

# The Landscape of Empire

The place of landscape in 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial novels

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a comparative research study of four novels published within two years of 1881 in four colonies of the Victorian Empire. The novels are *Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life* by Alexander Bathgate from New Zealand, *Gathered In* by Catherine Spence from Australia, *Neville Trueman: The Pioneer Preacher, a Tale of the War of 1812* by W. H. Withrow from Canada, and finally *The Story of an African Farm* by Olive Schreiner from South Africa. These novels were chosen because of their close publication dates. My purpose is to compare the depictions of landscape in each novel.

The purpose of this study is to discover the depiction of landscape in the novels and the effect of the landscape on the characters. Because the authors were writing as English subjects in a non-English setting, they each had to engage differently with the landscape in their novel, depicting the settler experience of colonising the new country. Each novel's portrayal of landscape is analysed using the text and placed into the historical context of the colony and the literary development of the colony.

The findings of all four novels are compared to identify the differences and similarities discovered in the initial analysis. These final chapters show that landscape was closely tied with the settlers' conceptions of religion, the treatment of the indigenous people, and settler experience in the particular colonies as represented by these authors.

The importance of this thesis and the comparative study at the end is that my study gives an in depth analysis of four novels from four different colonies that have previously not been compared. The selection of the novels based solely on date of publication makes the comparison all the more interesting because these novels were not chosen due to their content, so the similarities and differences of the novels point out the similarities and differences of the authors' literary portrayals of the colonies in a comparison study that has not yet been done.

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## INTRODUCTION

Dost thou not remember that the thorns are clustered with the rose,  
And that every Zin-like border may a pleasant land enclose?  
Oh, across these sultry deserts many a fruitful scene we'll find,  
And the blooms we gather shall be worth the wounds they leave behind!

Henry Kendall, "Fainting by the Way"

The expansion of the Victorian Empire was based on the exploration and colonisation of foreign continents in order to gain land, build on it, and control it. "For the middle-class emigrant, land was the great desideratum, and it is difficult to underestimate the importance of this particular commodity in the English consciousness during the mid nineteenth-century" (Grant 171). As Grant points out, this meant that landscape was at the forefront of colonial consciousness. However, landscape was more than simply the geographical area and material attributes of the land. While these physical characteristics defined the particular geography of a colony, the idea of landscape denoted the cultural and social aspects of the land as well, and thus the settlers' reactions to it. It is not surprising, therefore, to imagine that landscape and the exploration of landscape played a large part in the literature of the time.

The use of landscape in literature in the late nineteenth century was nothing new. In fact, "the use of landscape to reflect moral character goes back to the origins of the novel" (Mingay 3). From the eighteenth century, the Romantic poets "also searched to express the nature of country life in their various ways" (Mingay 3). As Cynthia Wall explains:

Through the eighteenth century, "topography," as the rhetorical term for the description of landscape and places, climbed up from a lowly, ancillary, and often

despised position in classical rhetorical theory to a full-fledged glamour in the English and French novels of the nineteenth century. (Wall 389)

In the collection of critical essays *The Rural Idyll* (1989), Mingay explains that these writers of the early eighteenth century often focused on an idealized landscape, while writers of the late nineteenth century began to deal with the harshness and truth of the land rather than a romanticized version. Mingay also points out that there is no single unifying vision of landscape through literature. Some authors used landscape to show societal realities, while others engaged with how the use of the land supported the inhabitants. Still others continued to use the romanticized ideals that became popular in Romantic poetry (Mingay 3).

What is clear is that writers have been dealing with the implications of the landscape around them from the origins of the novel. Thus, colonial authors would have had the same interest in the landscape in their new settlement, and often more interest as colonisation is centred on holding and conquering land. In fact, Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, in their book *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780 – 1830*, conjecture that, because the previous century saw the height of Romanticism where poetic and literary works were professing the beauty of the land and the superiority of Britain, these texts became vital to the process of colonisation very early on. They explain that early British colonial administrators found that they had a great ally in the written works of England “which Romantic critics had helped to establish as embodiments of Englishness and Christianity” through the views of the land (Fulford and Kitson 3).

The various depictions of English landscape were not only confined to novels during the height of colonial immigration. Robert Grant explains that often pamphlets, newspaper articles, and even “emigrant handbooks” were being published to entice immigration to the far reaches of the empire through “descriptions of new, alluring, distant lands” (Grant 169). These descriptions were designed to give settlers a feeling of both adventure and comfort by



highlighting the differences and similarities of the new colony: “It was common to highlight the informality of colonial life and to stress that, in a world of natural abundance, there was no need of complicated, old world social superstructures” (Grant 169). As Grant explains, these descriptions paint a picture of the pure beauty of the new colony due to their need to simultaneously give “English” qualities to the land and settlers, “to negotiate the projected disparities between the old country and new” (Grant 169).

However, once settled in the new colony, the focus inevitably changed from foreign landscape seen from a distance to the experience of living on that new landscape. Thus, settler literature had a very different perspective than the literature back in England. While the English, surrounded by the comforts of the old world, had the freedom to describe the Englishness and exclaim at the foreignness of the new colony, the settlers had the task of engaging directly with the land of their new colony. They not only had to conquer and wrest a living from the land, but they had to find a new identity that fit with that unfamiliar land as well. The land was the first aspect they had to contend with upon arrival. It defined their colony physically and, as a result, culturally as well. Their literature had to reflect both the embodiment of Englishness as earlier literature or literature based in England had, and simultaneously had to connect to the new colony and therefore the new landscape as well.

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This thesis is not concerned with assessing the historical accuracy of the descriptions in settler writing, or finding a general ideal of landscape through literature that can be extended to the colonies at large. Instead, this study will focus on the ideas and viewpoints of four specific settler authors by following their descriptions of the landscapes of the settler empire, specifically one novel from each of four colonies. By considering the depictions of the landscape from the point of view of four settler authors, comparing the four novels through their descriptions of physical land, and studying the relationship of the land to

various similarities in the novels, what this study aims to demonstrate is the direct relationship between the specific landscape of the writer's colony and the novel's depiction of the developing literary identity of the colony.

The four novels included in this study were all published at the same time and came from each of the colonies New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and South Africa. These four novels are: *Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life* (1881) by Alexander Bathgate, a novel based on family journals about life in sheep stations around Otago in New Zealand; *Gathered In* (originally published serially, 1881 – 2) by Catherine Helen Spence about a young man's move from Scotland to his uncle's farm outside of Melbourne, Australia; *Neville Trueman: The Pioneer Preacher, a Tale of the War of 1812* (1880) by William Henry Withrow, detailing the War of 1812 in Canada from the perspective of a travelling preacher; and finally *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) by Olive Schreiner, detailing life on a farm in a remote area of South Africa and also considered to be the first South African novel.

This project grew out of a smaller project done for the New Zealand Electronic Text Centre at Victoria University of Wellington in 2009. In that project, I wrote an introduction to John Bell's *In the Shadow of the Bush*, a romantic melodrama set in New Zealand that was published in 1899. What was most striking about this novel was its use of New Zealand purely as a setting which does not affect the conventions of plot in any way. The characters and plotline were reminiscent of a mainstream nineteenth century novel concerning characters from very low socioeconomic circumstances, several side plots, and a conclusion that involved blackmail. With a plot so driven by popular British themes, the setting of New Zealand simply provided an exotic backdrop. This posed a larger question of whether other New Zealand authors treated the landscape in a similar way or whether they genuinely engaged with their surroundings. From there, the study grew to include the neighbouring colony of Australia as the closest colony to New Zealand. This question then grew to include

colonies further away from the South Pacific region, first to Canada because of the early settlement and proximity to America, and finally to South Africa to include an area dominated by colonies from several European countries. The main question as each colony was added to the study was how does the landscape affect writing in each colony? Did colonial authors use it as a backdrop, or did they engage with it and allow it to define their novels? This thesis grew out of this question, ultimately narrowing the scope down from a general view of how all authors treated the land they lived on to a comparison of the depiction of landscape in four novels from four different colonies.

Once the colonies were chosen, a publication date had to be chosen in order for the comparison to include authors who were writing at the same time across their various colonies. Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* is widely considered to be the first novel written in South Africa, and as its publication date is 1883, this gives a perfect starting point to begin the search for novels from that period. The content of Schreiner's novel set on a farm in Africa led to Bathgate's novel, set on a sheep station in Otago, published in 1881. Spence's novel and Withrow's novel were both chosen based on the dates of publication rather than content in order to compare their use of landscape with that of Schreiner and Bathgate who both wrote about life on isolated farms.

By choosing authors who wrote at the same time from a range of settler societies, this project provides a snapshot of late colonial fiction's attitudes to landscape at a time when settlement itself – that is, clearing and breaking in the land – had finished, and colonial societies were thinking about a literary culture by creating narratives, even mythologising in some cases, their past and their relation to the modern. A consequence of this specific choice of novels means that there is naturally a limitation on the kinds of generalisations that might be made about settler fiction in these colonies. Bathgate's portrayal of New Zealand sheep stations, for example, cannot give a general sense of the New Zealand colony at large, or

even Otago sheep stations, as other authors not included in this study may have depicted the landscape in an entirely different manner. However, while these novels narrow the scope of the thesis to four specific novels, the similarities and differences found give a clear picture of how each of these authors was defining and engaging with this task of creating a literary history of their colonies.

A study of this nature has not yet been done within the critical field of colonial literature. There are large surveys of literary development within a single colony, such as *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* edited by Terry Sturm, which details each particular period of New Zealand history and the literature that was being written at the time. Similar surveys summarise other countries' literary development from the first settlement to late twentieth century writers, like *The Oxford Literary History of Australia* edited by Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Strauss or *A History of Canadian Literature* by W. H. New. There are also studies done of the place of landscape within Victorian writing, such as *Gardens and Grim Ravines: The Language of Landscape in Victorian Poetry* by Pauline Fletcher.

Additionally, there are surveys and essays written on the effect or view of landscape in the early writing of the colonies, but these are also only written about a single country or landscape in the literature of England. For example, Suzanne Falkiner's *The Writer's Landscape: Wilderness and Settlement* (1992) is a two part essay on the role of landscape in defining Australian literature, but does not discuss any other countries. *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* by Dick Harrison (1977) is a similar study of prairie fiction in Canada. However, none of these are comparative studies. Most mentions of landscape in colonial literature are in short essays or articles in journals and not the focus of an entire study. A survey edited by Kate Darian-Smith called *Text, Theory, Space: Land, Literature and History in South Africa and Australia* (1996) is not a comparison between South African and Australian landscape in literature, but a book of articles on either

Australian or South African literature. Each essay in the book takes the view from either Australia or South Africa, and there is no comparison of the two. Additionally, while there is a wealth of writing on Schreiner and Spence, particularly in relation to first wave feminism, there is very little written on Bathgate and Withrow. A recent Masters thesis “Far South Fancies: Alexander Bathgate and His Ideal Society” (Otago, 2007) by Jennie Henderson discusses Bathgate’s anthology of poetry *Far South Fancies*, and Withrow is mentioned in several anthologies on early Canadian writers. However, none of these analyses are comparative, and none compare these four authors’ use of landscape.

The closest similar study was done by Terry Goldie, and it is detailed in his book *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (1989). Rather than landscape, however, his book compares the attitudes of writers in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia towards the indigenous people in each country. As he explains: “I felt much might be learned by a comparison with a literature of similar roots and similar international stature (or lack of it)” (Goldie vii). While this thesis focuses on landscape, it is interesting to note the presence, or lack in one case, of the indigenous people in these four novels. The native people of a country can easily be seen as an essential aspect of the landscape, and with no in depth mention of them in the four novels, their absence gives another powerful insight into the depiction of landscape. Indeed, the fact that indigenous people are seen as part of the landscape rather than actual human beings makes it much easier to take advantage of them, subdue them and crush them into submission, which is precisely what happened in most of the colonies. They needed to be tamed, just like the landscape, and made “British.” While this aspect is touched on in the following chapters, the indigenous cultures of each of the colonies are an integral part of the landscape and thus are worth discussing briefly.

## Indigenous Cultures within the Novels

In Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the most pertinent aspect of indigenous culture was, like the land, “usefulness.” This varied from colony to colony, as Terry Goldie points out:

In all three countries, indigenous people were forced to succumb to the needs of British imperial expansion. In Australia, the Aborigines at first had little purpose in the white economy except as guides in exploration. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, they became important, perhaps vital, labourers on stations in the interior. The situation in Canada was reversed, with the Indians essential as fur traders to the early economy and of less value thereafter. The Maori, because of differences in topography, and in both white and indigenous economy, seemed of limited ‘use’ at the beginning and remained so. (Goldie 5)

This seems quite accurate when we look at the indigene in the three novels from these colonies. In *Gathered In*, the Aboriginal people are not mentioned once. Spence defines many aspects of Australia, including the variation in the landscape, as an integral part of what makes Australia unique. However, another aspect of that culture, the Aboriginal people, is left completely unmentioned.

In *Neville Trueman*, Withrow shows a few scenes with Indians portrayed as warriors protecting the interests of England and King George, giving them a use beyond that as fur traders, as cited by Goldie above. However, they are mentioned rarely, and when they are, it is only as useful help. In *Waitaruna*, the Maori are mentioned briefly twice, and then only as a dying race. The larger mention about a man called “Maori Jack” describes the things he

taught the settlers about eel catching. However, despite Bathgate's admission that this knowledge is useful to the settlers, he brushes off the man by quickly lamenting that it is a shame that his race is dying and leaves it at that.

Sean Purchase points out in the book *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature* that "Victorian literature is obsessed with others and images of otherness. It was, though, pivotal to the process of representing or inventing both the Englishness and its others at the same time" (Purchase 107). It seems strange that this idea of "otherness" would be so central to Victorian literature when within these three novels, novels that deal directly with Imperialism and the colonisation of countries occupied by the "other," barely mention that "other." This can be explained quite easily, and Goldie makes a wonderful point in his introductory chapter stating that this is due to the problem of belonging:

Australians, New Zealanders, and Canadians have, and long have had, a clear agenda to erase this separation of belonging. The white Canadian looks at the Indian. The Indian is Other and therefore alien. But the Indian is indigenous and therefore cannot be alien. So the Canadian must be alien. But how can the Canadian be alien within Canada? (Goldie 12)

It is not racism that results in absence from these three novels; it is the confusion of belonging. In England, the centre of Victorian culture, the other is a fascinating part of the Empire but still far away from the centre of British life. For the settlers and in particular the authors of these three novels, the other is the displaced indigene that is integral to the landscape they are trying to define as theirs. Thus including the indigene in any truly engaging way means that the authors must admit to their own "otherness" within the landscape they are trying to define as home. Bathgate, Spence, and Withrow, as will become more evident in the chapters devoted to their novels, were trying to define their colonies for themselves, so the lack of connection to the indigenous people can be seen as an effort to

engage more directly with the land of the country rather than the people who lived there originally.

Schreiner's novel is the only one that seems to break this pattern set by the first three novels. In hers, not only are the indigenous people present, but the main character, Waldo, mourns their removal from the landscape. Additionally, the farm acts as a microcosm for African society and thus the servants and workers on the farm are poor blacks while the landowners and managers are whites. As V. A. February points out in the introduction to her book *Mind Your Colour: The "Coloured" Stereotype in South African Literature* (1981), "One of the direct consequences of colonialism and racism is that the colonized of the discriminated invariably become the dupe of a series of rationalisations whereby the power-holders (i.e., the whites) justify their dominant position in society," (February vi). Bathgate, Spence and Withrow show this subjugation by barely including indigenous people in their novels. Schreiner, however, shows her objection to this attitude through her parody of imperial characters who agree with the oppression. Additionally, Schreiner's attitude towards the loss and subjugation of those indigenous people is directly tied to the loss of the pure landscape where those people lived. Hannah Freeman explains, "Schreiner fought for indigenous peoples and the Boers, both of whom she believed lived a more sustainable existence with the landscape" (Freeman 19).

Goldie and others have studied the place of the indigene in colonial novels, and in fact, because the indigenous people were the original occupants of the land, the four novels' engagement – of lack thereof – with the indigenous people shows the authors' attitudes towards the human aspect of the landscape they colonised. However, this study focuses on direct engagement with the landscape. The description and place of landscape in these four novels show the similarities, differences, and the attitudes of the four authors towards the landscape they helped colonise.



This comparative study is important to the critical study of the literatures of these colonies because, through comparison, the significant attitudes and opinions of the colonial writers can be found. In these novels, landscape becomes a literary device used by the authors to show aspects of character such as affiliation to religion, culture and any other aspect of the settlers' new identities in their new home. Withrow's novel *Neville Trueman*, shows settlers in Canada engaging with the Canadian landscape but identifying as British colonists as well. The other three novels show a shift away from this identity, and it becomes clear that their identification as British settlers became difficult when faced with the realities of living on and engaging with such a different landscape from the one they came from. Dick Harrison explains that:

Canadian prairie fiction is about a basically European society spreading itself across a very un-European landscape. It is rooted in that first settlement process in which the pioneer faced two main obstacles: the new land and the old culture. The land was a challenge not only physical but psychological; like all unsettled territory it had no human associations, no ghosts, none of the significance imagination gives to the expressionless face of the earth after men had lived and died there. The prairie, in effect, lacked the fictions which make a place entirely real. (Harrison ix)

This meant merging an old identity with a new setting, and inevitably a new identity would arise so the settlers could identify with their new home. However, finding a new identity, particularly in a landscape so vastly different from home, is not easy. Many of the early settlers were emigrating from a home that had very ambivalent feelings about both the status of these emigrants and the places being colonised. In fact, not all four authors of the novels this thesis focuses on seem to agree with the rationalisations of colonisation. Though they do

each include a specific view of the landscape of the colony they write from, their views do differ on the justification of the colonisation of the land.

The glorification of colonisation is evident in the New Zealand, Australian, and Canadian novels, as will be detailed in the following chapters. These three novels show the land of their colonies as useful for building upon, though each shows this in a different way. In Bathgate's introduction to *Waitaruna*, he comments on his hope to accurately portray, "these fair Southern Islands, fondly and proudly called 'The Britain of the South,'" (Bathgate vi). What this statement and the chapter on *Waitaruna* will show is that, for Bathgate, the New Zealand landscape was almost a replacement for the British landscape as opposed to a new land that had to be dealt with in a new way. Schreiner's novel takes the opposite view through two characters, one of whom acts as a metonym for the land that is being conquered and, one who is a parody of the Imperial attitude towards colonisation. Instead of using land to show a justification of colonisation as Bathgate does, the land in Schreiner's novel is almost a character in its own right, calling out for settlement to cease.

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A comparative study of this nature is very important to the critical field as it will show that landscape plays a deeper role in these novels than simply the physical or geographical area being colonised. This study of four novels from these colonies seeks to find four specific viewpoints from four authors who were dealing with this struggle of identification through their novels. In a few places these novels give small glimpses of the colony at large. For example, in Alexander Bathgate's introduction to his novel, he proudly calls New Zealand the "Britain of the South." This shows that other settlers and writers in New Zealand must have felt similarly about the landscape of the colony. This sentiment is also given by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, one of the founders of the New Zealand Company, in a letter. He states that he was glad of the "early successes of the New-Zealand Company, in rescuing 'the

Britain of the South' from Louis Philippe's purpose of making it a convict colony of France" (Wakefield 29 – 30). Conversely, the landscapes of Canada, Australia, and South Africa, as will be explored in the chapters that follow, were vastly different to the one back in England. In each novel, the authors show the growth of culture that responds to the land.

