

Inside-Out, or Outside-in?: Woman in a glasshouse at the residence of Louis P Christeson at 213 Willis Street, Wellington (ca 1890s)

Peter Wood

ABSTRACT: This research draws its subject, and its sub-title, from a photograph taken by Louis P Christeson, in which a female figure is depicted tending to the potted inhabitants of a small conservatory. Using this image as a reference point, this paper discusses the conservatory as a transgressive space that is neither properly inside, nor properly outside, the houses and gardens they are associated to. Specifically, a conservatory enables the creation of fertile artificial climates to support flora specimens that would otherwise not find a horticulturally receptive environment. As an architectural technology, its history well precedes the 1890s, but it is in this decade that the conservatory's role expanded from its agricultural origins to affect representations of social and cultural transaction. Or, in simple terms, though the 1890s a conservatory was increasingly just as likely to feature people as it was plants.

With conservatories, simple divisions of interiority and exteriority, and normative expectations of public and private distinctions, become far more mobile in their spatial classifications. In this regard, the 1890s are a particularly important decade for the conservatory as it shifted from being a tool of horticultural propagation to become a new expression of social and cultural production that conflated the distinctions between interior and exterior, and linking this to individual economic progress. Bringing this argument back to my reference photograph, I suggest that for Louis P Christeson, the conservatory was profoundly important symbol of middle-class arrival as exemplified by home ownership and leisure interests, both of which utilised the conservatory as a "third-space." It cannot be claimed that the conservatory led societal evolution, but it does provide a useful architectural touchstone for registering how the relationship between interior and landscape changed as a consequence.

"Woman in a glasshouse at the residence of Louis P Christeson at 213 Willis Street, Wellington (ca1890)"; the title reads like an accusation. How dare this woman appear at Mr Christeson's residence? But she holds a watering can, and is formally dressed in a manner befitting Victorian respectability (her apron is conspicuously clean). Glass-house, or conservatory? Potted plants line the timber bench in an orderly parade. The skewwhiff brick floor indicates improvisation, while the narrow mullions speak to the need for structural support from a neighbour. So, a conservatory, but a modest one found in an inner Wellington suburb. That we find a

female figure tending to this domain is much as we might expect it to be. The greatest early nineteenth-century proponent of the glasshouse, John Claudius Loudon, is described as developing the gendered view that "women were naturally indoor people and men outdoor people."¹ and in *The Green-House Companion* of 1832, Loudon would write:

A green-house is in a peculiar degree the care of the female of the family and forms an interesting scene of recreation to a mother and her daughters, as a season of the year when there is but little inducement to walk in the kitchen-garden, and nothing to do in the parterre or

the shrubbery.²

With this in mind, it is not a great leap to conclude that the depicted figure is Eveline Christeson (née Stephens) the wife of Louis Peter Christeson.³ The watering can and apron provide evidence of the work involved in maintaining a healthy conservatory, but following Loudon's prediction, this image should still be seen an indication of changing social mores whereby strict spatial

² Loudon quoted, Thompson "Georgian and Regency conservatories" p 44.

³ Friends of Karori Cemetery "Louis Peter Christeson" np.

¹ Davidoff & Hall *Family Fortunes* p 190.



Figure 1: Woman in a glasshouse at the residence of Louis P Christeson Ref: 1/2-062480-F. ATL, Wellington.

demarcations of domesticity started to crack. In Loudon's enlightened view, this shift has begun by the early part of the nineteenth century, but it is the hypothesis behind this paper that New Zealand's colonial settlement slowed the introduction of new domestic

patterns, with the decade of the 1890s becoming the first in which New Zealand's housing development had sufficient suburban momentum to be able to express altered domestic patterns.

