologisers of New Zealand verse. Furthermore, the late colonial period produced the unique voice of the ‘station ballads’, which had a significant influence on New Zealand national ideologies and literature. Yet the important influence of the station ballad (a literary strength of the period) has been completely overlooked in literary historiography. I have also discussed the verse of Blanche Baughan and Katherine Mansfield in terms of unique and original responses to the New Zealand landscape. Certain poems by these writers were considerably ahead of their time in innovative technique and sentiment (read Baughan’s ‘Landlock’d’, ‘The Paddock’ and ‘Shingle Short’; Mansfield’s ‘The Storm’, ‘The Awakening River’ and ‘Sea’). Baughan and Mansfield’s verse has been sadly critically neglected – in Baughan’s case as part of a period rejected by academic critics, in Mansfield’s case misunderstood or overlooked in favour of her fiction. Returning to an environmental historian’s point of view, William Pember Reeves popular history text The Long White Cloud: Ao Te Aroa (1898) needs to receive the same recognition as Guthrie-Smith’s Tutira (1921) as a landmark early environmental history. My urban chapter has expanded understanding of the social ‘rural-urban paradox’ through literature, and identified a number of acceptable discourses in which New Zealand writers could acceptably portray towns and cities without compromising the rural myth. Finally, the colonial comparison adds to the historiography with its three-colony comparison of late colonial literature – something that has not been attempted before. This comparison has been rewarding in terms of the light it casts upon New Zealand literature of landscape and identity.

Therefore New Zealand late colonial literature (1890-1921) is an excellent source for environmental history, and one which reveals far beyond
conventional documentary sources. It is hoped that this thesis will lead to a re-evaluation of a diverse and exciting period of literature and will inspire people to read and preserve New Zealand’s rich literary heritage.
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