In each novel as well, the authors show the growing identity of the characters as belonging to their colony rather than belonging to England, and a large aspect of their identity is constructed from the physical location of the settlement. For example, in *Neville Trueman*, the Canadian novel, the identities British and Canadian are often interchanged for one another in Withrow's descriptions of the battle scenes. As Dick Harrison (1977) and Terry Goldie (1989) point out, in Canada the land was so harsh and the settlements so few and far between that, despite the early settlement of the country, a Canadian national identity was still in the making until well into the twentieth century. This can explain Withrow's use of Canadian and British identities for the soldiers, as well as many references to "good King George" throughout the novels. Conversely, as will be demonstrated by the Australian novel *Gathered In*, Spence shows that the early exploration and building up of Australia's harsh interior lands through penal colonies meant that a separate national identity would have been necessary from the early days of the colony. This is the overwhelming viewpoint in her novel, where society and Australian identity are much more advanced than either aspect in Canada. In fact, many characters discuss that culture in Australia as comparable to culture in England. Though the land in the novel is often harsh and dry, there are enough settlements and settlers that many characters in the novel feel their identity is no longer British but Australian.

A final aspect worth touching on briefly is that these novels show the relationship between landscape and the shaping of religious beliefs in the colonies. Interestingly, all four novels were written by Protestants, and this helps shape their viewpoints of the landscape as

well. *Gathered In*, *Neville Trueman*, and *The Story of an African Farm* each have an overt religious theme that is directly related to the landscape of the colony.

### Religion and Landscape in the Novels

As explained in the chapters on Canada and South Africa, early writing in those two colonies was frequently in the form of missionary diaries. Often these journals had the most unbiased view of the land because the missionaries were only observing rather than trying to build or conquer. Thus, by adding a religious aspect into the colonial novels that followed later in the century, an author is, perhaps even unwittingly, providing a character with a non-colonial view of the landscape.

Religion and landscape are more closely connected than just by missionary diaries. Gillian Beer, in an essay on literary image and the countryside, points out “[landscape’s] importance extended beyond the purely aesthetic and became linked with the belief that the natural forms of the countryside exercised a beneficent moral and spiritual influence on country people” (Beer 243). As explained in the chapter on Canada, the settlers brought over a great deal of “cultural baggage” with them to the colonies. Many settlers, particularly when faced with such a vast and different landscape than their home landscape, would hold onto this baggage as their closest means of identification. Religion was a central aspect of cultural identity and in most cases of settlement religion had preceded the settlers onto the land in the form of travelling missionaries, making it easy to hold onto in the face of a new and strange land.

Additionally, the justification for building up towns, cities and industry in a land so far and different from home was that it was God’s work, and that the land was God-given to the settlers who knew the correct way to use the land to its full potential. As Goldie explains,

“Christianity is associated...with the scientific progress of civilization,” (Goldie 131). As pointed out in the *Oxford Literary History of Australia*, “Late eighteenth-century colonisers believed their God-given duty was to improve the natural landscape of the new world by making it productive; in addition, its indigenous inhabitants would be Christianized and civilised,” (Bennett and Strauss 23). Robert Grant explains that this was seen as the job of the British; “It was suggested that the native of England was uniquely qualified to bring the benefits of civilization to new lands” (Grant 169). Religion was tied directly to the land and the inhabitants.

*Neville Trueman* and *Gathered In* both have religious characters as protagonists, and both respond to the land in a way that shows their faith. In *Neville Trueman*, the title character is a wandering missionary who is part of the defence of the Canadian lands during the War of 1812. In *Gathered In* the protagonist is quite religious, and in the Australian colony he meets a wandering bush minister with whom he often discusses the shaping of religion in the new settler society.

The religious aspect of *The Story of an African Farm* is integral to the story and the characters. Religion underlies Waldo’s entire story and character, and each of his crises is religious. Throughout the novel, Waldo struggles with his faith and idea of God throughout the rest of the book until the very end:

Only then, when there comes a pause, a blank in your life, when the old idol is broken, when the old hope is dead, when the old desire is crushed, then the Divine compensation of Nature is made manifest. She shows herself to you.

(Schreiner 267)

In the end, it is Nature that becomes the true deity. Here, Nature is compared to the Hebrew God saying, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” As Gerald Monsman explains in his book on Schreiner, this end shows:

Waldo as a child believed not in a truly transcendent divinity but in a narrow, restrictive god-as-idol in which the deity is co-opted by the worshiper. By the novel's end, however, Waldo has moved from fantasizing an embodiment of rigid patriarchal principles to embracing the concept of a divinity and love as a continuous unfolding of possibilities, and not a finished creation. (Monsman 102)

In the end, Schreiner shows that Nature is the true divine power. She “denied the moral superiority of British techno-culture...Her concern to define an inviolate, privileged space within a fallen world – to re-establish the farm as ‘garden’ – is reflected in her opposition to the confining idol of colonial code,” (Monsman 166). Africa, “so often claimed by imperialists to be a god-forsaken continent,” (Schreiner xv), is actually truly divine through nature.

What these novels demonstrate is that not only is the landscape viewed within a Christian framework, but in Schreiner's novel the landscape becomes the deity itself. Only Schreiner engages with that religion and finds a way to reject it through the South African landscape. For her, the pretext of Africa as “god-forsaken” has led her to reject both this notion and the Victorian ideal of “god-as-idol,” making the natural landscape of Africa the place where true spirituality lies.

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The chapters that follow will analyse in depth the authors' treatment of landscape in a group of settler colonial novels all written at the same time with the intention of identifying the characteristic elements of how landscape was treated in their fiction and identifying any differences in the way the various settler writers use landscape in their text. Furthermore, they will show how the novels demonstrate the closeness these four authors felt to the land and how that land shaped novels they wrote about their colonies.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life and Landscape*

#### Landscape in the First View of the Colony

The New Zealand Company was founded in the late 1830s with the purpose of urging British citizens to emigrate to New Zealand. The company was headed by Edward Gibson Wakefield. In order to entice immigrants to the budding colony, his aim was to create a view of New Zealand as a pastoral paradise, perfect for budding farms and business. Wakefield and the company secretary John Ward wanted to give prospective settlers a perfect view of the new colony, and “as colonial land agents they allowed their imaginations full play in describing the unseen real estate they intended to sell” (Evans 19). To this end they used familiar old world terms, comparing the weather to the finest in Southern Europe, and “[Wakefield’s] overblown language gives a picture of never-ending growth and fruition” (Evans 19). These pamphlets were the first descriptions of the New Zealand landscape.

Wakefield describes the effort he put into the early work of The New Zealand Company in a book of letters published in 1849. He describes the need for colonisation and emigration, saying that it was this need that drove his hopes with New Zealand. As shown in his quote in the introduction, he wanted to keep New Zealand from becoming a French penal colony the way Australia had become an English one. He then goes on to say that, while the English government had, prior to 1830, generally granted land without price, the new colonies would be the perfect opportunity to sell land to prospective settlers. With these desires for New Zealand settlement, his attempts at convincing settlers to move to New Zealand were based on his depictions of the landscape. He states in one of his letters that “the business of settling a new country, the mode in which waste of public land is disposed of

by the government, must necessarily exercise an all-important influence” (Wakefield 44).

Once New Zealand land became a commodity, it was necessary to advertise it in the pamphlets.

The importance of these pamphlets is that not only are they the first pieces of writing about New Zealand, but they are also entirely focused on landscape. Land was the central commodity to the immigrant, and thus Wakefield’s focus was not an accident but an effort to give a pastoral quality to the landscape before prospective settlers had ever seen it. As shown in the introduction, he, and clearly others including Bathgate, referred to New Zealand as “The Britain of the South.” The aim was to show the reader that through the industrial revolution England had lost the purity of its rural life. In New Zealand, they promised, life could be the pastoral ideal that was no longer possible in the old world. The effect of these pamphlets can be seen in novels in the late nineteenth century, particularly in the novel included in this chapter, *Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life* by Alexander Bathgate.

What these pamphlets meant for the early settlers was that upon their arrival the colony would either be exactly as described or a great let down. Thus, in their early writing they would describe the land as either a “New Briton,” or a desolate land bereft of identifiable connection. However, even this lonely view had a payoff: “The goal of all this difficult and lonely endeavour with the land is, of course, material success, a goal that is uncritically accepted by most,” (Sturm 117).

Thus, from the first, the physical landscape of New Zealand was seen as something useful, something that could be built upon and put to use, creating a practical relationship between the colonial settler and the land. As James Belich points out, “progress in New Zealand was to avoid the price that marred it in Old Britain: a loss of virtue; the vices of industrialism; the class tension and conflict” (Belich 19). The writing about the land and the colony followed suit because



The written word was so crucial to the process of colonising. Its job was to sustain order, and particularly to sustain the idea that it was right and natural for Europeans to be living in the wilds so far from their original home – to deny in fact that there *was* such a distance between home and Home. (Evans 18)

Not all settlers found the landscape pleasing. However, even for those settlers who found the landscape desolate and lonely, the process of colonisation was beneficial because it turned a dull landscape into a bustling colony. The disparity of views is quite evident in *Waitaruna*. Many characters comment about the progress of the colony which they feel is greatly improving the landscape, whether or not they found the landscape pleasing to begin with. This was exactly the view that The New Zealand Company tried so hard to sell: the land is beautiful, picturesque, and just right for the colonial man to make something out of.

### Landscape in Pioneer Novels

From the outset, the landscape itself was highlighted as the unique aspect of the New Zealand colony by The New Zealand Company. Early writing from the colony thus highlighted the landscape as the most stunning and unique aspect of the colony. As in Ward and Wakefield's pamphlets, the land was seen as a beautiful haven, an idyllic place with possibilities as opposed to the grit and grime of England's overpopulated cities. Landscape was particularly important in early short fictions, "whose effort is directed mainly at documenting and recording the local environment" (Sturm 204). Lydia Wevers' chapter in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* on the colonial short story in New Zealand explains that, in a short story, the colonial experience can be documented briefly in a few pages, and "the consequences of cultural separation and instability can be suggested very

easily in a narrative specifically engaged with experience that is out of the ordinary, exotic, inexplicable, and takes place in the overtly unfamiliar landscapes of the Empire” (Sturm 205). This meant that the writing could engage directly with the landscape to give a picture of experience.

Novels were of course much larger works than short stories. Early colonial New Zealand novels were intended for a British audience so they used popular melodramatic plots often involving romance between a man and a woman usually of different class and their struggle to be together. This meant that the biggest difference that could be written about in a novel was the land itself while the plot stayed close to the traditional conventions of romance. In fact, because sensationalism was such a vital part of the Victorian novel, a far-off setting in the wilds of a colony at the end of the world was a perfect beginning for a Victorian romance. Even the novels that did nothing to describe the settler experience used the new landscape as a backdrop. Often it was described as not only beautiful but useful as well. Though only a few novels interpreted the settler experience in an articulate way, they still offered a few revelations about New Zealand:

First, there was the land itself. Often it formed a sublime or picturesque backdrop, but what really interested most of these writers and their characters was not the beauty of the land but what could be made of it, or better, from it. (Sturm 117)

Not all novels agreed with this idea of the land as the useful and beautiful paradise that Ward and Wakefield had promised. Many settlers found a great contrast between what they were told and what they found in the colony, and would thus write about that contrast. Much of the land, particularly in the plains of the South Island, was barren and isolated, prompting novels of loss and regret. Some authors wrote novels where the remoteness was felt by the each character. However, other authors, like Alexander Bathgate, took both points

of view and wrote characters that felt each way, though only giving credence to the characters who felt more positive through his negative characterisations of those who found fault with the land.

Many early novels were either Victorian melodramas transplanted to the wild New Zealand bush or a cross between a typical romance and a settler adventure story. An example of the former is *In the Shadow of the Bush* (1899, Sands and Co.) by John Bell, a romance complete with every aspect of Victorian melodrama: love, disaster, misunderstanding, blackmail, and a tidy conclusion wrapping everything up. The plot is rather predictable, and in fact the setting in New Zealand is a bit contrived as every single important character shows up in the same rural town in the middle of the North Island within one week of each other as though it were a district in London instead of a country halfway around the globe. In a novel like Bell's, the only noticeable difference from an English melodrama is the landscape in the novel. There are tree fellers, descriptions of the kinds of trees and birds, and a general picture of the green pastoral paradise of the new colony. Instead of a lark singing in a willow tree, there are kakas calling from a pohutakawa. Though these distinctive landmarks give a picture of New Zealand life, they seem to be placed into the story randomly rather than being central to the plot.

The second type of novel, a romance crossed with a settler adventure story, describes *Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life* (1881) by Alexander Bathgate. This novel is much more realistic in its depictions of New Zealand life. Bathgate took descriptions directly from the diaries or the journals of family and strung them together with a single coherent storyline. There was quite a large group of novels of this sort, detailing the colonial experience and adventures of the migrant workers. Often these novels would take place on sheep stations or farms, giving almost biographical details of colonial pioneer life. *Waitaruna* demonstrates these modes discussed in the previous sections perfectly: the contrast between overpopulated

England and the beauty of New Zealand as described by Ward and Wakefield, the isolation and loneliness of life on a station, and the purpose of working the land to build these stations and cities.

### Alexander Bathgate

Alexander Bathgate had a good deal of insight on the pioneer lifestyle before writing his novel. His family emigrated to Dunedin in Otago from Scotland in 1863 when he was 18. His father was manager of the Bank of Otago and did editing work for the local newspaper, *The Otago Daily Times*. Bathgate began working as a banker but later was qualified as a barrister and worked in Dunedin until 1909. Throughout his life in Dunedin and Otago, he pursued many different activities including conservation, law, banking, and writing. He wrote articles for many local papers, his own accounts of Otago, a volume of verse and two novels: *Waitaruna* (1881) and *Soger Sandy's Bairn: Life in Otago Fifty Years Ago* (1913). The latter is based on the experience of two brothers who defy their family and are disinherited. They move to New Zealand to work in the gold fields of Otago and make their fortune. The first novel, written 30 years before the second, is based directly on the settler experience, "in the sober depiction of Otago life, with Bathgate defining the formula when he says his book is a series of 'true pictures of life in the southern portion of the colony of New Zealand...strung together, as it were, by a story'" (Sturm 111). In the introduction to the novel, Bathgate himself says of its purpose that

If the simple story of *Waitaruna* ends in removing, however slightly, the great ignorance which prevails among many of the people of Britain, regarding these fair Southern Islands, fondly and proudly called "The Britain of the South," the writer will feel amply rewarded for his labours. (Bathgate vi.)

By calling New Zealand “The Britain of the South” in the introduction, Bathgate sets up the view of the colony that was introduced by Ward and Wakefield and pervades throughout the entire novel: a replacement land that exists for the purpose of colonisation to replicate the lost glory of home.

*Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life* (1881)

Alexander Bathgate

The plot of *Waitaruna* is, like most early New Zealand novels, a stock standard melodramatic romance. The main focus is around Gilbert Langton and the woman he falls in love with, Ottalie Ewart. Naturally, Gilbert is worried about his feelings, fearing Ottalie does not share them. There is also another man interested in Ottalie, Gilbert’s manager, who becomes jealous and cranky whenever he fears Gilbert has feelings for Ottalie as well. In the end, the manager confesses his love and is turned down. Dejected, he decides to leave the colony for Australia to try to make his fortune there, and Gilbert, after having been promoted to manager, confesses his love to Ottalie. Of course, Ottalie returns the feelings for Gilbert and, the novel ends in their engagement.

Like many other romances from the period, there are a few subplots around the main characters. There is Gilbert’s friend from school, Arthur Leslie, who spends his time in the colony continually trying out new ventures but eventually marrying a barmaid and living out by some goldfields in a shanty. There is also another more doomed romance involving Ottalie’s brother, Harry, and her friend Nellie Ewart (née Cameron). Nellie is a wealth-hungry woman who marries Harry for his money. The pair move out to a lonely station by the mountains, but Harry meets an unfortunate end by drowning, a demise referred to as “the New Zealand Death” due to the enormous number of settlers who met their end by drowning.

Although rather typical in plot, Bathgate's novel is more successful in presenting a New Zealand settler experience than other more sensationalist novels such as John Bell's *In the Shadow of the Bush*. In Bell's novel, there is a feeling that the author is trying to emulate a British writer like Dickens or Thackeray, rather unsuccessfully, by throwing in subplot after subplot and culminating the novel in a final show down where every character involved in a complex blackmailing scheme arrives in a small town in the North Island at exactly the same time. Bathgate keeps his novel from becoming too overblown, not letting the subplots become too thick or number too many. *Waitaruna* is a realist novel about the colony and, although there are a few romances thrown in, the story still revolves mainly around a picture of life in the area around Dunedin in the South Island.

Additionally, Bathgate involves the landscape a great deal in the story. For Bathgate, the setting of the novel has as much to do with the story as the plots. Unlike many sensationalist novels like Bell's *In the Shadow of the Bush* where the landscape is thrown in as a backdrop to give a picture of pastoral life in a far away colony, landscape plays a much larger part in Bathgate's novel.

### Landscape in *Waitaruna*

Landscape in *Waitaruna*, like many early New Zealand novels, is the main aspect of the colony that distinguishes it from the land the settlers came from. From the first chapter, the land is set up as paradise, exactly as Wakefield and Ward had hoped in their pamphlets. At the outset of the novel, Gilbert Langton, a young Englishman, sets off for New Zealand to make his fortune. As he prepares for his journey, he runs into an old friend, Arthur Leslie, and tells Leslie about his move to New Zealand. Leslie is immediately taken in: "as each glowing picture of colonial life was drawn by Langton – mainly, it is to be feared, from his

imagination – Leslie avowed his determination to go to New Zealand also,” (Bathgate 2). In contrast to the beautiful picture of the colony that Langton described, Arthur’s uncle was determined to give him “a seat in his counting-house, and this was by no means a pleasant prospect in the eyes of that young gentleman” (Bathgate 2). The mention of a “counting-house” is rather claustrophobic, giving a picture of London as the opposite of the paradise that New Zealand is. From the first, New Zealand’s landscape is shown as more beautiful and desirable than England.

After hearing such wonderful things about the colony, Arthur decides to stow away on the ship to make his way to New Zealand as well. After the three month journey, they arrive in Dunedin and go their separate ways. Gilbert meets up with the man with whom he arranged a job, Mr. Ramshorn, who works on Waitaruna sheep station in central Otago. Before they set off, Gilbert runs into Arthur again who tells him that he has also taken a job on a sheep station, and, coincidentally, Arthur’s post is the neighbouring station to Gilbert’s.

For this first section of the novel, Gilbert and Arthur are set up as opposites in their views of the colony. Gilbert, who had clearly put a lot of thought into the move, is immediately struck by the scenery when he arrives in Dunedin: “He heard some of the passengers around him grumbling at the apparent hilliness of the country but so far as he was concerned, the beauty of the scenery impressed him so favourably that he could think of nothing else,” (Bathgate 35). Arthur, however, finds the place much less to his liking. While on the ship, “the majority, amongst whom was Arthur Leslie, wished eagerly for the promised land of New Zealand to rise to view,” (Bathgate 29 – 30). Unfortunately for Arthur, the pastoral paradise described by Gilbert and built up in grandeur for many months at sea will never be fulfilled. After only a few weeks in the colony, Arthur is already dissatisfied and bored with the country and the land:

“Is not this a miserable outlandish hole for any white man to live in?” asked Leslie, while they were thus occupied. “I am thoroughly sick of it, and intend clearing out very soon. There are gold-diggings not far from this, and I think I’ll have a try at that sort of thing.” (Bathgate 83)

The two men have different views of the landscape itself that they project from the start of their journey. Gilbert sees the land as practical, something that is currently unused, unlike the land back in England. In his view, the land in New Zealand is his for building and working upon in the hope of gaining wealth and making a comfortable life for himself.