As has been well argued by others, the 1890s is a decade of nation-building where New Zealand's identity was considered a product of experimentation in a grand "social laboratory." Presenting William Pember Reeves to a meeting of the London Eighty Club, HH Asquith "gifted" us this categorisation, describing New Zealand as:

A laboratory in which political and social experimentation are every day being made for the information and instruction of the older countries of the world.⁴

The most direct celebration of this today is the example of women's suffrage, but Raewyn Dalziel is quick to point out that the view of mainstream historians has been to emphasise the establishment of a masculinity,⁵ with Jock Phillips, as one prominent example, observing that the stereotype of the Kiwi male as physical, hard-working, fair-minded and egalitarian became "identified with the process of national definition."⁶

Laboratory experiments need equipment, and

⁴ Asquith quoted, Dalziel "An experiment in the social laboratory?" p 87.

⁵ Sinclair *A Destiny Apart* p 209.

⁶ Phillips quoted, Dalziel "An experiment in the social laboratory?" p 87.

I would suggest that for social and political experiments, this apparatus is often architectural in output. However, buildings are not always well timed to express their experimental relevance. The best illustration of this is found in the formation of New Zealand regional modernism after 1945, and especially the "Man Alone" photograph associated to both the Group Architects⁷ and the privilege of the bach as a local typology.⁸ As argued by Robin Skinner, the semiology of the Man Alone image was not limited to interior/exterior ambivalence,⁹ but the significance of the verandah as an important "iconic trope."¹⁰ Concluding his instructive essay on the "Man Alone" photograph, Skinner states plainly: "Perhaps it is time to look for other precedents and to consider what alternative readings they offer on New Zealand's several centuries of rural and urban development."¹¹

In this paper I wish to present the conservatory not only as a viable alternative to the verandah, but as the more obvious

⁷ Skinner "Whare in the Bush" p 70.

⁸ Wood "The Bach" p 44.

⁹ Skinner "The Whare in the Bush" pp 60-61.

¹⁰ McKay "The Story up to Now" p 4.

¹¹ Skinner "Whare in the Bush" p 70.

precedent. That it is all but unmentioned as an element in New Zealand architectural narratives is a topic that will require more space than this essay allows. Suffice to say, this certainly invokes the privileging of masculine stereotypes to construct national identity. But I would go further and suggest that the conservatory throws architecture into doubt by constructing a direct dialogue between interior and landscape that no longer needs edifice, in a classical sense, to find orientation.

That the key protagonist of this new architectural hierarchy, John Loudon, was a garden designer is not only inevitable, but necessary. Loudon was writing to, and for, a new English middleclass, and his views should be considered progressive. However, they do remain contextualised within a class system whose architecture is carried by traditional notions of grandeur. Against such values, the greenhouse can be a dangerously transgressive space. Discussing Manet's Edouard painting *In the Conservatory* (1879), Jonathan Crary writes "the uncertain form of the greenhouse itself, in its disorganization of the cultural and natural, its collapsing of interior and exterior, public and private, parallels other effects of derangement and

destabilization in the painting."¹² The greenhouse is a rare architectural feature that activates "exchangeability": not only does the outside become the inside, and the inside become the outside, but the exotic becomes domestic, while the familiar seems more untamed. Of course, we can't actually see the conservatory in Manet's painting, only its circumstantial presence: a garden bench, potted flowers, and, especially, the palm-like fauna that intimates a heightened climate (this, and the title of the painting). Maybe there is a heightened luminosity we could attribute to an overglazed environment? But, perhaps, it is precisely this denial of object that politicises the conservatory? A deconstruction violating an otherwise sacred duality between landscape and interior that is normally demarcated by the dominating fabric of building: wall, floor, roof, door.