Arthur saw New Zealand not only as a place where he could be saved from a mundane life in England, but as an almost mystical land where gold, work, and money are free for the taking. After only a few weeks in the colony he realizes that things are not as easy as he hoped, and his view of the colony changes. The landscape is thus described differently by each character, with Gilbert seeing the strange beauty in the landscape and the isolated stations while Arthur sees nothing but desolation:

Gilbert was much impressed with the beauty of the birch trees; but, though he praised them greatly, he could awaken no enthusiasm in his companion, who contented himself with observing that there was a “deal of good fencing in them,” and added that he would not like to have to “hump” the posts out of the bush. (Bathgate 91)

Arthur remains a grumpy character whose purpose is to exemplify the more pessimistic men who make the journey to New Zealand. He is not alone in his hatred of the land as Nellie Ewart’s attitude demonstrates later in the novel. However, the general opinion of the rest of the characters is much more positive and incredibly imperial. They view the land as a ‘promised land’ that was truly made for them to build upon, a new England where they can rebuild society fixing previous mistakes. Mr Ramshorn, the man who took Gilbert



on to Waitaruna sheep station, expresses this view as he and Gilbert begin their journey to the station:

It is a strange thing how gold seems to be always found in out-of-the-way place, as if it were put there to attract population. Look at California and Australia, and now this country. Otago was considered the most outlandish, miserable part of the whole colony by those living further north, and now Dunedin has outstripped all the other towns in New Zealand. (Bathgate 51)

This attitude is by no means seen as a bad thing. In fact, the building up of the land is preferable as it shows that New Zealand is not an out of the way or backwards colony, but just as advanced as any other colony or England. As Gilbert and Mr Ramshorn leave Dunedin and begin the ride to Waitaruna, they remark upon the growth of the colony which surprises Gilbert:

“It’s as pretty a little town as you will see anywhere,” said [Mr Ramshorn]; “though it’s the fashion of most Victorians to abuse it, and the country in general, and the climate in particular, I can’t say I agree with them on any point.”...

“I had no idea I should have found the place so large or so far advanced.”

“The last few years have made a marvellous difference. When I first came down from the other side, a few years ago, Dunedin was a very small place compared with what it is now. But let us push on.”

“I supposed it was the discovery of gold that sent it ahead,” said Gilbert, turning his horse’s head away from the fair city again. (Bathgate 50 – 1)

From this exchange, it is clear that both Mr Ramshorn and Gilbert see the land around them as something to be put to use. The discovery of gold was fortuitous as the area had no use

otherwise. With the discovery, towns can be built, sheep stations can be brought in, and towns can grow. This recent development of the colony is, as Mr Ramshorn puts it, marvellous.

This development is also immediately seen as beneficial to the land itself, making something out of the next to nothing that Otago is. As Gilbert and Mr Ramshorn ride towards Waitaruna, the scenery before them is described as lovely at first with farmland and settlements, but as they leave civilization it becomes very bleak indeed:

The district through which they travelled in the morning was, in the main, well cultivated and studded with farms, but later in the day their route led through a tract of country which to Gilbert seemed desolate in the extreme. Nothing but undulating ridges covered with a yellow grass, growing in large bunches or tussocks; no trees, no houses, and no people to be seen. On they rode for miles through country of this description; only now and again would they see, on the top of some range, or in one of the gullies, a solitary cabbage tree. (Bathgate 52)

The novel is dotted with references like this: “The view across the plain can hardly be called a pleasing one, for one only sees a wide stretch of yellowish withered-looking grass,” (Bathgate 100). Despite the beauty that Gilbert continuously describes, there is also an opposing sense of isolation in the landscape that the settlers are trying to fill. This shows not only the pleasant side of colonisation, the only side that a character like Arthur Leslie was expecting, but the hardships the settlers had to endure as well.

The balance between beauty and isolation runs throughout the novel. Hawera Station, where Harry and Nellie Ewart, Ottalie’s brother and sister-in-law, live is described as an incredibly lonely station, “one has a feeling of being hemmed in on every side,” (Bathgate 206). However, despite the extreme isolation of the scene, the scenery is still described as

“beautiful, nay, grand,” (Bathgate 207). Although the scenery can be described as both isolating and stunning, for Nellie it is only barren: “Unfortunately for Nellie Ewart, she cared for none of these things, and she found herself very dull in her new home” (Bathgate 207).

The struggle between beauty and desolation is a theme that runs throughout the novel, and the sense of isolation despite the beauty that it creates is the centre of the novel’s view of the New Zealand landscape. Each character deals with this struggle at one point, and each character comes out on a different side. Arthur Leslie’s dislike of the land and the colony was established early on, and it causes his turn to alcoholism and eventual settling down in a shanty outside of Muttontown, a rough settlement for diggers.

Gilbert is not constantly enamoured of that scenery and does occasionally find dullness in the landscape. On a trip to Muttontown, he notices that “the view from the street where they stood was contracted and uninteresting,” (Bathgate 131). As Gilbert and Mr Ramshorn ride into the township, they notice, “the whole valley was covered with gravel, sludge, and mud washed down from the various workings, amid which there flowed in many and devious courses a stream of muddy water, or rather liquid mud,” (Bathgate 129). The views he comes across on either his journeys or around his station are described with an overwhelming feeling of loneliness and great expanses of nothing:

Here and there huge masses of rock of fantastic shapes met the eye. The scant vegetation did not suffice to hide the brown earth, and the only thing which redeemed the otherwise barren and desolate appearance of the mountain was the fact that many of the gullies with which its side was furrowed, were filled with a dense growth of manuka shrub. (Bathgate 80-1)

However, unlike Arthur, Gilbert is still able to find the beauty inherent in even the most barren of landscapes. Arthur, Nellie and eventually Mr Ramshorn, cannot find the beauty in the landscape. Thus, their endeavours become solely about money, and if there is not enough

returned on an investment or in a gold-digging, they cannot reconcile the barrenness of the landscape with those unfulfilled needs.

The extreme isolation does more than just frustrate Arthur and Mr Ramshorn. It also causes the downfall of Nellie and Harry Ewart's marriage. At Hawera Station, as mentioned before, the sense of isolation is constant, with nothing to break the monotony: "Hawera station looks a lonely place, as indeed it is" (Bathgate 206). The enormity of the mountains and lake by the station amplify the lack of human presence because "The station and the few adjacent buildings are the only indications of the presence of man; and on a dull day with the clouds resting on the mountain tops, Hawera Station looks lonely in the extreme" (Bathgate 207). Due to this seclusion, Nellie is constantly miserable, and refers to life at the station as almost a death sentence. Speaking to Harry before he goes off for the day, she says to him, "buried alive as I am here, and never having a soul to speak to but you, it is only natural that I should feel lonely" (Bathgate 210). She refers to being "buried alive" again during this conversation, saying, "You must remember that it is a great change of life to me, to leave all my friends and bury myself alive among these dismal mountains" (Bathgate 211). For Nellie, the beauty of the scenery is nothing compared to extreme isolation and lack of human contact.

This loneliness takes its toll on their marriage as it is revealed that Nellie does not really love her husband. As Harry eventually comes to realize, "she supposed he was, or would be wealthy" (Bathgate 213) and was thus willing to put up with the deserted station if she had Harry's money. Harry tries as hard as he can to continue to please her in the hope that perhaps she'll come around and fall in love with him eventually, but he never gets the chance. It is in an effort to please Nellie that he meets his demise. Gilbert comes out for a short visit to Hawera station, but after a few days he must head back to Waitaruna. Harry decides to come on part of the journey with him to get the week's letters for Nellie from the

post station. They reach the station but have to cross a large river to get to it, and despite their calls, no one comes out of the building to bring a boat across. Harry refuses to leave without getting the letters because, “Nellie would never forgive me, I think, if I disappointed her in that way. I have half a mind to swim across,” (Bathgate 249). As Harry tries to ford the river, his horse accidentally kicks him in the head, and Harry slips down the bank and drowns in the current. This incident reveals the danger and hardship of colonial life. Though the land is beautiful, there are still hazards.

The struggle between extreme isolation with great personal risk and the payoff of building a colony is precisely what is mentioned in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, that the goal of such difficult work was great material success. There is a willingness to deal with the isolation and hardships if there is promise of an ample reward. Most of the characters find a degree of sympathy with the land and enjoy the beauty of it. At Hawera station where Nellie cannot see anything but isolation and monotony, Ottalie is able to see the beauty:

“What a truly lovely place this is, Nellie!” exclaimed Ottalie the morning after her arrival. “The view is so much more varied and impressive than we have at Pakeloa. Water, trees, and mountains are, I think, the three elements of scenery, and here you have them beautifully united, while at Pakeloa we only have mountains.” (Bathgate 215)

Characters like Ottalie and Gilbert see the isolation of the land as either beautiful or useful, and often as both. Ottalie is always commenting on beauty when she sees it, and as mentioned earlier both characters see the loveliness of a station like Pakeloa where the remote landscape was adorned with a homestead which makes an oasis in a deserted setting.

Characters like Nellie and Arthur cannot accept the compromise of living in a land they find dull and lonely in exchange for the reward of hard work, and thus they can find no

joy in the landscape. Arthur finds the place wretched and continually changes careers hoping to find something that he can enjoy, or at least make money off of. Nellie Ewart despises living in such an isolated spot, and after Harry dies she soon moves back to the population centre and finds another man. After Ottalie's comment about the union of the beautiful elements of Hawera's landscape, Nellie says, "it is no doubt very pretty; but I must confess I find it a little dull at times...I would give a good deal to have a nice gossip with some of my old friends," (Bathgate 215). These two characters deal with the loneliness solely for the prospect of a payoff, and consequently no payoff will ever be enough for them to forget the desolation they find in the land. On the contrary, characters like Gilbert or Ottalie find ways of enjoying the landscape around not only through the hope of a reward for their efforts but because they came to the country with a more open mind as well.

Despite the continual reference to the country as something to be built upon and used, there are a few moments in the novel where there is juxtaposition between this building up of the colony and a sense of what is being lost, particularly in reference to the native people. There is a brief mention, as Gilbert looks at a beautiful canoe, of the loss of Māori craftsmanship which used to abound, "in the days before the advent of the 'Pakeha' with his deadly civilisation and exterminating 'Waipouru' (alcoholic liquor – literally, 'stinking water')'" (Bathgate 74).

There is one other point in the novel where Bathgate mentions a Māori man, this time a man called Māori Jack. He comes on an eel gathering expedition with a few of the men, and, "Gilbert was considerably interested in Māori Jack, as he was the first of the aboriginal race he had seen in the colony; for though still numerous in the North Island, throughout the South Island of New Zealand Māories are rarely seen," (Bathgate 176). This is the only point in the novel where the indigenous people are talked about other than just in a passing mention. Here, Bathgate says of this man that, "one could not but regret that he belonged to a

doomed race, and that his people would disappear before the conquering white men,” (Bathgate 176). This statement is quite bittersweet, because, although Bathgate seems sympathetic with the destruction of the Māori people, it is said as an inevitability, as though the loss of an entire race of people is sad but necessary. As Jane Stafford and Mark Williams point out in *Māoriland*, “Colonialism rested on massive injustice by which people from Britain supplanted the existing population of this country. The literature of the colonial period rationalises, justifies and extends this process of conquest, displacement and appropriation,” (Stafford and Williams 15). Here, in this short statement, Bathgate does exactly this: he mourns the loss but justifies it as a consequence of belonging to a “doomed race.”

This rationalisation is noticeable in reference to landscape throughout the novel as well. At the first visit to Pakeloa, the homestead where the Ewarts live, the scene is described:

Looking from the house, the view is desolate and barren; but on turning towards it, the trees, the green hedges, the plants and shrubs in the garden, even now, when many of them are still leafless, are pleasing and refreshing to the eye, and acquire an additional charm and beauty from the contrast with their surroundings. Pakeloa was indeed an oasis in the desert, at least so thought Gilbert Langton, as he, in company with Mr. Ramshorn, dismounted there an hour or two later. (Bathgate 101)

The notion that this homestead is an oasis within a desert of the surrounding landscape again demonstrates the idea that the expansion of the Victorian Empire is beneficial to the land itself. Bathgate has rationalized the displacement of land by describing how the homestead is an oasis, a beautiful place built by the settlers in an otherwise desolate desert.

The novel ends on a high note, both with plot and in the view of the landscape. After a few days in Dunedin, Gilbert runs into Ottalie at an opera, and the two eventually must make their way back to Pakeloa where Ottalie's mother is ill. As they ride back together, they come up to the top of a mountain and look out expecting to see Port Chalmers and a view of the whole bay. However, "the whole valley was filled with a dense white mist that hid the bay... They appeared to be upon an island, and the compact and fleecy mist formed a calm and milk-white sea, from which the peaks and summits of the peninsula hills rose like so many little islets. The illusion was perfect" (Bathgate 309). It is at this majestic point where the two finally declare their love. Ottalie asks if the future will be perfect or not, and Gilbert replies that it will be perfect, for Ottalie will make him, "a better and happier man," (Bathgate 312).

This ending seems to sum up this struggle that runs throughout the novel perfectly. Despite the isolation, the struggle for money, the constant health problems, and the personal strain it takes to live the settler life, in the end the beauty of the landscape and the companionship found there illustrates the success of the colony and the endeavours of the settlers who left home to build it.

Despite the importance of the landscape in this particular novel, it still does not engage fully with the land as a wholly New Zealand entity. Instead, the novel is like an advertisement written to uphold the imperialist attitude towards colonisation, showcasing New Zealand as a "New Briton," perfect for settlement and industry. The landscape is beautiful but desolate, and every imperfection can be fixed. *Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life* shows that the colony is perfect for simply recreating England.



## CHAPTER TWO

### *Gathered In* and Landscape

#### Landscape in the Developing Australian Canon

The first printing press arrived Australia in 1787 with the First Fleet, but unfortunately no one who knew how it worked came along with it, so it remained unused until a convict prisoner set it up at the beginning of the nineteenth century. With this press, the first colonial newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette*, was published in 1803. From then, the number of publications and writings grew rapidly.

Despite the rapid surge of publications, this early writing was not a sudden outpouring of novels, poems, or anything other than official writings of the colonies:

The earliest literary works produced from the new colony were the First Fleet annals: official and semi-official accounts of the settlement. Formally, they were part of a trend towards prose realism in Europe, one that included the new genres of journalism, the literary essay, and the novel, which gained literary status through its claim to verisimilitude. (Bennett and Strauss 25)

Much of these writings were self-conscious, the officers trying hard to be both observant and official in their descriptions of the experience of colonisation. During the early nineteenth century and even reaching into the mid to late century, the definition of high literature extended only to epic poetry, histories and biographies, while novels, other forms of poetry, fictions and popular drama were considered lower forms of writing. However, these so-called lower kinds of literature are precisely the kind of writing that begin a trend of national literature by responding to the new world experience of the first settlers.

In 1856, a critical essay on Australian fiction was published by Fredrick Sinnett, a journalist and literary critic. His essay, “The Fiction Fields of Australia,” discussed the nature of Australian novels, which he saw as travel books in disguise as ‘real’ literature. Sinnett wanted Australian authors to move away from pioneer stories describing the landscape and settler experience. However, “it is precisely because colonial writing is the writing of all kinds of travellers in their particular contexts that it begins to acquire those qualities that differentiated it from the universalism Sinnett valued” (Bennett and Strauss 43). Sinnett was not alone in his hopes. In the latter half of the century, there were many calls to Australian novelists to create a true Australian literature, not travel stories. These calls were countered by writers who felt the Australian landscape was and should continue to be the central theme that novels focused on.

This history of Australian literature is vital to understanding the place of the physical landscape within the growing canon because by the 1880s, when the novel in this chapter was published, the debate over the place of the Australian landscape within Australian novels was at its height. Instead of a literature trying to show the newness of the Australian landscape, a task that had been done decades earlier at the start of the century, writers of the 1880s could choose either side, the landscape driven “bush realism” novels, or the kind of literature Sinnett hoped for, a marrying of the physical with cultural, political and national identity to create a unified cultural landscape.

The physical landscape played a large part in this idea of an integrated cultural landscape. The vastly different physical features of the land became the most obvious substantial disparity between the new colony and the old world, so a great deal of the literature and writing described above was essentially a vehicle for a new identity based on the settler’s place within this landscape. As Lucy Frost points out in a chapter of *Imagining Australia*, “landscape was narrative. Place was always more than setting,” (Ryan and

Wallace-Crabbe 54). The early writing explored the landscape, followed the landscape, and used the landscape as the greatest and most outwardly evident feature of the colony.

Thus, in early novels the landscape of Australia is used overtly as almost a character, a setting against which one must battle in order to survive. The harshness of the deserts and the strangeness of the outback make it perfect as an antagonist to a hero: “Depicting the environment as hostile has generally worked well for fictional developments of national place and character,” (Bennett and Strauss 95). This view of the land is also useful for the settler whose job it is to tear down that land, “for the mere presence of the beholder was an invasion and an assurance of future destruction,” (Hergenhan 139). Recognising the environment as hostile or antagonistic made the job of invading and “civilising” that land forgivable. Additionally, because so many early settlers were forcibly sent to Australia, the sense of exile in a strange land lent this view to the landscape immediately.

Due also to the Eurocentric worldview of the settlers, whether convicts or farmers, “Australian nature was measured against the green and pleasant landscape of the northern hemisphere,” (Hergenhan 157). This certainly holds true in many early novels and memoirs, accounts that seemed like “defensive attempts to assert some sort of order and control over the vastness and sameness of the landscape” (Hergenhan 158). Thus, a great deal of early writing reflects this dilemma between the beauty and strangeness of the environment and the justification that it will be destroyed to make room for the growing colonies. It was, for some, “not only an economic necessity but a moral responsibility to bring ordered civilisation to the landscape,” (Hergenhan 139).

However, the view of Australia and the Australian landscape could not continue as a solely British view but instead had to change to a new identity centred on “Australian-ness.” Likewise, the literature changed from European styled descriptions of landscape, the popular pastorals, to a literature that used the landscape as a large part of a unique and growing

Australian consciousness. In the literature that grew out of the deepening identification in the 1880s and 90s, the landscape of Australia fit in perfectly with the idea of “Australian uniqueness”:

In this version of history new national understandings were invested in aspects of the rural and the wilderness – the itinerant workers on the land, and the landscape itself – in opposition to an urban population and scene understood to be tainted by European beliefs and aesthetics not compatible with the original, ‘indigenous’ Australia – by which no reference to the Aboriginal population was intended. (Bennett and Strauss 91)

Australian writers of these later decades by no means used the landscape simply as a backdrop or a sensational setting for their bodies of work. Instead, the landscape shaped their view of themselves, particularly during the second half of the century. In 1852, *Sydney University Magazine* called for a national literature that embodied the poetic beauty of classical literature but was also, “shaped by the Australian environment and culture,” (Bennett and Strauss 50). A call like this, of which there were several from other magazines as well, ingrained the sense of location in the journals and works of fiction, particularly in the colonial adventure stories that became increasingly popular mid-century:

The narratives of ‘wilderness,’ engaging the experiences of exploring and first settlement produced a zone for imperial enterprise. By the 1870s, this Imperial narrative was reshaped to suit a new genre of colonial adventure...In the colonial adventure, landscape was no longer wilderness waiting for settlement. (Ryan and Wallace-Crabbe 55)

Later appeals by the *Bulletin* for bush realism meant that by the last two decades of the century, much of the literature no longer used the landscape as a sensational setting or an

antagonist which the characters must face and triumph over. Instead, the process of identification resulted in a union between the physical and cultural:

The image of Australia which resulted from this self-determining process was an indigenous one, centred upon the bush. By the 1880s and 1890s the bush had become a label for both the landscape and a social reality characterised by egalitarianism, collectivism, and ‘mate-ship.’ (Hergenhahn 162)

Thus, the landscape no longer meant only the physical side of Australia, and instead it became one with the culture that narrative sought to depict.

However, this union of landscape and narrative did not mean that literature of this period was cohesive. Sinnett’s criticism in 1856 had been the beginning of the debate between the school of ‘bush realism’ and the more commercial and popular successes of the more contemporary Victorian romance novels. This meant that by the 1880s there were two distinct types of literature. The first, most often seen as the result of the *Bulletin*’s urging, was based on realism and factual experience. Most often referred to as ‘bush realism,’ this “school of writing pretended to do away with such idealism, and claimed to face directly the realities of life in a landscape that was no longer pastoral,” (Kramer 68). On the other side of this clash was a literature that fully engaged the Australian experience with the realities of life in the colony, the kind Sinnett had called for in 1856.

This latter kind of fiction that harmoniously unites the landscape of Australia and a well constructed plot describes Catherine Spence’s novels, in particular the novel that has been included in this study, *Gathered In*, originally published in serial form from 1881 – 2 in the *Adelaide Observer*. What makes this novel and others from its genre so fascinating within the beginnings of the national canon is its movement away from a “ripping yarn” story about the bush or a novel that uses the bush as narrative. The colonial adventure novel that later became the Australian-identity-through-landscape narrative shows the landscape quite

clearly, but it is this latter kind of fiction that shows the view of landscape that is more deeply penetrating to identity and thus not the central aspect of the novel. In other words, it depicts a view of the Australian landscape not as a sensational backdrop but as an integral part of the full cultural landscape.

### Catherine Spence and Her Novels

Spence originally wanted to make a career as a writer, although she confessed that her dream was to get the qualifications of a teacher first and rise to literary fame afterwards. She was born in Scotland, the fifth child of eight, and in 1839 at the age of 14 she immigrated with her family to South Australia. Before her first major publication in 1854, her novel *Clara Morison: a Tale of South Australia During the Gold Fever*, she wrote small pieces and poetry for journals and newspapers. After her first novel she published three more books, although she wrote a further three that were never published.

Throughout her works, Spence was determined to give an accurate portrait of life in the Colony; “She was resolutely opposed to the romance, and in particular the romance of the bush, which was already shaping into a fictional formula,” (Kramer 45). In *Clara Morison* this determination gives more life to the colony than to the characters, creating a sense of pure realism that falls flat only when she makes the plot more conventional. What makes the novel so remarkable, however, is the setting in the gold mines of South Australia:

The usual main features, plot and character, are subordinate to opinions and what more conventionally is the background, the setting, here moves towards the foreground. The setting is not the visible features of Adelaide, but the cultural context, the very character of the community. (Kramer 47)

In this, her first novel, Spence is quite ahead of her time. Her career, beginning in the 1850s and continuing until her death in 1910, spanned two critical and antithetical periods in Australian literature. The early period was that of an Anglo-Australian style of writing, where there was a need to be both different from and equal to Britain. Spence believed she achieved this in *Clara Morison*, saying:

I have grown up in this colony of South Australia and love it – the domestic life represented in my tale is the sort of life I have led – the people are such as I have come in contact with – the politics are what I hear talked of – the letters from the diggings are like those I have seen – the opinions I give are what are floating among Australian society – so that it may be considered a faithful transcript of life in the Colony. Of course the plot is fictitious but the anecdotes I intersperse are true, or at least believed to be true in Adelaide which is more than can be said of half the tales current in England about diggings and diggers. (Spence vi)

The latter period was that in the 1880s and 90s begun by the *Bulletin* that was mentioned previously, the period of uncompromising Australian nationalism. Although the first period tended more towards the style of romance that was so popular in Britain and the second characterised by ‘bush realism,’ Spence always wrote in a style of domestic realism influenced largely by her life in South Australia and her love of Jane Austen.

Her later novels continue this exploration of community and setting as well as character, and the novel *Gathered In* (1881) is an excellent example of this.

*Gathered In* (1881)

Catherine Helen Spence

Like many of Spence's novels, *Gathered In* begins in Scotland at the home of an underprivileged family, the Oswalds. The elder Oswalds have just lost their daughter, Isabel. After her death, a young gentleman, Norman McDiarmid, comes to see her son Kenneth. Through the first few chapters we learn that Mr. McDiarmid is Kenneth's father. However, because of the Oswalds' lower class status, a relationship between the high class McDiarmid and Isabel was forbidden, and Isabel was forced to return to her home with her son.

One day the Oswalds receive a letter from their son George in Australia. His fortune has taken a turn for the better and he can now afford to send Kenneth to school with the intention of one day bringing him to Australia. George Oswald's family live in Tingalpa, a sheep station located a short distance outside of Melbourne.

Kenneth is schooled as a gentleman, and after he finishes his final year he leaves for Australia. Once there, his uncle employs him as a tutor for his own son Jim, a task that Kenneth greatly dislikes because Jim is only interested in gambling and drinking. Later in the novel, Kenneth meets the neighbouring family, the Grays, at their station next door. He likes them all very much, especially the daughter Edith and her married friend Sybil Ellerton. He soon discovers that Sybil is in fact his father's daughter, making her his half sister. Jim meets Sybil and becomes enamoured of her. In order to separate Jim from Sybil, it is decided that Jim will take a tour of the colonies with Sybil's husband, Mr Ellerton. Jim's absence from Sybil in no way lessens his feelings for her, so he decides to make Mr Ellerton meet with an unfortunate accident so he can return alone and win Sybil for himself. Jim's plot fails as Mr Ellerton becomes aware of his true intentions. After their return to their



stations, Mr Ellerton meets Jim, who is intoxicated and alone on an isolated country road, and drowns him.

That very evening the body is found, and Kenneth is arrested as the prime suspect. Before the trial he meets with Sybil who tells him her suspicion of her husband, and he admits to her that he is her brother. After the trial where he is found innocent, he goes with Sybil, the Grays, and his aunt and uncle to Europe where they finally meet with Mr McDiarmid who had admitted to everyone that Kenneth is his son. Finally, Edith and Kenneth admit their true feelings for each other and are married at the McDiarmid castle. The novel ends here, but it is said they would be returning to Australia to live at Tingalpa and continue running their stations.

This novel is quite a step above many earlier colonial novels. It is no longer simply an emulation of a particular style, but embodies that style on its own. The plot twists are not written in an imitation of British melodrama, unlike the New Zealand novel mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, *In the Shadow of the Bush*. For example, Kenneth's discovery of his sister living next door does not seem like a melodramatic device as the arrival of characters in Bell's novel did, but a well constructed development that seems not only plausible but adds a bit of mystery to the plot.

Overall, the novel gives an excellent picture of the opposing literature of the "bush realism" style and shows a union between culture and land. The novel is certainly written in Victorian style, however it is not an emulation of the style but instead an Australian novel in its own right.

## Landscape in *Gathered In*

The landscape in this novel is more subtle than in earlier, more bush-oriented novels and the later “Bush realism” novels pioneered by the *Bulletin*. The first eight chapters of *Gathered In* take place in Scotland, and there are a few descriptions of the rolling hillside of the lowlands. There are also a few descriptions of the projected view of Australia, and, due to the rapid growth of the colony, the views are of the colony as a whole, not just the land. At the end of Kenneth’s schooling, he fails to obtain a full degree. He is greatly disappointed, but his friend Harry Stalker wonders, “of what value would an University degree be in the eyes of the patriarchal George Oswald, steeped in the local conceit of successful and ignorant colonists?” (Spence 38). Even before he leaves there is an expectation of the settlers to be ignorant and lowly. This of course mirrors the commonly held view in England of Australia at the time, and it is this view that Spence herself hoped to overcome. By including it at the beginning, she is allowing the misconception to be recognized before she refutes it through Kenneth’s experiences with the culture he finds and many of the people he meets in the colony.

This change in perception of the colony from rough and vulgar to refined and positive begins during Kenneth’s journey on the ship due to the number of Australians sailing back home after a tour overseas:

It would appear by the prevailing talk that Melbourne was the “hub” of the Australian universe, and, although Kenneth had been told that the gold was the largest interest, both as an article of export and as employing most labour, it was the wool and the pastoral interests that enormously preponderated in the talk at the cuddy table. (Spence 47)

This gives the impression that the Australian landscape is similar to that back in England with all the delights of a large city but plenty of pastoral work as well. However, there is also a note of pride about the advance of the colony, that “England owed much more to her colonies, especially to her Australian Colonies, and most especially to the premier colony of Victoria, than she acknowledged, or than she was at all aware of,” (Spence 47).

What becomes particularly clear in these early passages as Kenneth is on his way to Australia is that the pervading view of Australia is not solely of the difference in landscape. The early views that Kenneth has are not of the vast red deserts or the strange marsupials, but of the cultural landscape, the entirety of the colony. Of the captain and crew, Spence writes they were, “as familiar with Melbourne streets and Melbourne politics and general affairs as with those of their native land, and Kenneth thought he imbibed the atmosphere around him very fairly” (Spence 47). Kenneth is interested in the full “atmosphere” of Australia, not just the physical differences between geographical features of the new colony compared with Scotland.

Interestingly, there are a few other references in this chapter that, like the one above about the captain and crew’s “native land,” refer to England as “home”. When discussing the route of the ship, Europe is called home: “Many of the passengers had taken the Suez route home, but preferred the long stretch of sailing for their return” (Spence 47). Several sentences later: “Some few, who had greatly enjoyed the excitement and the change of foreign travel, went back reluctantly as to a place of dullness and quasi-banishment” (Spence 47). However, these are only a few, and it is pointed out that, “most of the passengers seemed glad to have a prospect of taking up their work again, and mixing with their compeers on a platform where they occupied a place more or less conspicuous” (Spence 47). On top of this, the overwhelming view is that there is a great misrepresentation of the colony, which should be seen as a whole, a perfect blend of new landscape, culture, cities, and

pastoral stations that put the colony on equal footing with England, not simply a satellite of England.

It is not until Kenneth is on the train to Castlehurst, the town closest to his uncle's station, that the physical landscape of Australia is finally noticed on its own:

The old-accustomed passengers by railway to Castlehurst were a little amused at Kenneth's active curiosity as to the country he was travelling through; at his interest in the great gum trees and the various wattles with their different flowers; the townships they stopped at for passengers; the lay of the country; and the character of the buildings. Castlehurst, though not so busy a place as it used to be, was a much larger town than he could have supposed could exist outside of Melbourne. (Spence 51)

Again, even in his notice of the new physical landscape, he also notices the architecture and the growth of the colony in the size of Castlehurst.

When the physical landscape is mentioned again it is at Mr Gray's station, Wilta. The description of Wilta does not point out the strangeness of the land, but instead the flow of it, as if the land is in balance with the world being built up with it:

[W]ell-grassed land, sometimes open, but with occasional belts of timber; here splendid gums, with straight white stems, rising fifty or sixty feet before forking out into well-leaved widespread branches, with the inevitable marks of fire on the side of the prevailing hot winds at their base...the never-failing creek, traceable in the distance by the gum-trees which bordered it all along, which flowed from the Wilta Hills beyond the house, bridged over by Mr. Gray, and road made at his own expense for miles through the run; (Spence 84)

This union between the bush and settlement is typical of a later period of colonial development. Because the land has been worked and built up in the early part of the century by the original settlers, the later colonists have a different, more united, relationship with the land. The land is there for them to use because it has already been set up for their use. As Jim and Mr Ellerton prepare for their colonial journey, they decide to visit Tasmania, “which was a slow place; but still it was ‘the thing’ to do Tasmania, which was a sort of cool summer garden made expressly for the recreation and refreshment of burnt-up Victorians,” (Spence 141).

This sentiment is noticeable again when Kenneth goes to a new station his uncle recently bought to begin the settlement, he recognises that, “to be a pioneer in a new country had its charms, although that new country, flat, dry, and sombre, covered with nothing but monotonous saltbush, which, however, sheep can live and thrive on, was not nearly so agreeable to look on as the undulating wooded grassy country round Tingalpa and Wilta,” (Spence, 142). Yet after this he sets up the settlement quite happily, “was astonished to see how rapidly it took shape,” (Spence 142), and leaves, pleased with the quick work. Kenneth sees and recognises the physical landscape, knows it will be fruitful despite its lesser beauty than the stations he lives on, and sets up the settlement.

There is also reference to the climate as very favourable compared to other similar climates. Much later in the novel when the group have left Australia and are on holiday in Italy, Spence says, “Our Australians greatly enjoyed Italy – the climate so much like their own in warmth, though bathed by the rains of the Mediterranean so much more profusely,” (Spence 278).

However, apart from these, most other references are to the cultural landscape, not the natural. At Kenneth’s arrival at his uncle’s house at the beginning of the novel, he again finds the note of pride in the Australian lifestyle, this time from his aunt on the fashions and

culture of Melbourne. She asks him, “What do you think of the Melbourne fashions? Do they dress as well as they do in London?” (Spence 53). After Kenneth mentions he’s never been to London, only Edinburgh, she exclaims, “Oh! Of course, that is a poor place compared to Melbourne;” (Spence 53). This view of the fashions is not held by everyone. When the ship first arrives into Melbourne, a group of passengers, the Misses Honey, discuss the latest fashions in Melbourne with a friend who has not been overseas. Their friend says that the women look old-fashioned, while in Melbourne they get the fashions in advance. Miss Honey counters her, saying, “So your Melbourne dressmakers say; but we know better” (Spence 50). However, when the ladies think this has impressed the newcomers to Australia, “Kenneth and his companion drew a different conclusion, but of that the fair ladies were happily ignorant” (Spence 50). This gives the impression that the opinions of the Honeys, who disagree that Melbourne is as high in fashion and culture as London, are not well founded.

This sentiment of Melbourne’s superiority continues. The view of the landscape is continually discussed in comparison to London and England. At Kenneth’s first lesson with his cousin Jim, Kenneth mentions that he finds Melbourne to be a very lovely city, but also, “painfully new.” Jim replies:

“That is the best of Melbourne,” said he. “None of your old mouldy buildings with no end of lying stories about them, but all spick and span new. If a house gets shabby it is pulled down and another put up in its place. In time it will lick all the cities of England into a cocked hat.” (Spence 71)

Later in the novel Mr Ellerton is discussing Sydney with a stranger and says of the music, “they have more appreciation of the best style of music in Sydney than in most places,” (Spence 172).

In these passages, the landscape being referenced is still sometimes natural, but it is no longer solely physical. Most of these refer to cityscapes and the culture that comes along with the landscape of a city. The old world is constantly referred to as old and aging, while the new world, the world of the Australian colony, is growing and replacing the old. The conversation of the Misses Honey and their friends shows that everything in Australia is competing with England, and, in the minds of the settlers, Australia is trumping the old world.

There are also quite a few references to the kind of people who have chosen to settle in Australia. In opposition to what was probably the pervading sentiment that all the Australian colonists were descended from the lawless criminals who originally settled the colony, many of these descriptions portray the inhabitants of Australia in a more favourable light. As Kenneth makes his way with a bush preacher toward Wilta, he compares the gold diggers to those in America:

“We have scarcely the same class of diggers here as in the California diggings...” said Kenneth. “Not the wild desperado with lawless cravings after much impossible feats and persistent practice of the most grotesque and grim blasphemy. Our typical digger has not been developed from the wild western prairie hunter; he has been attracted from old civilized countries.”

(Spence 82-3)

There are also a few places where there is mentioned a lack of quality settlers, but this is not in reference to any convicts, a subject the novel stays well away from. It is instead a lack of a certain class of people. Edith is talking to Kenneth about the wonderful stories she’s heard about Mr McDiarmid from Sybil, and she bemoans, “Oh! We have no such people here!” (Spence 125). Later, however, Walter Gray, Edith’s brother, says that there are in fact some

settlers of a good class in Melbourne, they are just few and far between but should not be forgotten:

[They are the] very best class of Melbourne girls I know. It is rather a treat in general to have a visit from them, for there are so few girls in the neighbourhood to associate with who take any interest in the subjects Edith cares for...If you judge our colonial girls by the Misses Honey and their associates, or even by the Misses Roberts, you will judge it most unfairly. These Talbots are of another stamp altogether. (Spence 239)

Beyond these depictions of the settlers themselves are a few pictures of the lifestyle of the settler. At Wilta there is a description that gives a very realistic view of the trials of this kind of life:

The long spells of idleness which are the curse of station life when the improvements are all made, and things have settled down to clockwork regularity in competent hands, had been hitherto undergone by the Gray family without any bad results, partly from this extension of operations before spoken of, and partly because they were fond of books and of society, and generally contrived to have visitors staying with them to share their leisure, who thought bush life the very perfection of existence. (Spence 102)

This shows that the physical landscape is tied directly into the culture, creating a more rounded view of the colony. Only a few places in the novel describe the physical landscape directly, while the rest inlay the landscape into the social fabric. By comparing the fashion or buildings of Melbourne to those back in London or Edinburgh, Spence is showing how ingrained Australian identity is in the minds of the settlers by the late nineteenth century. Through all of the characters' comparisons between Australia and England, and all of the descriptions of the Australian lifestyle, Spence is showing that identity is being fully



defined as Australian. There are the city folk and the station folk, each retiring for small vacations to the other's way of life, and thus there is no need to be compared at all to England.

What Spence has shown through this novel is that landscape is no longer a defining feature of the colony by the late nineteenth century. The early nineteenth century was marked by exploration of Australian identity through the new landscape, so by the end of the century the writers had a base from which to work. Their new task was to define the cultural landscape, and literary development was vital to cultural identity.

In fact, the influence of cultural landscape on literary development is directly mentioned several times in the novel. The first time, it is mentioned by Mr Henderson, a wandering bush preacher that Kenneth meets on his first visit to Wilta. The two become great friends, mostly discussing their views of religion, and at one point Mr Henderson tells Kenneth, "you [are] so much younger, so much more influenced by the new literature and new views of morality," (Spence 139). This statement gives the insight that the old views of religion and morality, of identity, are being replaced, particularly in the colonies where new literature is helping to define this new identity.

What makes this and the later direct mentions of literature so intriguing in this novel is that it shows quite candidly how self-conscious Spence is about this process of literary growth. After the previous passage with Mr Henderson, there are two more moments where Australian literature is directly referenced, first through the landscape, and second through the development of a national canon.

The first of these references is a rare moment in an early novel. Kenneth and Edith share a great love of literature, and they have many conversations about poetry and novels. In one scene in particular, Kenneth and Edith are discussing poetry and landscape, and Kenneth says:

That fine poem of our Australian poet, Henry Kendall, 'Fainting by the Way,' which you pointed out to me lately, rung in my ears all the journey I took with the new manager my uncle had sent up to Riverina, and I could not help feeling that fine as was the description of our desert wastelands, there was a sort of allegory conveyed equally powerful, of the help, the strength, and the cheer of human companionship and sympathy. (Spence 155)

Here in an Australian novel is a reference to an Australian poet. What makes this moment so fascinating is that it shows a direct allusion to the developing Australian canon in reference to landscape. Kenneth wishes to define the landscape he saw, and he already has a body of literature that has reference to the vast landscape of Australia to choose from.

The second passage that directly references Australian literature is about this awareness of the development of a national canon unique to Australia. Edith and Kenneth are in Italy at the grave of Elizabeth Browning, discussing literature:

"There is nothing for which we should be so grateful to the old country as for its literature. I hope it may weld the English-speaking peoples together firmly by-and-by," said Edith...

"We are nearer to England for all practical purposes," said Kenneth, "in Melbourne than the American colonies ever were, and I feel sure that its literature takes a very strong hold on the colonial mind. Perhaps we may be longer in developing any distinctive literature of our own." (Spence 280-1)

This passage gives an interesting insight into the developing literary canon of Australia. This novel is an excellent example of the new canon in Australia because it does not try to simply emulate Victorian conventions but instead has a plot and setting in its own right. However, within this Australian novel is a reference to the hope that a canon *will* develop, as though Spence herself is unsure whether that has happened yet or not. This passage could be

Spence's way of critiquing the developing canon of Australia, saying that the literary development needs to be less based on convention or simple 'Bush Realism' and instead needs to be based on the cultural and religious thought that is unique to the colony. Alternatively, the novel is set twenty years earlier, so this comment could refer to the now growing canon that Spence is actively writing for.

This passage also gives a view of the connection between England and the colony, a view that previously in the novel seems all but broken. Throughout the novel, the sense that develops is one of separate identity, a national identity distinct to Australia and quite different from England. However, Kenneth's statement about how close Australia is to England compared to America shows that the colony does still share close ties to the empire and England through a competitive culture and a shared body of literature.