In part, this threat lies behind the architectural horror that resides in the populist splendour of Joseph Paxton's glass achievements with the Great Conservatory at Chatsworth House (1836), and the Crystal Palace of the Great Exhibition (1851). Concerning the latter, Sicher labels crystal the most durable motif of

¹² Crary *Suspensions of Perception* p 108.

eschatological vision for the new Eden, and describes Paxton's crowning glory as "a ready symbol of universality, science and civilisation, of the Victorian gospel of labour: *Pulcher et ille labor palma decorate labore.*"¹³ The maternal antecedent for the Victorian conservatory, Crystal Palace is also an architectural conspiracy of compassionate colonialisation that would commercialise the flora of Empire under an industrialised glass canopy form which becomes emblematic of the rise of capitalism as the new religion.¹⁴ So it is that Paxton's name has become synonymous with the nineteenth-century glasshouse in England. In the words of Isobel Armstrong, Paxton was an engineer "rejoicing in the virtuosity of technology,"¹⁵ but, she continues, he shouldn't be misrepresented as the leading evangelist of this movement.

That distinction belongs to Loudon, who was a generation older than Paxton, but more dedicated to the democratisation of the materiality of the glasshouse:

Loudon was the first to perfect the iron sash bar that

¹³ "It is a pleasant duty to honour work" Sicher "By Underground to Crystal Palace" p 382.

¹⁴ Sloterdijk "The Crystal Palace" p 15.

¹⁵ Armstrong *Victorian Glassworlds* p 170.

enabled the hothouse's forms of ferrovitreous building to be transferred to general architectural structures.¹⁶

This is important as Loudon saw the glasshouse as an emancipatory opportunity that depended upon scale to escape restriction to the manor houses of the aristocracy. Indeed, he had been particularly critical of the conservatory of Chatsworth for being built in wood and not iron.¹⁷

Loudon was a prolific writer, and he successfully chronicled his thoughts on hothouses in publications in 1805,¹⁸ 1817,¹⁹ 1818,²⁰ and 1824²¹ in which his views on improving horticultural practices provided a technological advancement on which to strengthen the visual appreciation of the landscape through the nineteenth century. Together with his wife, Jane Webb, the Loudons established themselves as one of the most productive publishing alliances in the fields of gardening, botany, and architecture in the early nineteenth century, working across a range of publication types including

¹⁶ Armstrong *Victorian Glassworlds* p 171.

¹⁷ Armstrong *Victorian Glassworlds* p 171.

¹⁸ Loudon *A short treatise on several improvements*

¹⁹ Loudon *Remarks on the Construction of Hothouses*

²⁰ Loudon *Sketches of Curvilinear Hothouses*

²¹ Loudon *The green-house companion*

encyclopaedia, magazine, book, essay and manual.²² Of particular interest here is their regular publication, the *Architectural Magazine*, which is notable firstly, as the first English-language periodical on purely architectural matters, and secondly, for seeking a general membership that would encompass apprentice to architect, general reader to professional, with male and female readers.²³ Unifying this diverse audience was the Loudons' egalitarian commitment to individual taste as the foundation of social worth when evaluating the physical environment. As he would write:

taste may be possessed by the journeyman, carpenter, mason, bricklayer, or cabinetmaker, in as high a degree as by the architect, surveyor, or learned and wealthy amateur.²⁴

In the view of John Macarthur, Loudon's work "shatters the pattern book genre from within" by combining moral education with practical, technical and economic instruction on how to design, build, and furnish cottages with "taste," and in doing so they contributed fundamentally to elevate the morality of the

²² Hultzsich "From Encyclopaedia to magazine" p 844.

²³ Hultzsich "From Encyclopaedia to magazine" p 844.

²⁴ Loudon "Introduction" p 3.

populace.²⁵

That Macarthur is Australian should not go unobserved. From the introduction to the first issue of the *Architectural Magazine*, Loudon had seen the opportunity to "diffuse among the dwellings of the great mass of society in all countries,"²⁶ and Colleen Morris has shown that Loudon's ideas reached the Australian colonies to established a network of readers and contributors shaping the manufactured landscape.²⁷

Morris concludes that practice of the Gardenesque, espoused by Loudon as being "that a garden should be distinctly recognized as a work of art,"²⁸ was the predominant landscape principle defining Australia's garden aesthetic in the nineteenth century. While New Zealand's colonisation trailed that of Australia, this only adds weight to the expectation that the Gardenesque was the foremost approach to shaping parks and gardens. The point to be appreciated here is that, by the period of New Zealand's rampant

²⁵ Macarthur "Colonies at Home" p 247

²⁶ Loudon "Introduction" p 3

²⁷ Morris "The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge" pp 101-123.