These two points in the novel give a sense of both the landscape's effect on literature and on the development of the literature itself. The first reference shows the direct effect of landscape on literature. In the second half of the century during which Spence is writing she does not have to interact directly with the physical space because settlers and writers before her have already had the chance to do that. Thus, when her characters interact directly with the landscape, they can rely on previous writings to understand it and, as Kenneth does, discuss it further. In this passage, Kenneth takes the description of the landscape (which he quotes after his statement), and adds his own opinion and reading to it.

The latter quote shows the growth of literature after the first poems and novels are written. In this passage, Spence's characters are directly addressing the need for a national literature and the hope that one will develop. However, the act of wanting a national canon is essential to the development of such a canon. Self awareness makes the creation of a canon more meticulous and deliberate. By showing her characters as aware of the changes in

literature towards an Australian literary culture, Spence herself is showing her awareness of her own place within that culture.

What *Gathered In* also shows is that, by the late nineteenth century, the emphasis of Australian colonisation has by in large moved away from building and creating a home to actually occupying that home. The land has already been built upon and the cities and homes established. Now it is the settler's job to live on it and use it.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Neville Trueman: The Pioneer Preacher, a Tale of the War of 1812 and Canadian Landscape*

#### A Harsh World to Explore: The Canadian Landscape

The Canadian wilderness is an extreme landscape for settlement. The isolation, the size, the barren stretches of plains and mountains, and the encroaching arctic do not lend themselves to an easy transition for explorers, traders and settlers. Yet Canada was settled in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the French and the English, well before the colonies in New Zealand, Australia and South Africa were established. Eventually the country would be integrated into the British Empire and become an autonomous state in 1867, but prior to that there was an enormous amount of European exploration by both travellers and missionaries.

The earliest Canadian writing came in the form of journals from these travellers, both exploratory and missionary. The explorers' reports were laden with detailed descriptions:

The early English-speaking explorers of Canada were assiduous writers. From the beginning their superiors – whether mercantile or military – required detailed reports on the new land, and many of the explorers' letters and documents describe their attempts to preserve these precious records while they travelled, and to continue to write them despite great deprivation and physical suffering. (Benson and Toye 372)

These were the first writings about Canada, and they offered the first glimpse of the cold, harsh wilderness of the northernmost landscape of the North American continent. For example, a journal published in 1860 by a travelling missionary begins in the first chapter by describing the land:

I had before formed some idea of the ruggedness of that northern clime, and of the obstacles in the way of missionary effort; and future experiment proved they were not overrated. No one, who values the priceless blessings of civilized society, can consent to part with them without a struggle, and delve into such scenes as fill every land of paganism. (Pitezel 21 – 22)

The journal then follows Pitezel's life as a missionary in the Canadian colony, and much of it is focused on this idea he states at the start: surviving and civilising a harsh and pagan land. Another history by John Carroll details the first decades of the Methodist church in Canada. Similar to Pitezel's journal, Carroll's book details the harshness of the climate and thus the many issues the travelling Methodist ministers had to deal with as they tried to bring God to the Canadian colony.

The missionary writings are also important in the history of early Canadian writing. The missionaries who came to the country to study and convert the native people were not interested in surveying the land for practical use, and in fact this made the views of the missionaries more objective in several ways:

The narratives of the missionaries are in many ways the most instructive. The missionaries had no conscious desire to exploit the land or the people, and they had every reason for wanting to see them as they were, and not simply in relation to white ideas or designs. As a result, they offer the purest evidence of how Europeanized culture shaped and limited men's response to the new land. (Harrison 48)

The travelling missionaries were also largely concerned with their own survival, and thus wrote a great deal about their struggles with the basics of life: food, shelter, and warmth.

The great numbers of missionaries in the early decades of settlement meant that religion was closely tied to the Canadian experience, and thus to the land and writing. Works

like Pitezel's and Carroll's show, as Harrison explained, that it was the missionaries who were able to survey the land directly with no bias placed on it and deal directly with religion and land in their writing. Additionally, they had to bring God to that land, not only in the hopes of converting the indigenous population but to help the settlers find peace and God on the land as well. In *Neville Trueman: The Pioneer Preacher, a Tale of the War of 1812* (1880) by W. H. Withrow, the novel that is the focus of this chapter, much of the protagonist's life as a pioneer preacher is spent helping the settlers and only rarely trying to bring religion to the Native Americans.

However, despite these early letters and journals written about the land, there was not a large Canadian readership base because of the small population and scattered nature of settlements. Additionally, publishing, like in most of the colonies, had to be done outside of the actual colony and back in England and further south in the United States because of the lack of resources. Thus, despite the availability of missionary journals and travel writing, due to the price of printing most settlers at the time would have simply acquired cheaper reprints of English or American novels, both of which flourished during the latter half of the nineteenth century and were readily available.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, the American Revolution and subsequent formation of the United States and a separate country created a divide between the "rebels" in the US and the Loyalists in Canada who wanted to keep ties with England as a colony. The War of 1812, the subject of Withrow's novel, also cemented this in the Canadian consciousness. Largely due to these events, national identity was being defined as British-Canadian, a union between British values and Canadian pioneer hardship. Because of this sense of identity, early critics advised keeping this amalgamation in mind through literature. One of the central hopes for Canadian literature was to give readers a glimpse into the Canadian experience, particularly through the most striking feature of the

country, the land, and through their religion: “Most critics were predisposed to admire or call for a literature of an idealized reality portraying Canadian experience and affirming Protestant morality” (Benson and Toye 242). This meant that by the start of the twentieth century there was still not a unique Canadian literary tradition; instead there was British convention with Canadian wilderness:

At a time when it was deemed Canadian literature could do no better than to imitate the proved virtue of English literary models, nature was also a subject of setting that concurrently proved Canada’s distinctiveness. Hence the nature story was thought quintessentially wholesome and Canadian. (New 108)

### The Canadian Landscape and Pioneer Writing

The landscape of Canada was a huge attraction to many travellers and explorers, as well as settlers looking for adventure with “the British still finding in Canada the bracing challenges of the manly wilderness and the Americans still locating in Canada the last frontier and the lost innocence of their own world” (New 52). The harshness of the landscape also meant that the culture of the Great West was centred on survival, and writing often centred on tales of endurance. Many wrote what are now referred to as the Pioneer novels, and these “accurate tales by pioneers of their heroic battles against harsh climate, homesickness, isolation, and poverty are the epics of Canadian literature” (Toye 650).

The Pioneer novels, fictional accounts often closely based on memoirs, contain “rich insights into the nature of the collective Canadian psyche and its relationship to the land” (Toye 651). The pioneers were the first to move north and west into the prairies and plains of central Canada, and here the main concern was survival. The Canadian landscape was so unforgiving that life became a battle with the environment. These memoirs dealt directly



with this environment because it was the sole concern: making a living off it, building on it, and enduring the often ruthless weather. Pioneer memoirs make heroes out of the settlers, men and women who are strong enough to not only stay but to prosper.

Within these memoirs was a dichotomy of old versus new, and their memoirs are full accounts of the hardships of that clash:

Pioneers faced two struggles. First they had to tame the land, to wrest a living from it. Many memoirs, journals, and letters don't go beyond this level, particularly those written by lower-class settlers of limited education...Erudite, upper-class settlers, on the other hand, usually failed as homesteaders in the external battle of taming the land; but they engaged strenuously in the second, more exciting internal battle of mapping it in the mind. Their memoirs are full of the clash and conflict of Old-World polish and refinement meeting New-World primitivism and roughness. (Toye 650)

### Prairie Writing

Although the novel that is the focus of this chapter does not fall into the category of prairie novel, the history of prairie writing is an important aspect of early Canadian literature to note. This genre of writing deals directly with the landscape of the prairie wilderness, a vast expanse that spans the entire continent of North America, and greatly influenced Canadian writing about landscape as well.

Like the pioneer accounts, the writing of the prairies became a kind of unified literature, not only unique to Canada but engaged with the particular landscape of the western prairie, a landscape so vast and harsh that the experience of simply living on it gave rise to novels engaged with that experience. These novels were not as harsh as pioneer memoirs, which

recounted the struggle of settling in the wild. Instead, they stemmed from the travel and exploration writing that came out of the nineteenth century. These novels were true-life adventure stories, and, like the pioneer memoirs, they were most directly about the land: “prairie writers and critics agree on the importance of history and geography in shaping the regions creative expressions” (Toye 677).

Unfortunately, most of these novels were entirely unsuccessful in their aims. Though they described the land and recounted the adventures, they did nothing to further a Canadian literary canon. This was largely due to the limitations in their writing by the popular romantic genres they used as the outline for most novels. Prairie novels were often these generic romances displaced to the prairie like the two novels discussed in chapter one. As Dick Harrison points out, although the writers often dealt with the pioneer struggles, they misused the setting as a backdrop or antagonist to their old world romances or ideas of adventure instead of, “working out the destiny of the new land in romantic terms” (Harrison 50). They engaged the land, but failed to let the land engage their identity.

Dick Harrison’s book, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction*, written in 1977, was one of the early works discussing the effect of the landscape on the writing of early Canadians, particularly the prairie fiction tradition of the mid to late nineteenth century. The first essay that dealt with the effect of landscape on prairie writing was Henry Kreisel’s “The Prairie: A State of Mind,” which

suggested the need always to consider the prairie landscape when attempting to understand the region’s literature and people, asserting that “all discussion of the literature produced in the Canadian west must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape upon the human mind.” (Calder and Wardhaugh 5)

These recent critics beginning with Kreisel have finally begun to discuss the literature of the prairies as wholly dominated by the landscape, with the landscape as the unifying factor that ties culture, history, and geography together.

Despite Harrison's criticism that the writers did not engage the landscape, he also argues that this lack of awareness is not solely due to inability to connect fully with the new landscape. A great deal of the struggle that Canadian prairie writers dealt with was, like the pioneer memoirs, due to the old order they were used to: "The old order remained strong enough that in most of the nineteenth-century fiction, the writer's imagination could hardly be said to have engaged the new environment, let alone assimilated it to an artistic form" (Harrison 45). Thus, the settlers, even those who moved out to the west where the prairie writing was centered, were still deeply ingrained in their cultural upbringing in the old world, including writing style and content:

The writers, of course, were not native to the West, nor for the most part immigrants, but visitors at best, and if their imaginations were stirred by the new land (or by the idea of it) they sought the reassurance of familiar forms in which to give expression to those stirrings. (Harrison 46)

This meant that the early literature still clung desperately to the culture that the writers came from. Additionally, the enormous influx of Loyalists from the United States in the late eighteenth century meant that the population was mainly composed of those still loyal to English rule, and, though they eventually went on to create a separate government in the 1860s, they also still considered themselves British subjects, unlike the Americans in the United States who had broken that tie in 1776. Consequently, the early prairie novels were about a non-European landscape being taken over by European society. The land and place lacked the tradition of writing, and this was a threat to the European, or old, order. The early settlers then saw both the hostility of the land and the promise in it: promise that they could

assert order in an isolated and often harsh environment. Prairie writing upheld this view of the landscape as the aspect of Canada most threatening to the settler.

The environment was threatening because it was greatest impediment to the expansion of the colony. The harsh weather made life so difficult that it posed a threat to the fur trade that Canada was built on, the traveling of explorers and missionaries, the expansion of the railroad, and the development of agriculture and industry. However, the desire to explore and build was greater than this threat, and the nation followed, along with writers of travel, history, and literature. These writers were wholly concerned with the struggle of man versus wilderness; “The story told by historians mirrored that of their literary counterparts: it was a tale of conquering and taming the landscape – the triumph of the human spirit and condition” (Calder and Wardhaugh 11).

What this means for much of the early Canadian fiction is that the landscape in a sense both dominated and hindered early writing at the same time. The cold forests of the east, the prairie of the mid-west and the massive mountains in the west were so vastly different from the landscape back home, but instead of trying to use that landscape to build a separate society like the Australians or Americans did, the Canadians clung to their past as a way of asserting order and tradition upon these wildernesses. The novels they did write, though engaged with the landscape and the struggle to live on it, do not help to identify a new culture within that land until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The novel that is the focus of this chapter, *Neville Trueman: The Pioneer Preacher, a Tale of the War of 1812* (1880) by W. H. Withrow, demonstrates this unwillingness to let go of British identity that is central to the genre of prairie writing. However, the novel is not a prairie novel, and it was chosen because the novel included in the first chapter, *Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life*, already demonstrates the genre of displaced romances. Because

this novel follows a traveling minister as well, it also gives a close look at the religious aspect of early Canada.

Whereas a prairie novel cannot exist without the landscape, the historical fiction, melodramas, and romances stick to conventional British literary forms and the characters cling to a British identity, revealing, perhaps unwittingly, another view of the landscape: as harsh and unyielding as the prairie and pioneer novels, but also a land that belongs to the British.

### William Henry Withrow

Withrow was a native born Canadian, born in Toronto, Ontario in 1839. He studied in several institutions in Canada and worked at an architecture firm before being ordained as a Methodist minister in 1864. He became the editor of the “Canadian Methodist Magazine” in 1874. As the editor of the magazine, he was determined to help create a reputable body of literature for Canada, saying his magazine should be a model of Christian intellectual life and to provide decent reading for Christian households in the hopes of establishing a Canadian literature.

Later in his life he wrote several novels and essays, each discussing the spread of Methodism in Canada. Many of his works were extended comments on the need to adapt religion to the social and political changes of the late nineteenth century. He also stated that he wrote with young people in mind, hoping they could take the lessons from his works and apply it to their lives in order to live more fully as Christians.

*Neville Trueman: The Pioneer Preacher, a Tale of the War of 1812 (1880)*

W. H. Withrow

The novel is the story of Neville Trueman, an American born pioneer preacher who travels around Canada giving sermons at churches and houses and helping the settlers keep their faith in the new land. At the opening of the novel, Neville comes to the house of Squire Drayton and his daughter Kate and son Zenus. It is the beginning of the War of 1812, a war fought between the Canadians and British in Canada and the Americans in the United States. Much of the war was about land disputes, with the United States hoping to capture more of the northern land in North America. In the end, neither side captured any new land, prompting many to describe the war as an enormous waste of time and men.

The novel describes the battles and hardships that the men have to endure, the patience and home work the women had to bear, and Neville's role as both a medical healer and a preacher for the armies. There is no discernable plot that can be distinguished, just a continual march of battles and descriptions of the armies on either side. Occasionally, the characters meet at the Squire's house to discuss the war, the deaths of some beloved generals and captains, and the future of the country. There are also a few scenes of Neville returning to the main church of the Methodist preachers to meet with the other traveling ministers to discuss the war and how it affects their work.

Near the end of the novel a story line finally begins to emerge. A captain in the British army, Captain Villers, falls in love with Kate. Kate, despite her admiration for him, tells her father she will only marry for love. This story is then left for a while, Captain Villers dies, and Kate is saddened by the death of her dear friend. In the last chapter, she reveals to Neville her love for him, and the two are married and move to the west to work in the wilds of Canada.

The novel falls flat in quite a few areas. Though many descriptions and short stories added in are well constructed, there is no plot that ties the novel together, only the war. At the end, the romance between Neville and Kate seems like an afterthought, as though the novel is trying to put every aspect of British melodrama into the novel: history, war, and love.

What is most interesting about the novel, however, is the views of the Canadian landscape, both the physical landscape and the country as a definite colony of Britain.

### Landscape in *Neville Trueman*

From the beginning, Canada is described as a rugged, rough land. As we are first introduced to Neville, he is riding through the woods, “a typical example of the ‘clerical cavalry’ who, in the early years of this century, ranged through the wilderness of Canada...carrying the gospel of Christ to the remotest settlers in the backwoods” (Withrow 2-3). The scenery around him is described as beautiful, majestic and “like the City of God descending out of heaven, with its streets of gold and foundations of precious stones” (Withrow 3). Neville is so overcome with the beauty of the land that he sings to the glory of God as he rides through the woods, immediately connecting the landscape he sees to his religious beliefs.

This early beauty, however, is a contradiction of what is to come in the war and how much of this wild beauty will be destroyed once the armies begin to fight. He arrives at Squire Drayton’s house, and there the war is discussed in earnest. Neville says, “My choice is made: I cast my lot in with my adopted country. I believe this invasion of a peaceful territory by an armed host is a wanton outrage and cannot have the smile of Heaven” (Withrow 13). The phrase “adopted country” is a very telling sign of the view of Canada as a British outpost, and this view runs throughout the novel. Additionally, there is yet another

reference to religion in Neville's statement that Heaven will not smile upon those who try to conquer their land.

These early quotes from the first chapter of the novel begin to show the amalgamation of each aspect of Canadian colonial writing – historical fiction, pioneer hardships, identity, and landscape differences – and these are the aspects will continue to be followed through the rest of the discussion of the novel.

To begin with, the landscape of Canada is continually described as beautiful, but lonely and isolated. On a journey Neville takes to a village, the “forest was gorgeous in its autumnal foliage, like Joseph in his coat of many colours” (Withrow 22). Later on, nearing the end of his journey, the stark isolation is described, “the bleak moor, over which swept the chill north wind from the lonely lake” (Withrow 22).

The first battle on the shores of the Niagara river and the cliffs above is filled with adventurous description and scenery. The river is churning, “the current is swift, and the swirling eddies are strong and constantly changing their position” (Withrow 41). There is thunder and lightning that enhances these images as well. There is also a footnote describing “the present writer's” personal experience at this scene, saying:

Shortly after leaving the American shore, a tremendous storm of thunder, lightening, rain, and hail burst over the river. The waves, crested with snowy foam which gleamed ghastly in the dim light of our lantern, threatened to engulf our frail bark. The boatman strained every nerve and muscle, but was borne a mile down the river before he made the land. That distance he had to retrace along the rugged, boulder-strewn, and log-encumbered shore.  
(Withrow 41)

This description is so vivid and rugged that it works with the passage in the novel to give an image of the dire circumstances that the Canadians faced, not only against the American



threat but the wilderness as well, and it gives the reader a picture of the Canadian experience being completely tied into the struggle with landscape, including both political and social landscapes as well as physical.

After the first few battles, winter comes on and the war must cease for a few months due to the bitter cold and lack of supplies available because of the weather. However, the winter eventually wears off, and, “spring came at length with strange suddenness, as it often comes in our northern land, causing magical change in the face of nature. A green flush overspread the landscape. The skies became soft and tender” (Withrow 69). This beauty is a simple description much like the first description of scenery in the novel, showing the splendour of the country before it is overtaken by the reawakening war.

The next year is similar, with battles described and Neville’s wandering to towns to give advice and help take care of wounded soldiers. Towards the start of the next winter, the American army decides to burn the town of Niagra, leaving the inhabitants of the town, “homeless and shelterless amid the rigours of a Canadian winter” (Withrow 138). This is the most heinous act that could have been committed because the winter is so harsh that loss of shelter would mean certain death.

At the burning of Niagra, Withrow adds a story about two lovers on either side of the conflict. The American girl, Mary, discovers the plot, and decides to risk everything to tell her Canadian lover so that he might evacuate the town. Unfortunately, “winter had set in early and severe. The river was running full of ice, which rendered crossing, especially by night, exceedingly perilous” (Withrow 141). In order to demonstrate her bravery against the danger of the land, the story is filled with images like this one, each time describing the chunks of ice in the river, the, “ghastly gleam...like that from the face of a corpse dimly seem amid the dark” (Withrow 142).

Despite her best efforts, she is pulled downstream in her boat where she may either end in the enormous lake, too far from land to be recovered, or be “dashed upon the ice-bound shore” (Withrow 142). However, she is eventually able to reach the other side and warn the town of the danger. Neville tries to stop the order being carried out, but he cannot, and the town is burned. Those who are left after the fire, “wandered for days in the adjacent dismal ‘Black Swamp,’ feeding on frost-bitten cranberries, or on a casual rabbit or ground-hog” (Withrow 149). In the end, however, “their country remained; its soil was relieved from the foot of the invader, and their loyal allegiance to their sovereign had been shown by their costly sacrifice” (Withrow 150).

This statement about the actual soil being “relieved from the foot of the invader” brings in another aspect of the landscape that is frequently brought up throughout the novel – the view of the land as an Imperial possession, not belonging to Canada alone but to England as well. At the attack of Ft. George, the Americans try to “land a hostile force on Canadian ground” (Withrow 87), which is defended, “by a body of British regulars and militia...defending their native soil” (Withrow 88). The land is both Canadian and British, showing there is no difference in the minds of the men that they are defending Britain by defending Canada.

This shows an interchange of the identities “British” and “Canadian,” a substitution that happens throughout the novel. In one sentence, there will be a description of the British militia filled with eager Canadian troops. As some friends of the Draytons describe their experiences, they speak of the “thousands who were engaged in the contest, Americans and Englishmen” (Withrow 129).

Because of the British influence, the Canadian army is consistently described as more heroic and prepared than the American army. The American army, many times, realizes their eventual defeat, “so great was the vigilance and valour of the Canadians” (Withrow 66). As

the war efforts are discussed on both sides, the Americans are a bit indecisive about the conflict. The war is denounced by “the truest American patriots” (Withrow 66), but the democratic majority believes firmly in persisting. On the other side:

The patriotism and valour of the Canadians were, however, fully demonstrated. With the aid of a few regulars, the loyal militia had repulsed large armies of invaders, and not only maintained the inviolable integrity of their soil, but had also conquered a considerable portion of the enemy’s territory. (Withrow 67)

This passage, like the earlier one about not allowing hostile feet on Canadian soil, shows again that the land itself belongs to the Canadians, and thus the British. The loss of an English colony is not just about the Imperial idea, but the land itself.

This idea of a kind of ‘adoption of the land’ runs throughout the novel, with each new aspect of Canada being ‘adopted.’ As pointed out earlier, at the beginning of the novel as Neville discusses the war with the Drayton’s, he decides, “My choice is made: I cast my lot in with my adopted country” (Withrow 13) using the word adopted. This sentiment continues, and later, Neville meets a woman coming to the military camp, determined to, “warn the King’s soldiers [of a coming attack] or die in the attempt” (Withrow 103). Neville is eager to help: “Not for a moment did this American-born youth hesitate as to his duty to his adopted country” (Withrow 103). Over and over, the country is referred to as his ‘adopted’ country, making it clear again that the Canadian land is there for British and ex-patriot Americans to adopt as their own.

What these passages show is not only that the land was thought of as entirely British, but the identity of the settlers was British as well. In the minds of the settlers, Canada and England are inseparable: “They felt in their hearts that love of King and country, and their

valiant defence and self-sacrifice on their behalf, were also an acceptable service to God” (Withrow 170). Canadian identity is simply one facet of the settlers’ larger British identity.

These passages about self-sacrifice give a glimpse of the last aspect of the land that this novel deals with: the pioneers’ struggle with the environment to simply live. Near the start of the novel, Squire Drayton’s son, Zenas, is on the floor:

...laboriously shaping an ox-yoke with a spoke-shave. For in those days Canadian farmers were obliged to make or mend almost everything they used upon the farms. Necessity, which is the mother of invention, made them deft and handy with axe and adze, bradawl and waxed end, anvil and forge.

(Withrow 24)

Even in the war, this work of the land must not be forgotten. While the men are away fighting, the women must take up their tasks: “‘The maids and I will plant the corn and cut the wheat, too,’ said Kate, with the pluck of a true Canadian girl. ‘We’ll soon learn to wield the sickle,’ ” (Withrow 93). Kate’s eagerness to help is then described by the Captain, “I am sure you will deserve to be honoured as the goddess Ceres of your Canadian harvest-fields, by the future generations of your country” (Withrow 93).

The hardships of the land are even more evident in the winter of the war. After a particularly bad incident at York, Neville comes to the destroyed town to meet with a Methodist elder; “They voyage was tedious and the weather bleak, so he suffered severely from the cold. As York harbour was frozen over, he landed on the ice and made his way to the twice-captured capital” (Withrow 163). Even a short journey is fraught with the ice and cold of Canadian winter. The town of York is also desolate and bleak, partly due to the war but also to the environment:

The half-burned timbers of the Parliament Building, Jail, and Court-House, showed in all their hideous blackness through the snow that failed to conceal

beneath its mantle of white the desolation of the scene. In its most flourishing estate before the war, the town hardly numbered some nine hundred inhabitants, whose residences, for the most part humble wooden structures, were grouped along the loyally named King Street. (Withrow 163)

The size of the town, even before war time, paled in comparison to the large cities in the United States and England.

The Canadian settlers had to be hardy and hard working in order to wrest a living from the land. This was not just because of the harshness of the environment, but because of the isolation as well. As the previous passage showed, even the large cities in Canada were insignificant compared to large cities of neighbouring countries. The immense size and rugged terrain meant that villages were few and far between. The seclusion of small towns, spread out of the enormous Northern plains of the continent, meant that a visit from a travelling preacher was invaluable to their isolated communities:

[The travelling preachers] diffused much useful information, and their visits dispelled the mental stagnation which is almost sure to settle upon an isolated community. The whole household gathered around the evening fire, hung with eager attention upon their lips...many a toil worn man and woman renewed the brighter memories of earlier years as the preacher brought them glimpses of the outer world, or read from some well-worn volume carried in his saddle-bags pages of some much-prized English classic. (Withrow 25)

This particular section also gives a glimpse of the hardships of the pioneer preacher's lifestyle, an aspect brought up several times through the novel. After a meeting with the elder of the Church, Neville and the rest of the preachers "took their leave of one another, and fared forth on their lonely ways to their remote and arduous fields of toil" (Withrow 21).

These descriptions show that the preacher's lifestyle was incredibly taxing, as they had to be both working pioneers and constant travellers. A particular reverend is described:

"...As his income was very small and precarious, he eked out the sum necessary to support his family by selling a manufacture of his own in his extensive journeys, and by hauling, with his double team in winter time, on his return route from Lower Canada, loads of Government stores or general merchandise." Such were the shifts to which Methodist preachers had to resort in order to sustain themselves in a work which they would not desert.

(Withrow 162)

For the travelling preacher, life was just as harsh as for the pioneer. Not only did they have to keep themselves alive on a meagre salary, but the extensive travel was made more difficult in Canada because of the barren and icy landscape.

Yet all this work, of both the pioneers in the prairies and the preachers making their way from town to town, was necessary for the building of the colony and industrialisation that was so vital to the Victorian Empire. In the same way that the pioneers and farmers were settling the land for industrialization and the work of the empire, the Methodists and other religious persons, particularly the travelling preachers, felt that they were engaged in "consecrating the virgin wilderness to God" (Withrow 181). Everyone was working for the betterment of the land of their English colony.

By the end of the novel, the war has ceased, and the English were able to keep their Canadian land:

The calm verdict of history finds much ground of the extenuation for the revolt of 1776; but for the American declaration of war in 1812, little or none. A reckless Democratic majority wantonly invaded the country of an

unoffending neighbouring people, to seduce them from their lawful allegiance and annex their territory. (Withrow 224-5)

After the war, the chasm between the two countries, described as, “the two fairest and noblest daughters of brave Old England, the great mother of nations” (Withrow 227), is finally overcome. The bridge spanning Niagara is the object that ties the two lands together because, “the deep and gloomy gorge beneath that bridge, with its wrathful and tumultuous torrent, seemed to forbid all intercourse between its opposite banks, so, unhappily, a deep and gloomy chasm has too long yawned between these neighbouring peoples” (Withrow 227-8).

The end of the novel shows Neville and Kate’s love, now that the war is over and they are free to be together. Here, the scenery finally comes back to the beauty that was described at the start. Standing on the banks of the Niagara, the scene is comparable to the greatest scenes in Europe: “Kate stood to gaze upon the lovely scene – fair as the stories Bay of Naples or the far-famed Riviera of Genoa” (Withrow 232). After they marry, they leave to begin their work out west; “And never was there happier a pair than that which rode away in the wedding-coach to their new home on the forest mission of the western wilds of Canada” (Withrow 240).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Story of an African Farm* and Landscape

#### The First Novel and Early Settlement

“In South Africa, *The Story of an African Farm* is regarded by many as our first authentic work of fiction” (Murray 19). Olive Schreiner’s novel, published in 1883, is the focus of this chapter. Although works of fiction did not appear until the last two decades of the nineteenth century, this did not mean there were no publications within the British colonial possessions in Africa during the early part of the century. There were in fact publications as early as the eighteenth century. However, these early works were mainly missionary accounts of the savage land and people and explorers’ travelogues about the great adventure found in the wilds of South Africa: “The British Appetite for accounts of overseas missionaries goes back a long way” (Comaroff 49). These accounts were the first glimpses of the continent being colonised, from the landscape and natives to the settlers and new society.

Because the focus of this early writing was adventure and colonisation, the early reports and accounts were inevitably tied directly into the landscape: “The imagined landscape of Africa was greatly elaborated in late eighteenth-century Britain, albeit less as an end in itself than as a by-product of the making of modern European self-consciousness” (Comaroff 86). In addition to the British settlers in South Africa, there was a large Dutch farmer population, the Boers. The British and Boers were often at odds with each other, each trying to stake a claim to the land. What this meant was that, unlike the colonies in the South Pacific and North America, the South African colonies were a battle ground for both politics



and economics. The land was not only for building but for conquering and holding, and the winner of the battle would be the heroic victor who kept the rights to the land.

This made a single cohesive literature nearly impossible to create because, in the South African colony, a simple settler model with regards to literature leaves out the other nations vying for the land. Additionally, there is an extreme ambivalence in relation to the culture left behind “and the position of white settlers as being both colonized by metropolitan societies, and, in their turn, brutally colonizing indigenous peoples” (Whitlock 66). What this means for a body of settler literature is that, “each colonial relation develops narrative and descriptive techniques and a range of colonialist practices particular to its setting and history” (Whitlock 66).

The main form of leisure writing was adventure stories. Travel writing from the colonies was extremely popular in England during the expansion of the Empire, and women wrote a great deal of their experience in a land so different than their home:

During the nineteenth century many British women travelled to South Africa, writing letters, journals and travelogues about their experiences for a ‘home’ audience. These women were mostly middle-class – the wives or daughters of missionaries, soldiers, colonial officials – brought to South Africa in the wake of imperial expansion in the region. Their narratives focused on the difficulties of reproducing middle-class homes in an alien environment, where amenities of ‘civilized’ society were often sorely lacking. (Adler 83)

By the 1880s, British Imperialism was at its full height, and, particularly in South Africa, there was a strong urge for British women to bring domestic British culture to the colonies, to preserve and reproduce that culture. Throughout the Empire women were expected to recreate the home environment, but in South Africa this was increasingly difficult because of the severe location. For the most part, “travel narratives revolve around the

experience of alien geographical space” (Adler 85). In Africa in particular, the landscape was highly contested socially and politically, and many writers responded directly to this: “their portrayals of Africa and African society centred on the theme of possession and dispossession of the landscape” (Adler 85). This landscape, however, was still viewed with a critical British eye, and “the landscape clearly fell short of the vision of an exotic country imagined at home” (Adler 86).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century and before, it was simply fact that a woman’s place was in the house. However, towards the later end of the century, women’s opportunities expanded with first wave feminism and the suffragette movement, allowing many women to step into the sphere usually dominated by men. In other words, “the empire was ‘made safe’ for British womanhood through conquest and settlement” (Adler 83). This allowed many women to travel to South Africa in the same spirit as men, for adventure, exploration, and research:

The plethora of women’s travelogues during the last quarter of the century indicated the extent to which women had entered the male-dominated field of published travel writing, while their style and content reflected the changing roles and growing independence of British women beyond the confines of the domestic sphere. (Adler 83)

However, the vast difference between this emergent British colonial culture and the emerging culture of the South African colonies gave rise to a backlash against the British side of the culture, and for some writers this manifested itself in parody of British ideals:

It was a site where mimicry resisted the intention to produce the resemblance necessary for the production of a British-style domestic space. Instead, it generated grotesque parodies of Britishness. It was no coincidence that Olive Schreiner’s anti-pastoral novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, with its stern

turning away from European locations and its celebration of an austere African landscape, was published in 1883... (Whitlock 76)

This gives an indication that in South Africa there was some movement against British imperialism by the settlers themselves, unlike in Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian literature where there was a clear need to identify with British culture, whether competitive or imitating. Even in Australia where there was a movement against the British, there was still a sense of comparison and rivalry, of being equivalent.

After the publication of *The Story of an African Farm*, there were a few more novels written by immigrants who felt both alienated and fascinated by the extreme landscape. These novels, like Schreiner's, try to come to terms with the clash of cultures and the process of colonisation, but still failed to produce a cohesive literary canon.

### Olive Schreiner

Olive Schreiner was born in the Cape Colony in South Africa in March of 1855 to a German father and English mother, the ninth of twelve children, though five of those died in infancy. Their years in South Africa were spent on a succession of missionary stations, but by 1865 her father was forced to leave the church. The family was left broken. Schreiner moved around constantly and worked as a governess. During this period she read extensively, including Darwin, John Stuart Mill, and Emerson's *Self Reliance*, all which had a profound effect on her writing.

In 1881 she left South Africa for England which she always felt was her true home. She brought with her a manuscript for *The Story of an African Farm* which was accepted by the publishers Chapman and Hall in 1882 and published the following year. In London she grew increasingly unhappy and after a string of unsuccessful love affairs left for Europe.

Again, she became unhappy and found herself unable to write. In 1889 she decided to return to South Africa. She wrote several more novels and a number of essays on South Africa and “the woman question.” By the early 1910s she was frustrated and disgusted by the British-identifying South Africans, and spent the last decade of her life moving between England, Europe, and finally South Africa again where she died in 1920.

From her youth, Schreiner despised the invasive missionary and colonial culture of the English in Africa. In South Africa, the colonial fervour, particularly that of the evangelists and religious settlers, was much more severe than in other colonies. Schreiner herself thought this was probably due to “the assertions of England’s dominance over not only the black heathen but over the lesser white creed who spoke Afrikaans” (First and Scott 49 – 50).

Schreiner also greatly disliked the wild exploration stories written about Africa during the late nineteenth century. She felt they were simply written to create a picture of exotic adventure for the Victorian public back in England:

Schreiner, in contrast to adventure writers of the time, was alert to the imperialist sense of superiority and power which informed the so-called romance genre (in which enterprising British gentlemen-explorers conquered, or paternalistically educated, vicious or childish native tribes). (Murray 25)

Throughout the rest of the colonies as the previous chapters have discussed, the British settlers were struggling to come to terms with the competition with the Boers on an un-British landscape. The three novels so far have shown various stages of the development of this struggle in the first three years of the 1880s. However, in South Africa not only were the surroundings vastly different, but the politics involved in the wars with both the Africans and the Boers, meant that for many early writers this struggle between new and old was impossible to reconcile:

Schreiner's conception of 'realism' would have been problematic. Like many early South African writers, she discovered that the nineteenth-century British realist novel – her literary inheritance as an English-speaking colonial subject – was unable to encompass the diversity and shocks of her own surroundings. Instead of depicting a stable, middle-class, domestic sphere – the usual setting of British realist fiction – Schreiner reacted to the settler situation as comprising many and often incompatible 'realities'. (Murray 22)

Thus, in her novel, and many other early novels, the story is a blend of English, Dutch, and African characters.

*The Story of an African Farm* (1883)

Olive Schreiner

The story centres on an African farm run by Otto, a German overseer, and a widow called Tant' (for Tanta, meaning 'aunt') Sannie. Otto's son Waldo and two young girls, Lyndall and Em, daughters of an Englishman who had married Sannie, also live on the farm. The book is divided into two main sections. The first is about Waldo's search for truth and meaning, and the second is about Lyndall's realisations about womanhood and the inequalities between men and women. Throughout the novel, Lyndall and Waldo share a close bond, both intimately connected to the other's struggle.

The novel begins with Waldo's thoughts on God's existence, and by the end of the first chapter he has decided he hates God. One day, a man arrives on the farm. He's an Irishman named Bonaparte Blenkins, and he convinces Otto into letting him take up residence and become schoolmaster to the children. Sannie dislikes him at first, but he soon convinces her that Otto has lost all of the sheep on the farm. Sannie dismisses Otto over the

supposed incident, and in his anguish he dies that night. With Otto gone, Sannie promotes Bonaparte to overseer, and he begins to work his way deeper into the farm. The children distrust him, particularly Waldo. Bonaparte decides he will marry Sannie to get the farm, but when Sannie's niece Trana arrives, he decides to try her first. However, when Sannie overhears him proclaiming his love, she turns him out of the house and he flees for good.

The second section follows Lyndall more closely. At the opening it is three years later than the previous section and Lyndall, now a young woman, has been at boarding school. She is due to arrive back to the farm in six months. A new man has also arrived on the farm, Gregory Rose, and he falls in love with Em. He asks her to marry him and she accepts. They begin their wedding preparations, and soon enough Lyndall comes back. Gregory at first greatly dislikes her because it seems she does not care at all about him. His hatred becomes obsessive, and soon enough he finds himself in love with her. Em breaks off their engagement, and he asks Lyndall to marry him instead. She agrees, provided that he lets her do whatever she wants. The day after she agrees, however, she disappears. She has gone to her lover, the man she truly loves but says she cannot marry because she does not want to be a wife to a man she loves, only a man to whom she is indifferent.

One day Waldo, who has been off travelling through the country for a year and a half, returns to the farm. Em sees him writing a long letter to Lyndall about what he's experienced in his absence from her and the farm. Em tells Waldo that Lyndall has died. Gregory relates the story of how he went in search of her, desperate to get her back. He finally found her in an inn in a small village. She had given birth to a child who had died only days later, and was now bedridden and dying herself. Disguised as a nurse, he stays by her side, helping her until she decides it is time to leave the inn. The two of them leave in a wagon, and one night on their journey she dies.

Waldo stays on the farm, helping Em with what needs to be done. Finally, he realises that the only way he'll ever see Lyndall again is in the afterlife, and he sits down by one of the huts. The book ends as Em looks up to see the chickens climbing on Waldo, who appears to be asleep; “‘He will wake soon,’ she said, ‘and be glad of it.’ But the chickens were wiser” (Schreiner 270). Although it is not stated, it is clear that Waldo has finally died.

### Landscape in *The Story of an African Farm*

In *The Story of an African Farm*, Olive Schreiner focuses the entire narrative on the farm, allowing the characters and plot to fully interact with the landscape. By keeping her setting so simple, she, “ruthlessly works with the landscape’s literal, historical and moral meanings” (Burdett 18). This setting acts as a condensed version of a pre-modern world:

The novel is set, geographically and culturally, in a resolutely unmodern context. The farm buildings do little to humanize or soften the vast, obdurate landscape of harsh light, ‘weary loose red sand’ and sometimes startling beauty of the African Karoo. (Burdett 19)

In Schreiner’s novel, the landscape is by no means a backdrop or a stage to show colonial growth as it is in each of the other novels in this project. For the two main characters, Waldo and Lyndall, the landscape is where they find truth, Waldo about the non-existence of God and Lyndall about the oppression of women. In Schreiner’s novel, the landscape becomes a character that is influenced by and influences the other characters.