²⁸ Morris "The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge" p 119.

settlement (1850-80), the conservatory was already a formal object in the psyche of the Gardenesque landscape, which, by the 1890s, was thoroughly indoctrinated into New Zealand's suburban gardens here. An example for how this approach might be realised is found in an article contributed to *Australasian Gardening* by William Elliott, in 1897, where he would write:

Should indigenous trees be planted, they should not be grouped as though they are grown naturally, but planted singly and allowed so much space to develop that they would at once be recognised as having come under the dominion of art. Therefore, a garden must differ in all material qualities from anything existing in a natural condition, for though nature may be imitated in a few things, it should never be closely copied so as to deceive and prevent recognition of art.²⁹

At this point it is necessary to distinguish between the various types of glazed artificial environments deployed in horticultural production. This starts with a basic familiarisation of the glasshouse as an edifice, but this needs to be extended onward to incorporate how the glasshouse made class, wealth, technology and imperial acquisition architecturally manifest (to own a glasshouse

²⁹ Elliott quoted, Morris "The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge" p 119.

in the nineteenth century was to own the world).

To emphasise a basic difference between a glasshouse and a conservatory, the former is free-standing while the latter is attached to a dwelling. Superficially, it might seem that the conservatory is a lesser structure as it relies on a pre-existing structural form – a house – for at least a part of its architectural integrity. However, to accept this simplistic hierarchy would be to greatly mistake the importance of the conservatory as a space that nurtures social and cultural growth as much as it does horticultural productivity. In this sense, the glasshouse was "domesticated" from its agricultural origins to become integrated into the house. Writing in *Green-House Companion* in 1824, the Loudons are specifically clear on this point:

According to our ideas of the enjoyments of the green-house, it is essential that it be situated close to the house; not merely near, but immediately adjoining; and attached to it either by being placed against it. Forming a part of the edifice; or by means of a corridor, veranda, or some other description of covered passage. The most desirable situation is unquestionably that in which the green-house ... shall communicate with, and form as it were an additional apartment to the library, or breakfast parlour. If it communicates by spacious glass doors, and the parlour is judiciously furnished with mirrors, and

bulbous flowers in water-glasses, the effect will be greatly heightened, and growth, verdure, gay colours, and fragrance, blended with books, sofas, and all the accompaniments of social and polished life.³⁰

Almost 60 years before Manet would take brush to canvas, the Loudon's provided an architectural imperative for the social ambiguity that would be found to be so shocking in *In the Conservatory*. Under the guise of the Gardenesque, the conservatory is promoted as an instrument that reflected changing class patterns in English society so that, if the Picturesque was the aesthetic of the gentry, the Gardenesque was its "affordable alternative" serving middle-class professionals escaping overcrowded cities.³¹ For Jones, while this group may have lacked the means to become country squires, they were still wealthy enough to live comfortably in the territory between urban centre and rural landscape, into which the Loudons were advocating the new aesthetic of the Gardenesque with its promotion of a domestic ideal of consumerism and acquisitiveness for those benefiting from the new capitalist era.³²

³⁰ Loudon *The Green-House Companion* pp 5-6.

³¹ Jones "Suburban Sinners" p 84.

³² Jones "Suburban Sinners" p 84.

The significance of this for New Zealand is profound. The developments described above occur immediately before the widespread colonisation of New Zealand. Indeed, they might be seen to play a contributing and ideological component to colonial settlement as New Zealand was selectively presented as a destination without gentry and peasant social divisions, or stark contrasts between rural and urban allocations. So, while many if not most settler immigrants to New Zealand were far removed from the financial comfort of the new middle class described by Jones, they nonetheless emerged from the same aspirational atmosphere. Add to this the capitalistic imperatives that drove colonial settlement, and New Zealand presents as a perfectly timed test-bed for the collision of Loudon's Gardenesque principles with new economically driven social patterns.