The novel begins with a long description of the landscape, immediately giving a sense of the ethereal and unearthly quality of the farm:

The full African moon poured down its light from the blue sky into the wide, lonely plain. The dry, sandy earth, with its coating of stunted ‘karroo’ bushes

a few inches high, the low hills that skirted the plain, the milk-bushes with their long, finger-like leaves, all were touched by a weird and almost oppressive beauty as they lay in the white light. (Schreiner 1)

This first paragraph gives a picture similar to what early travel writers would have wanted the English back home to imagine. Schreiner, however, does not continue with these images, and this first glimpse of the farm is contradicted almost immediately:

The farm by daylight was not as the farm by moonlight. The plain was a weary flat of loose red sand, sparsely covered by dry karroo bushes, that cracked beneath the tread like tinder, and showed the red earth everywhere. (Schreiner 4)

The unearthly quality of the land continues throughout the novel, and that precise feature is mentioned by several different characters. At the beginning of the second section of the book, a stranger passes through and stops to talk with Waldo. As he looks out over the vast plains the view is described as not of this world: “It was a drowsy afternoon and he objected to travel in these out-of-the-world parts. He liked better civilized life” (Schreiner 120). Later, when Lyndall is speaking to her lover she says she wants him to take her to the Transvaal, saying, “That is out of the world” (Schreiner 206).

As the novel continues, the effect of landscape becomes more and more clear. In the chapter called *Times and Seasons*, Schreiner describes the experience of growing up as an experience with the land:

The flat plain has been to us a reach of monotonous red. We look at it, and every handful of sand starts into life. That wonderful people, the ants, we learn to know; see them make war and peace, play and work, and build their huge palaces. (Schreiner 116-7)



This metaphor of growing up in tandem with the land continues, and Schreiner describes adulthood and understanding coming closer:

And so, it comes to pass at last, that whereas the sky was at first a small blue rag stretched out over us, and so low that our hands might touch it, pressing down on us, it raises itself into an immeasurable blue arch over our heads, and we begin to live again. (Schreiner 118)

These descriptions show how tied the characters are to the land around them in that the land is even used as a metaphor for their development from childhood to adulthood. The land acts as a parallel for their lives, and they in turn react directly to it.

The landscape acts as a separate character throughout the novel, and there are two particular aspects of the characters' relationship to the land that continue in depth as well. The first is Waldo's connection to the land, the physical world around him being his grounding in his search for truth. The second is the lack of rain that is felt by the parched land and mirrored by the characters' own desires and needs.

Waldo's connection to the land is demonstrated early on. In the second chapter, Lyndall and Em sit beside a rock covered in ancient bushman paintings, crude drawings of the land and animals. Waldo comes up to them, and Lyndall and Waldo both share stories of ideas they have learned recently through their reading. Lyndall tells a story about the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte which she read about in Brown's history. She says she feels sorry for him, how he wanted to conquer the world and he did, but in the end, he was captured and conquered and sent away to live on an island where all he had left was the memories of the greatness he once was. Lyndall recounts Napoleon's feelings, talking about how sad he was at the end of his life. Waldo listens to the story intently, and then says that he read Brown's history but did not read anything about the feelings Bonaparte had. Lyndall says that she just knew the feelings even though books don't tell everything.

Lyndall's story demonstrates the empathy she feels for the man who strove for greatness. Waldo, however, cannot feel the same empathy for him. Instead, he tells a story showing empathy for the land. He relates to the girls what he has read about the plains, how they were once underwater in a great sea, then rose to make the vast, dry landscape and the 'kopje,' the little hill beside the farm. He gets up and says to the girls:

'If *they* could talk, if *they* could tell us now!' he said, moving his hand over the surrounding objects – 'then we would know something. This "kopje," if it could tell us how it came here!' (Schreiner 15)

Waldo searches for an explanation, "It was a ponderous question; no one volunteered an answer" (Schreiner 15). Em says it was God who put the 'kopje' there. Waldo asks her how God did it, and Em answers it was "by wanting." But this is still not enough for Waldo, and he asks, "But how did the wanting bring it here?" (Schreiner 15). He tells Lyndall that he sometimes feels that the stones themselves are speaking to him of the ocean that came before and the people that lived on the dry plains before any of them.

This passage shows not only Waldo's search for truth from the land, but how he is in a way a metonym for the land as well (Burdett 2001). Lyndall speaks of her admiration for colonialism in her story about Bonaparte, but Waldo's response is about the loss of the land through colonialism. He says to her that the paintings on the rocks may look silly and funny to them, but they show the history of the land that is being taken away. Sally-Ann Murray explains the importance of this passage to an understanding of Waldo's connection with the land:

Although they are unintelligible and even grotesquely humorous to the children, these indigenous paintings are recognised by Waldo as being both an ancient feature of the African landscape and evidence of a culture whose

people had suffered genocide at the hands of land-hungry colonialists.

(Murray 27)

Waldo's yearning for truth comes from a place away from the Empire. It is a truth tied to the physical landscape, and it also recognises the colonial overtaking of the land that belongs to the indigenous people of Africa. Waldo is able to see the destruction of the landscape by the invading forces because he, in a sense, feels what the land feels. He knows and understands the land and thus is able to speak for it and understand its loss. He also recognises that those rocks are the only feature that will stand the test of time as well. After he laments the losses, he says to the girls, "we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on here, looking at everything like they look now" (Schreiner 16).

This theme is delved into even more later on in the novel:

Waldo lay on his stomach on the red sand...The scrubby thorn-trees under which he lay yielded no shade, but none was needed in that glorious June weather, when in the hottest part of the afternoon the sun was but pleasantly warm; and the boy carved on, not looking up, yet conscious of the brown serene earth about him and the intensely blue sky above. (Schreiner 119)

Waldo is lying intimately with the ground, as he is often described doing, when a stranger rides up, "The stranger looked from beneath his sleepy eyelids at the brown earth that stretched away, beautiful in spite of itself in that June sunshine" (Schreiner 121). The stranger does not see the landscape in the same way as Waldo, and in fact he is described as not understanding the wilderness, but being much happier in a city.

The stranger notices a series of images that Waldo is carving onto a wooden rod and begins a story to describe it. In the carving, he sees a man who sees a beautiful white bird, Truth, for a single moment. The man cannot forget the beauty of the bird and leaves the comfort of his home valley to find it. The man climbs up into the 'mountains of stern reality'

looking for the bird; he climbs for his entire life and finally dies upon the mountain, still searching. Waldo tells the man that this is the story on the block of wood. The two discuss truth for a while, and then the stranger asks Waldo if he is happy where he is:

Waldo looked at him. Was his delightful one ridiculing him? Here, with this brown earth and these low hills, while the rare wonderful world lay beyond. Fortunate to be here! (Schreiner 135)

The stranger advises him to stay where he is, for he is happy. Waldo, like the man in the story, is searching for truth. At the beginning of the novel he loses faith in God and any truth from above, and now he seeks it from the land, from the earth, bushes and rocks. He looks for truth, an explanation, and the stranger tells him to stay put, to be happy as he is and where he is, because that is where truth lies. Waldo listens, and after the stranger rides away, there seemed to be “a rare beauty to him in the sunshine that evening” (Schreiner 138).

This passage again demonstrates how connected Waldo is with the landscape. In the conversation with the stranger after the story of the man searching for Truth, the stranger makes it clear that Waldo’s search is tied directly to the landscape. As Carolyn Burdett points out:

The stranger’s emphasis on Waldo’s *location* – ‘here with the karroo-bushes and the red sand’ – indicates that the boy’s ‘self’ is a specifically colonial entity. Waldo is portrayed as intimately related to the land. Frequently represented as lying or squatting close to the ground, he functions as a kind of metonym for the African landscape. (Burdett 41)

As in the passage before their conversation, Waldo is lying on the ground while the stranger simply surveys it, and thus Waldo is the one who feels the land.

Waldo’s final realisations about truth at the end of the novel also come while he is lying or sitting on the ground. After several years of travel he feels lost, and one night he

drunkenly lies down in the rain to sleep. When he wakes up, he sees the beauty of the world around him, and he suddenly realises how lost he has been. He can feel the earth beneath him, and this is what brings him back from the brink of losing his quest forever. Throughout his travels he has been in wagons, in buildings, and away from the places of his childhood, but the land beneath him once more reminds him of what he almost forgot. From there, his search turns back to the physical landscape. He finds the sea, which he has longed to see his whole life, and he sees human qualities in it:

Of all the things I have ever seen, only the sea is like a human being; the sky is not, nor the earth. But the sea is always moving, always something deep in itself is stirring. It never rests; it is always wanting, wanting, wanting. It hurries on; and then it creeps back slowly without having reached, moaning. It is always asking a question, and it never gets an answer. (Schreiner 227)

In the end, after Lyndall's death, he returns to the farm to work the land as he used to. Finally, on a beautiful quiet day, he sits down with his back to the red walls and the chickens climbing on top of him. Here, on the farm with the land directly beneath him, he closes his eyes for the last time.

While Waldo represents the land, in the first section of the book there is a character that acts as the imperial force that conquers the land. Early in the book, a man named Bonaparte Blenkins arrives at the farm. Blenkins is often mistaken for one of Schreiner's despised "gentleman-adventurers," when he is in fact a parody of the imperialist culture he comes from. He is full of wild tales about the amazing adventures he's had in far off countries, claiming, "'I, my friend,' said Bonaparte, 'have been in every country in the world, and speak every civilized language, excepting only Dutch and German. I wrote a book of my travels – noteworthy incidents,'" (Schreiner 25). This bombastic attitude is exactly what

Schreiner despises in colonial adventurers, and Blenkins and his outrageous claims are the embodiment of such adventurers.

Blenkins and Waldo have a fascinating relationship, particularly when read as representing imperialism and the land respectively. Of the three children on the farm, Blenkins finds particular issue with Waldo and makes a point of subduing him as much as possible. After Otto's death when Blenkins is made overseer of the farm, he comes across Waldo working on a small machine. The machine is something Waldo has been working on for months, an automatic sheep shearing machine. Blenkins asks what it is and tells Waldo it is quite ingenious, but then steps on the machine, crushing it into dust. Later on, Em finds a trunk of old books that belonged to her father in the attic. Blenkins sees Waldo with one of the novels and tells Sannie that he is reading an immoral book, stolen from her loft. Later he tells Sannie that Waldo has been stealing her precious dried peaches that she keeps in the loft.

Blenkins' crude accusations and plotting against Waldo seem to show the imperial need to conquer the land. Schreiner uses him to demonstrate the opposite of what Waldo represents:

Blenkins is not merely humorous or ridiculous in spite of his Irish blarney; rather, his manipulation of others and his 'entrepreneurial' opportunism provide a comment on the imperial 'adventure' in South Africa...At the same time, the interruption of Blenkins amid the apparently leisurely rhythms of the farm allows Schreiner to show just how limited were colonial perceptions and purposes in Africa. (Murray 26)

In the end, Blenkins tries to get too much at once by courting both Sannie and her niece Trana at the same time. By proposing to Trana without realising Sannie can overhear, he ends up being found out and forced off the farm for trying to possess too much. However, as

Sally-Ann Murray points out, even this act leaves him with the possibility of returning to the top, like all colonial adventurers and imperial oppressors:

Despite farcically overreaching himself in his courtship of two women (to the colonial adventurer, women, like money and land, are to be possessed), Blenkins, as the supreme opportunist, is likely to enter the new South Africa beyond the farm, where the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and the subsequent development of the diamond fields had begun to transform an agricultural-pastoral economy into an economy based on industrial capitalism. (Murray 26)

Blenkins is thus the perfect metonym for imperialism. He comes into a place uninvited, disrupts and destroys the careful lives around him, in particular the land he tries to tame and possess (Waldo), and in the end when he tries to possess too much, he is flung out but will, quite likely, land on his feet again with a new object or land to conquer. Although the Blenkins storyline is quite comical, Schreiner's objective is much more cynical. Blenkins is written to be awful and hated, yet she sets him up for a bright future in the colony, showing rather pessimistically that imperialism will win out.

Hannah Freeman argues that not only does Waldo represent the land, but he and Lyndall both seek to become dispersed in the land, while the other characters like Blenkins and Sannie seek to own the land as deeply as possible; "Erasing the physical might open up the possibility of a more unified people and a more reverential relationship to their environments" (Freeman 19). She argues that erasing the physical body is the main goal for Lyndall and Waldo in order to become one with the landscape, while the opposite is true for characters like Tant' Sannie and Bonaparte Blenkins. Blenkins and Sannie seek to consume both land and food, and they become "bloated, grotesque symbols of abusive power, greed, and colonial brutality" (Freeman 20). Conversely, Waldo and Lyndall seem to "disperse, or

break apart, into their surroundings” throughout the novel until the end when both die, leaving their physical bodies on the ground to become totally immersed in the landscape (Freeman 20).

Waldo’s deep connection to the land is not the only parallel with landscape in the book. The rain and the dry earth mirror the lives of the characters as well. The land remains dry and parched for most of the novel, and the rain breaks only when the characters break as well, in spirit or realisation. Although rain may not appear to be an implicit part of the landscape, Schreiner’s use of it allows it to act as an aspect of the land that affects both the characters and the earth. As Stewart Crehan explains, “since colonial conquest led to the extrapolation of [indigenous] land, the rising of the oppressed may be figured in some apocalyptic act of nature such as an attack by wild beasts or a fierce thunderstorm” (Crehan 6). This idea gives a new level to the rain throughout the novel as well. Both Lyndall and Waldo finally become one with the land when the drought finally breaks, not only showing that the parched land is getting the rain it has needed but they are joining with the struggle of the oppressed: the missing Bushmen who drew on the rocks, the servants, and all those who were displaced.

This parallel begins with second chapter. The opening paragraphs describe a great drought:

At last came the year of the great drought, the year of 1862. From end to end of the land the earth cried for water...Week after week, month after month, the sun looked down from the cloudless sky, till the karroo-bushes were leafless sticks, broken into the earth, and the earth itself was naked and bare; and only the milk-bushes, like old hags, pointed their shrivelled fingers heavenwards, praying for the rain that never came. (Schreiner 10)



Each of the characters reacts to the lack of rain, and through the rest of the novel every time the landscape cries out for rain the characters feel it too. From the mention of the great drought of 1862, the rain is held off until the moment of realisation for each character. Each character feels the oppression that the dry earth feels and waits for the rain to break. For Waldo it is his search for truth after he loses faith in God. Lyndall longs for freedom from the repression she feels as a woman. Em hopes for love, and Gregory Rose yearns for Lyndall. Each of these desires is held off and when the moment of truth or realisation finally comes so does the rain. When the rains finally does break it may rain for days as a downpour of realisation and sorrow as with Gregory Rose, or it may wash away the dry nothingness of the earth and leave clarity in land, sky, and feeling as with Waldo and Lyndall.

At the beginning of the second section, the new man on the farm, Gregory Rose, rests all of his hopes on his love for Em. When he first arrives at the farm, he sits beside his little house and the landscape is described, "Far off, the little 'kopje' concealed the homestead, and was not itself an object conspicuous enough to relieve the dreary monotony of the landscape" (Schreiner 139). The monotony and dryness are mirrored in Gregory's unrequited love for Em. In a letter to his sister he tells her how he cannot eat and he is driving himself mad with love for Em. He tells her if Em does not love him he will kill himself: "There is a dam of water close by. The sheep have drunk most of it up, but there is still enough if I tie a stone to my neck" (Schreiner 142). What makes this so significant to the importance of rain in the novel is that, of all the ways he could tell his sister about his potential suicide, of which there are many on a farm in South Africa in the 1860s, he chooses to use water. Like the land, he is parched and the only solution he can see if the 'rain' does not come is to drown, thereby killing himself in the water that never came.

When he finally finds the chance to tell her how he feels, the rain clouds build up, ready to burst, "'The clouds are black. I think it is going to rain to-night,' said Gregory.

‘Yes,’ answered Em” (Schreiner 143). Gregory then tells her that he loves her, and they decide to wed. Here, where the rain should finally come after months of drought, there is no mention. Gregory has not yet found his true desire, so his drought is not over. Upon Lyndall’s return to the farm after boarding school, Gregory quickly loses interest in Em and yearns only for Lyndall, again paralleling the rain. Gregory was convinced he could not live without Em, and the oppression of that yearning built in him like the heat and drought upon the land. Then, when the rain clouds finally came, there was no indication that they finally broke, just as Gregory’s love built for Em but dwindled after meeting Lyndall, leaving Gregory still as parched as the land.

Gregory proposes to Lyndall, who accepts him on the condition that he allows her to be as free as she wants. He agrees, and then wakes to find her gone, run off with her lover. It is only now that the rain clouds finally break:

Outside the rain poured; a six months’ drought had broken, and the thirsty plain was drenched with water. What it could not swallow ran off in mud rivulets to the great ‘sloot’ that now foamed like an angry river across the flat...It rained for twenty-four hours, and still the rain poured on. (Schreiner 211)

It rains after he loses her, and it does not stop. All through the novel the earth has longed for a refreshing rain to come and wash away the oppressive aridity. When it does break it is not to wash anything away lightly, but instead pours down so hard that the earth cannot soak up all the water. Similarly, Gregory has waited and waited for his true love, first with Em and then with Lyndall, but after he leaves Em and Lyndall leaves him, he is left broken. The rain pours down because he cannot be refreshed by it, and though the rain breaks the clouds do not leave. It is as oppressive as the dryness.

Finally, after months of anguish, he receives news of Lyndall in a sickbed in a town several days away. He makes his way to the town, and when he is finally within reach of her and figures out a way to care for her, the oppressiveness is finally lifted with the clarity after a rain, "At his feet the dusty ants ran about, and the high red bank before him was washed bare by the rains. Above his head rose the clear blue African sky" (Schreiner 238). Gregory feels the oppressive lack of rain throughout the entire novel, and when the clouds finally break they leave behind clarity. Gregory's rain breaks when he has lost all hope for being with Lyndall, and clarity comes when he finally finds her.

The rain that falls on the farm when Gregory loses Lyndall is also a downpour for Em. Em had hoped that Gregory would stay on the farm with her and take care of her ostriches. They would not be married, but she wanted him to stay. However, when the rain comes and he decides to go search for Lyndall, Em is left alone.

Waldo's rain and clarity come at the end of his long journey searching for truth and meaning. For his entire life on the farm, Waldo searched for meaning from the dry, red and brown earth. Over and over he is described, "Waldo lay on his stomach on the sand" (Schreiner 101), always searching. Finally he leaves the farm to search elsewhere. After nearly two years of travel, he returns to the farm, and in a letter to Lyndall he explains how he lost hope for ever finding truth. He travelled and worked, moving from place to place but never finding any reason to stay. He never used to drink while on the farm, but recently he'd begun to drink quite a lot. One night while out on a journey, he bought himself his own bottle of brandy. After he reveals this, he writes of one night that it began to rain. He was drunk, and there was no dry spot for a fire or bed, so he simply lay down in the mud under his wagon. When he awoke, he saw, "all the clouds had gone, and the sky was deep blue" (Schreiner 224). He had lain so close to the road that one of the boys on the journey had to move him so he wouldn't be crushed by a passing wagon or rider. With the realisation of

how close he had been to death from drinking too much, the rain finally clears for him, “I saw the earth, so pure after the rain, so green, so fresh, so blue” (Schreiner 224). At that moment Waldo realises he has lost track of why he was travelling and has been wandering aimlessly, but now that he has realised his mistake he can start his search again.

Lyndall’s rain clouds break when her fear of death overcomes her, and the clarity after the rain comes when she surmounts that fear. For the whole novel she has felt oppressed as a woman, unable to be what she wants and realising she can only ever hope to be possessed by a man. She ran away with her lover but refused to marry him because she knew if she did she would lose her sense of identity. This feeling of being trapped has led her to her deathbed. Here, at the end of her life, the rain finally breaks as her spirit breaks. After weeks of lying in bed with Gregory, disguised as a female nurse, helping her, she decides it is time to leave her sick bed and travel down the Colony; “It was a leaden afternoon, the dull rain-clouds rested close to the roofs on the houses” (Schreiner 245). Later in the evening the rain comes, and as it ceases she confides in Gregory that she is afraid of the ‘Grey Dawn.’ However, as the skies clear on their journey down to the Colony, she wakes at night and her mind is finally clear:

Through these months of anguish a mist had rested on her mind; it was rolled together now, and the old clear intellect awoke from its long torpor. It looked back into the past; it saw the present; there was no future now. The old strong soul gathered itself together for the last time; it knew where it stood.  
(Schreiner 252)

The rain lifts as the mist in her mind, and she dies peacefully, close to earth at her final moment of clarity.

Waldo learns of Lyndall’s death, and it is the end for him as well. He stays on the farm and works as always, but he knows that his only hope of seeing Lyndall rests in the

afterlife. His search for truth has led him back to the farm and it is here he has his final moments of lucidity:

It had been a princely day. The long morning had melted slowly into a rich afternoon. Rains had covered the karroo with a heavy coat of green that hid the red earth everywhere. (Schreiner 261)

In the quiet, peaceful aftermath of the final rain that has left the landscape green and glowing, Waldo sits down by the homestead, “A balmy, restful, peacefulness seemed to reign everywhere...to sit there gloating in the sunlight was perfect” (Schreiner 266-7). Here, at the end, the rain has stopped and Waldo now embraces the sunshine: “He moved his hands as though he were washing them in the sunshine” (Schreiner 267). This last description shows the end of the rain that has plagued the characters for the entire novel. Every moment that it is specifically not raining is a moment of stifling waiting. Now, the rains have not only washed away the dryness but they have washed away the yearning. As Gerald Monsman points out of this final description, “The dreamer, awakening, has left the cave for the sun” (Monsman 105). He sees the truth he’d always sought in the land around him, and he closes his eyes for the last time.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Similarities Between the Novels

Within the previous chapters there has been a great deal of discussion about the differences between the four novels and how these differences help demonstrate the differences in the literary culture in the colonies. There is, however, quite a lot that the four novels share. By turning the focus from differences to similarities, it is possible to find the overlap between these novels all written within three years of each other within the British Empire.

The most obvious similarity is the writing style mimicking British techniques rather than picking up indigenous tone like chant patterns or vocabulary. Evans explains that in New Zealand, there was a “conception of art as British as well as High,” (Evans 30), and many writers tried to sound like the classically great writers of England. In Australia, he explains there was a tradition of “anti-authoritarian and anti-English subversion” (Evans 30) which spurred local literary practices. Although the New Zealanders found this excessively vulgar, the Australians were often trying to match England in literature. Though this was not intended to mimic British writing, in trying to be equal and separate the writing style does indeed often sound similar to British tone. This is also pointed out by W.H. New when he explains that “it was deemed Canadian literature could do no better than to imitate the proved virtue of English literary models,” (New 108), so there was almost no effort to change writing style. South Africa, by far the most complex of the colonies in literary development, also wrote in traditional British style. Early writing was confined to adventure stories and missionary journals, as with each of the other three colonies.

The four novels in this project demonstrate this similarity. Each novel contains a typical Victorian melodramatic plot containing unspoken love between two people of different stations, family secrets, and blackmail. Though the presentation of this plot varies from writer to writer, they still follow the pattern. The only novel that breaks away at the end is *The Story of an African Farm*, as Lyndall dies after childbirth, Gregory Rose never marries his true love, and Waldo leaves his search for God, eventually finding it in nature and dying. However, where this plot differs from archetypal melodrama is where it follows a new style in feminist thought and religious questioning that was common among “late-Victorian radicals” as pointed out by Joseph Bristow in his introduction to the Oxford World Classic edition of *The Story of an African Farm*.

Another similarity that is most relevant to this study is the actual descriptions of the landscape. Each novel shows the landscape of the new settlement as an important aspect of the colony, and this feature is described as juxtaposition between beautiful and desolate. In *Waitaruna*, the New Zealand landscape is presented almost as an advertisement. Every time Gilbert speaks of the land it is to say how lovely it is, how perfect for colonisation. The scenery in *Gathered In* is quite similar. The areas around the stations of Wilta and Tingalpa are lovely wooded areas that seem to flow perfectly from the farm into the landscape. In *Waitaruna*, when Gilbert and Mr Ramshorn leave Dunedin they stop at a point on a hill to admire the view of “the slumbering city they had just left,” (Bathgate 50). Mr Ramshorn says of the vista, “the view from the other road is better in some respects, but you must admit that this is indeed fine,” (Bathgate 51). Similarly, as Kenneth and Mr Henderson ride to Wilta, “the companions found time to admire the scenery and the appearance of well-being on all sides as they drew near Wilta,” (Spence 84). The descriptions of the stations are also similar with green grasses, trees, and creek running through the property. Both novels also show the opposite side of this beauty as well in their descriptions of the desolate areas of the colony.

After Gilbert and Mr Ramshorn admire the view on their ride out to Waitaruna, “their route led through a tract of country which to Gilbert seemed desolate in the extreme,” (Bathgate 52). In *Gathered In*, as Kenneth travels away from these stations to another one at his uncle’s request, he finds the land bleak and unwelcoming as well: “that new country, flat, dry, and sombre, covered with nothing but monotonous saltbush,” (Spence 142).

The Canadian novel follows the exact same structure as these two in its differing descriptions of the landscape. At the beginning of *Neville Trueman* the autumn scenery is described as amazingly beautiful, full of vibrant colours, and then only a few paragraphs down as a bleak moor next to a lonely and isolated lake. *The Story of an African Farm* follows this type of description as well. The opening paragraphs of the novel describe the eerie yet beautiful scenery of the moon on the karroo bushes and the sandy desert. However once day has come, the farm is described as less beautiful by day than by night: “The farm by daylight was not as the farm by moonlight. The plain was a weary flat of loose red sand, sparsely covered by dry karroo bushes,” (Schreiner 4). Throughout the novel the scenery is both beautiful and oppressive.

These landscape descriptions are even more intriguing when put in the perspective of the writing style. Writers in each colony were both trying to keep their English identity and form a new one, so the writing style stayed similar to Victorian convention. However, because the subject matter is the new colony and landscape is the most obvious difference between the new world and home, there becomes a clash in the view of the colony. The authors, hoping to show what a beautiful land they live in to both the armchair travellers back in England and their fellow settlers, describe the scenery as stunning. However, their identity is still so closely tied with the British identity that the landscape also becomes a place to lash out at, a lonely, desolate place that bears no resemblance to home. This is noticeable in each



of the four novels, and the more different the landscape is from the British landscape, the greater the divide between beauty and isolation.

*Waitaruna* and *Gathered In* share one more similar aspect: the journey to the colony. In both novels, the main characters both start off in Great Britain and imagine the colony they are moving to. Upon their arrival, the different scenery is new and intriguing to both, which allows the authors to include full descriptions of the landscape. In *Waitaruna*, much of these descriptions are about the land itself, while in *Gathered In*, they are about the cultural landscape. Though here they differ, they still share the plot of discovery of the colony by an outsider.

Another similarity between the novels is the purpose of the land itself. Though the land in each colony was not necessarily used in exactly the same way, each colony was built for specific purposes, and the land was central to the purpose. The authors of these four novels each show this by describing the landscape as not only beautiful and desolate, but adding in the purpose of the land as well. In each novel, the main purpose is farming, though other varying purposes are mentioned as well.

In *Waitaruna*, as Gilbert and Mr. Ramshorn ride out to the sheep station, they survey the city and the fields. Mr. Ramshorn discusses how useful the discovery of gold was for such an out of the way location. The entire country is perfect for gold and farms, and the men feel that this is the purpose of the land: it is a place for them to build upon and find their fortune.

The use of the landscape in *Gathered In* is similar. The early days of the penal system meant that towns were built very quickly, and soon the land was being used by everyone, especially farmers and managers of animal stations trying to wrest a living off of the land. Kenneth notices this by thinking that the stations of Wilta and Tingalpa have much improved the land around them, unlike the new station he travels to later which is dry and desolate.

Just as Gilbert finds in *Waitaruna*, the land can become better if the settlers build well upon it.

In *Neville Trueman*, the usefulness of the land seems less obvious because of the extreme cold. At the beginning of the novel, Neville rides to Squire Drayton's farm. The Squire and his two children Zenas and Katherine become the most important characters not involved directly with the church, and they live on a farm. Though the novel is concerned with the war, the family farms are central to what the characters see the war is about: holding onto the land that they work and not relinquishing it to the invaders. Over and over in the novel, the war becomes about holding on to the material possessions.

In *The Story of an African Farm*, the land is put to use as farmland, but there seems to be a more sinister purpose. In this novel, the purpose seems to be solely of possessing the land, not necessarily using it. Though the land in the novel is a farm for ostriches and livestock, there are several different nationalities all living and working there. The overseer, Otto, is German, while Tant' Sannie is Dutch. In the first section, Bonaparte Blenkins, an Irishman, arrives, and all three are vying for control of the farm. In a plot that seems to mimic the land wars, Blenkins heightens the tension over who has the power on the farm, and eventually tricks Sannie into throwing Otto out. None of them seem to care as much about the use of the land as they do about who owns and controls the land.

A final similarity between the novels, though particularly between *Waitaruna*, *Gathered In*, and *The Story of an African Farm*, is the time period the novels were set in. The four were chosen by specifying a date of publication and were published within three years of each other, with *Neville Trueman* in 1880, *Gathered In* and *Waitaruna* in 1881, and *The Story of an African Farm* in 1883, though Schreiner was looking for a publisher by 1881. However, all four novels are set several decades in the past. *Neville Trueman* is set in 1812 during the War of 1812, but the three others are all set within a few years of each other.

*Waitaruna*, as dated from a letter Gilbert receives, takes place in 1863. In *Gathered In*, George Oswald mentions sheep he felt Mr Grey had cheated him out of a year or two ago in 1867. *The Story of an African Farm* mentions near the beginning that it was year of the Great Drought in 1862. The novel continues on for several years after, as does *Waitaruna*, meaning that all three novels take place over the 1860s.

What makes this so interesting is that, though all four novels were written in the early 1880s, each author chose to set the novel in the earlier days of the colony. After studying the descriptions of landscape and how this landscape affected work, religion, culture, and prosperity, this seems to imply that each author wanted to show their colony in its earlier days of settlement to demonstrate the advancements and the struggle the settlers had to overcome before the colony could reach its current state through the work of the pioneers like Gilbert, Kenneth and the Greys, and the Canadian and British soldiers. In *The Story of an African Farm*, characters like Bonaparte Blenkins and Waldo give a different picture of the previous decades of South Africa as a place that is being invaded by Europeans. The story takes the opposite view of the other three and shows the destruction that colonisation has brought to the land.

Through an analysis of similarities, it becomes clear that it is not just the differences in these novels that help demonstrate the effect of landscape on colonial literature and life. While the novels' reactions to the landscape show the differences in the growth of the colonies, the similarities in writing, description, subjects, and dates show the settlers' identification with the British as well.

## CONCLUSION

“Fainting by the Way” by Henry Kendall, the poem quoted in the introduction and discussed by Kenneth and Edith in *Gathered In*, is a perfect poem to end a reading of the four novels, *Waitaruna* from New Zealand, *Gathered In* from Australia, *Neville Trueman* from Canada, and *The Story of an African Farm* from South Africa. Published in the year that three of the novels take place, it sums up beautifully the struggle the characters had to go through with the landscape of their colony.

Kenneth quotes a verse from this poem to Edith as they discuss the landscape of Australia. It is an appropriate poem for him to mention because it is about the vast wastelands that Kenneth is experiencing for the first time, but it is in fact also pertinent to each of the novels’ depiction of the landscape. It was written in 1862, and, although each of the novels was written within a year of 1881, all but one are set within a few years of 1862, making the content and date of publication of the poem again quite pertinent to the three novels set in that period.

The poem is a conversation between two friends about a journey they are taking into the “wastelands” of the Australian outback. It begins with descriptions of the wasteland, from the perspectives of both travellers. One is despondent, continually stopping and refusing to carry on. The other traveller describes the beauty that may lie beyond the wasteland they are wandering through. As Edith and Kenneth discuss the poem, Kenneth quotes part of the first stanza of the poem and says how powerful and relevant the description of the wasteland is. In its entirety, the first stanza describes the barren wilderness in detail:

Swarthy wastelands, wide and woodless, glittering miles and miles away,

Where the south wind seldom wanders and the winters will not stay;

Lurid wastelands, pent in silence, thick with hot and thirsty sighs,

Where the scanty thorn-leaves twinkle with their haggard, hopeless eyes;  
Furnaced wastelands, hunched with hillocks, like to stony billows rolled,  
Where the naked flats lie swirling, like a sea of darkened gold;  
Burning wastelands, glancing upward with a weird and vacant stare,  
Where the languid heavens quiver o'er red depths of stirless air! (1 – 8)

The friends then converse, each for a stanza, one saying, "Oh, my brother, I am weary of this wildering waste of sand;/In the noontide we can never travel to the promised land!" (9 – 10). The other tries to encourage his friend, telling him there must be an end to the journey somewhere soon: "Even now the far-off landscape broods and fills with coming change,/And a withered moon grows brighter bending o'er that shadowed range;" (21 – 22). From the first verse and these later lines it is easy to see the focus of the poem is the landscape. One of the speakers compares the landscape to a wasteland, woodless and desolate. The other sees the beauty that waits at the end of their journey.

One set of verses, however, shows the purpose of the journey, and connects perfectly with the four novels: "Dost thou not remember that the thorns are clustered with the rose,/And that every Zin-like border may a pleasant land enclose?" (29 – 30). The speaker is telling his friend that their harsh journey through barren land will end in beauty at the end of the desert. For Kenneth in *Gathered In*, this poem is quite applicable to his situation. He has come from the green moors of Scotland to the dry deserts of Australia, but he can see the progress he has made with the help of human companionship. In the conversation he has with Edith, Edith points out that, "human sympathy is better than the mute sympathy of nature," (Spence 155). They talk of the traveler who is too weary to go on, and his friend who will not leave him. Kenneth says of the wandering minister whom he has befriended, "I felt at a time when life was very hard for me that our friend, Mr. Henderson, took me by the hand," (Spence 156) much like the second traveler encouraging his friend to continue.

The poem is also used to show the progress of the colony in the novel, though Kenneth and Edith do not discuss it in that way. In their view, the poem clearly shows the joy of human companionship in desolate surroundings. This is exactly the view that Spence shows of the Australian colony throughout the novel. The surroundings are strange and bleak, but the building up of the towns and cities into cultural hubs has given the characters a constant companion. Even when Kenneth goes out to his uncle's new station and finds the country dry and somber, he is still surprised to see the buildings take shape so rapidly until the area no longer looks like a dry wasteland but a settlement instead.

This interpretation is not limited to *Gathered In*, and each of the other three novels show the same view. In *Waitaruna*, the areas outside of Dunedin are described as "desolate in the extreme," (Bathgate 52). Some characters, like Arthur and Nellie, abhor the desolation and, like the first traveler in the poem, do not want to continue their arduous toil in a land so bleak and lonely. Gilbert and Ottalie are more like the second traveler who knows that at the end of the journey there will be beauty, and the journey will have been worth the hardships. At the end of the novel as the two lovers look out over the landscape together, Ottalie asks him, "... 'will the future be paradise or purgatory?' 'You know which,' he replied;" (Bathgate 312). They can see that the colony, like the land in the poem, is simply waiting for the journey to end when there will finally be settlement, companionship, and beauty.

Mr. Ramshorn can be seen as an interesting combination of the two travelers. While Nellie and Arthur clearly wish they could go back to England and Ottalie and Gilbert see the reward of their sacrifice to live in the isolated reaches of Otago, Mr. Ramshorn straddles both views. At first, he is like the first traveler. He is the one who tells Gilbert of the amazing strides Dunedin and the country are taking. Clearly, he waited and worked in New Zealand, fully aware that the end would come with great rewards for all of his hard work and patience. However, the fruit of hard labour is not the only thing Mr. Ramshorn sees as a prize for living

in such a desolate, lonely place. Towards the end of the novel, he declares his love for Ottalie, and she declines his proposal. This is where Mr. Ramshorn's view becomes that of the second traveler in Kendall's poem. Without the companionship of Ottalie, Mr. Ramshorn can no longer see beyond the present wasteland. He leaves the colony, in effect turning his back on the pleasant material scene that may await the end of the journey. He has given up on the New Zealand colony.

The same view persists in *Neville Trueman* as well. The farms and towns are like small oases in a desert of cold, harsh terrain, and though the landscape may be cruel and unforgiving, the characters are still willing to fight for it and defend it from the American invaders. Throughout the novel are tales of the heroic bravery of the many Canadians who face the hardships of the wasteland to come out on the other side. There is the tale of Mary Lawson, who wanted to warn the Canadians in the town of Niagra about a plot by the Americans to burn the city down. Her journey, like the first traveler in Kendall's poem, is a "perilous mission of mercy" (Withrow 141), but she knows that if she is able to complete it and warn the town, "they might, if possible, frustrate the infamous design, or at least rescue their moveable property" (Withrow 141), in effect saving the residents from the bitter cold wasteland that would await them if their town was destroyed.

The many preachers who travel alone across the country bringing God's word to small towns can also be compared to the first traveler in the poem. Towards the beginning of the novel, they have a meeting where all of the traveling preachers come together to hear a sermon and sing hymns. At the end of the meeting, they must say goodbye, and "not without eyes suffused with tears, they took their leave of one another, and fared forth on their lonely ways to their remote and arduous fields of toil" (Withrow 21). Their entire lives are spent roaming the wastelands of the Canadian tundra, hoping only to bring to the people the

“pleasant land” of heaven. In fact, the entire novel can be seen as a journey through the wastelands of war in the hopes of saving the Canadian landscape.

*Waitaruna*, *Gathered In* and *Neville Trueman* all show a close connection to the idea of the beauty at the end of a long journey through harsh landscape. This is literal in each novel with the hardships of settler life in often remote and desolate lands. The wastelands are also figurative in the novels, like the wasteland of loneliness that Mr. Ramshorn hopes to quell with a marriage to Ottalie, or the wasteland of war that the Canadians and British have to struggle through to claim the rightful ownership of the Canadian landscape.

The last novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, also shows a connection to the idea in the poem, but quite differently from the other three. While the other novels demonstrate this idea through colonisation and imperialism, Schreiner’s novel reveals another side more focused on the land itself. At the beginning, Waldo talks to Em and Lyndall about the Bushmen who painted on the rocks and laments their loss. Throughout the rest of the novel, Waldo stays close to the earth, always lying or squatting on the ground. At the end of the novel in his letter to Lyndall, he laments his journey away from the farm and the land where he knows true spirituality ultimately lies. Lyndall spends her life struggling through the wasteland of womanhood with no rights of her own. At the end, both Waldo and Lyndall die lying on top of the land, finally at one with the earth.

In a literal sense, this novel rejects the poem’s message: the wasteland must be travelled through to get to the beauty beyond. Waldo rejects the idea that beauty lies beyond the barren landscape. He finds beauty within the red desert, and by the end he even finds God in the desolate landscape. Lyndall knows her struggle is pointless because there is nothing waiting for her at the end of the journey. She wants no true lover, and she wants nothing of traditional womanhood, yet there is no other choice for her. Even Em and Gregory Rose get nothing at the end of their journeys. Em loves Gregory but loses him and



is left alone. Gregory loves Lyndall and tries to save her and marry her, but he loses her as well. Each character is left in the midst of the desolate landscape with nothing waiting at the end.

However, in a more metaphoric sense, both Waldo and Lyndall embrace the message of the poem spiritually. Both have felt suffocated by life, Waldo with his search for truth and God, and Lyndall with her hatred of a woman's place beneath a man. At the end, their long journey through the wasteland has finally ended, and they both die, ready to move to the splendor beyond the desert.

All four novels, *Waitaruna: A Story of New Zealand Life*, *Gathered In*, *Neville Trueman: The Pioneer Preacher, a Tale of the War of 1812*, and *The Story of an African Farm*, published within two years of each other across the Victorian Empire, show the wastelands of the empire. They each show the struggle of building a colony and the price that settlers had to pay by moving to a new land. However, all four also show the rewards of moving beyond the wasteland into the landscape of the empire.

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