If the Picturesque eye desired a landscape that could be admired from afar, the Gardenesque demanded a contrived nature that could be lived in, and with this desire house and garden started to merge. Regency innovations included placing living rooms and parlours at ground level to give access to the garden, long casement windows and doors started to align to terraces and verandahs, and

trellises provide scaffolds for climbing plants and flowers.³³ In England these developments appeared as stark challenges to the landscape privilege of the Picturesque, but upon arriving in the Eurocentrically-vacant culture of New Zealand, I would suggest that Loudon's Gardenesque thrived every bit as voraciously as its settler hosts.

Take, for example, the Treaty House, the culturally iconic pre-fabricated home of James Busby brought over in 1833 from an Australia already under the influence of the Gardenesque principles. With its tall French doors, ground-level verandah, and - at one stage - close planting, the Treaty House presents as an object of Gardenesque endeavour at a moment of national foundation. Even today, isolated pōhutukawa feature on the Treaty grounds, reinforcing attentively to Elliott's demand for servitude to "the dominion of art" by indigenous trees.

If the Treaty House might be taken as confirming to a Gardenesque type, there is still no better Gardenesque object than the conservatory, which conflated house and garden in a new space, defying conventional

³³ Jones "Suburban Sinners" p 86.

spatial divisions. To be sure, this provided an environment into which the middle classes could show off their taste and discernment by collecting exotic trees and shrubs,³⁴ but more significantly, the conservatory operated as a symbol of social status irrespective of how it was utilised. This emphasis emerges as the key trait for the adoption of the conservatory in New Zealand by the 1890s.

The *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator* makes mention of the conservatory at Blackheath in 1840,³⁵ while the *New Zealand Herald and Auckland Gazette* records, in 1841, the destruction by fire of the Mansion of the Marquis of Londonderry (which was thought to have originated in the flues in the overheated conservatory).³⁶ Similarly, in 1842, the *New Zealand Colonist and Port Nicholson Advertiser* carried a description of the conservatory at Chatsworth, and mentioned the extensive hot-water heating and "splendid palms."³⁷ In each of these examples the conservatory is evoked in a context of

privilege and wealth. The conservatory is a technological marvel in service to an aristocratic class system, here discussed at a time when New Zealand had little of either.

However, this begins to change from around 1860. That year a sale notification for a "splendid" property near Auckland makes mention of a two-storied house of six bedrooms, "with conservatory."³⁸ A likeminded 1861 notice for a large house in Wellington promised a drawing room and conservatory (along with servants' rooms).³⁹ Further south and the *Otago Daily Times* advertised a "handsome property" consisting of ten bedrooms, drawing room, out-houses and a conservatory, in 1862.⁴⁰

These first examples would all seem to follow, albeit in a diminutive fashion, an English model for a grand house and garden. And this is exactly what we might expect in a rapidly expanding British settlement colony. But this only serves to make an advertisement carried by the *Wellington Independent*, in 1863, all the

more interesting. For sale: "A glass roofed room, 21x9 feet suitable for a conservatory or green house. Must be removed within 10 days from this date."⁴¹ This would seem a significant departure from the landed gentry association of the previously mentioned cases, and while I wish I could identify this as New Zealand's first kitset glasshouse, the identity of the seller as GH Swan, Photographer, reveals this as a marketing ploy to rebrand a photography studio overhead window.

By 1890, real estate listings for substantial houses routinely list a conservatory. The *Press* carried a notice for a "charming suburban residence" in Fendalton whose impressive inventory included 11 rooms, stables, dairy, loft, fernery, vinery, conservatory, and "Man's Room."⁴² While in Dunedin that same month a nine-bedroom house with orchard, garden and conservatory was on the market,⁴³ and further north in Auckland an eight-roomed house was available with a 20 by 36 foot conservatory (and a "man's room," with loft).⁴⁴

Through the 1890s there is a pattern of

³⁴ Elliott "Creating Suburbia" p 57

³⁵ "Miscellaneous" p 4. "Blackheath" here refers to Montagu House, Blackheath, which was the home of Caroline of Brunswick before demolition in 1815.

³⁶ "Conflagration Of Wynyard House" p 3

³⁷ "Electricity Or Steam" p 4.

³⁸ "Mr Hansard is instructed to offer" p 1

³⁹ "Freehold Property at Kai Warra Warra" p 2. This was the home of William Smart Loxley, who died in 1861.

⁴⁰ "For Sale: A Handsome Property" p 3.

⁴¹ "For Sale: A Glass Roofed Room" p 1.

⁴² "For Sale: Charming Suburban Residence" p 8.

⁴³ "Quarter-Acre" p 4.

⁴⁴ "Eight-Roomed House" p 2.

conservatories appearing as additions to large suburban houses, often with an associated trappings of a bucolic bliss. These include the aforementioned vineries and ferneries, but also fish ponds, stables, coach-houses and outhouses.

Some indication of what this might have looked like can be judged from the photographs we have of Ratanui, the home of James Hector, in Lower Hutt. Founder of Wellington's botanic garden, the Scottish-born New Zealand naturalist demands special mention as holding lineage through Edinburgh University as one of a number of graduates who established an international network of imperial botanic gardens linked to Kew Gardens in London⁴⁵ (which, in turn, return us to New Zealand's contact history for Joseph Bank's role in establishing Kew). We might anticipate that the conservatory of one of New Zealand's most scientifically-important and socially-esteemed citizens be resplendent in its grandeur, but, oddly, this is not the case. In the best image we have, the conservatory is a modest, and largely overgrown annex to the house. A finial adds a token of architectural respectability, but it

⁴⁵ Cairns "Botanic Gardens" p 101.

looks to be a fairly forlorn domestic adornment. What is worth noting of Hector's home is how the conservatory competes with a number of other transgressive spaces. These consist of a squared bay window and a partially enclosed ground-level verandah.⁴⁶ It is in combination that these three elements comprehensively dissolve the spatial integrity of the façade and realise an ambition of living in the garden.

It sneaks into the twentieth century, but Wharepapa, the large Invercargill home Charles Henry Howorth built for himself in 1902, provides an alternative example. Described as an artist and engineer, it is perhaps not all that surprising that we find him conspicuously integrating a conservatory into the design. Two period images – one a photograph,⁴⁷ the other a watercolour in Howorth's own hand⁴⁸ – show the glazed addition, but unlike the simple lean-to arrangement, Howorth's design has an Edwardian cross-gable feature that unifies the

⁴⁶ "Petone seen from above Sir James Hector's house, Ratanui"

⁴⁷ "Briscoe & Co Ltd. A residence, Invercargill, with Marseilles Tile roof"

⁴⁸ "Howorth, Charles Henry, 1856-1945. Howorth, Charles Henry, 1856-1945: Wharepapa 1907"

conservatory as an integrated design element. Howorth positioned his conservatory so that it was visible upon arrival, and the provocative nature of this gesture can be found in the decision of subsequent owners to demolish it.

In neither of these examples is it clear whether the conservatory is used to genuine horticultural ends. Hector's appears abandoned, despite his botanical interests, and Howorth's seems to speak to a vanity of appearance. What they do hold in common is the acknowledgement that the conservatory serves as a necessary appendage to the upper middleclass domicile.

But knowing that the conservatory was an expected part of an affluent household in the 1890s leaves us little wiser about how it was understood. In an English climate the conservatory was a necessary tool for the propagation, and therefore display, of exotic specimens that spoke to an expanse of Empire. But in New Zealand's benign climate, at the other edge of Empire, such horticultural bravado loses its symbolic significance.

There are exceptions. On the topic of bulbous plants in 1888, the *Lyttelton Times* advised planting *Tritinia Aurea* – "a much neglected plant" – as it blooms in July and August "when flowering plants of a varied character for conservatory decoration are scarce."⁴⁹ While the *Fielding Star*, in 1895, reported a conservatory on the Fielding-Ashurst Road in which a pineapple could be seen "growing vigorously."⁵⁰ So there were at least a few attempts to exploit the conservatory to symbolic ends, but they appear to be localised experiments.

More honestly, the conservatory and glasshouse in New Zealand in the 1890s offered a mirror to the social-economic standing of the occupants of the house. In "Woman in a glasshouse" the dress of the female figure, the purposefully and thoughtfully constructed conservatory, and, especially, the potted flowers, indicated a leisurely occupation raising ornamental plants, which in turn speaks to a comfortable middleclass domesticity.

In contrast to, but not unrelated from, the

⁴⁹ "Bulbous Plants" p 3.

⁵⁰ "Local and General News" p 2.



Figure 2: Man in the back garden at the residence of Louis P Christeson.

previous photograph, is a second image. This one portrays a male figure seated in a suburban yard. He is found casually reading a newspaper, but his formal attire belies the causal pose. He has a trimmed goatee and his

hair, notably, is fashionably quaffed. He is surrounded by a young but ever so slightly unkempt planted garden, and to his right is a familiar conservatory, seen this time from the exterior. There can be little doubt that this is

Louis P Christeson, appearing here very much a respectable member of the new urban middleclass: fashionably elegant, worldly literate, he is a comfortably urban archetypal for the emergence of middle New Zealand in the 1890s.

That Christeson's pose can be so readily compared to the figure found in the mythological Man Alone photograph is specifically coincidental, but not motivationally distant as they share the same artificial values of nationalism defined by Phillips. In the same way that Mitchell could claim the Man Alone photograph as a "banner for truth"⁵¹ in the Auckland University School of Architecture, the Christeson portrait is a portrayal of respectability, albeit one located in a language of staged informality. The same might be said of the Man Alone, and if I were to draw a direct comparison between the two, an interesting presentation of spatial contrast occurs.

Situated in the bush, in the Man Alone image (which was once titled "Whare in the Bush"⁵²) the verandah becomes a transgressive space

⁵¹ Mitchell & Chaplin *The Elegant Shed* p 104 [caption].

⁵² Skinner "Whare in the Bush" p 56.

mediating cultural occupation between the threat of an uncontrollable landscape, and the promise of an order domestic interior. But placed into an urban context the verandah loses this symbolic potency in the interests of projecting respectability to the street. Certainly, the verandah facilitates movement between public and private domains, but the architectural language of this transition is moderated by external expectations of conformity and convention. Against this, the conservatory is a far more divisive condition. With the conservatory, it is not so much that it mediates between conditions of interior and exteriority in the manner of the verandah, but that it constructs a new spatial condition that is neither interior nor exterior but a new version of each. This may well be why the verandah (along with the porch) is a preferred conceit for New Zealand architecture, as it reinforces the edifice of architecture as a division between interior and landscape. But the conservatory, with its reconciliation of both interior and landscape, is an existential threat to architecture, albeit one that seems appropriate to New Zealand in the 1890s as it hints at the disingenuous nature of national archetypes, be they of buildings or character.

By way of pertinent digression, this is found

in the life of Louis Christeson. In March, 1882, the *Oamaru Mail* carried the announcement that LP Christeson – "late of Dunedin" – had commenced business as a hairdressing establishment, and invited patronage.⁵³ We must assume his launch went well as by April he was advertising for an assistant,⁵⁴ and in September it was announcement that Christeson's letters of naturalisation had been granted.⁵⁵ The following year he announced that he had added "Beautiful and Private Ladies' Hairdressing Rooms" to his Thames Street premise.⁵⁶ By mid-December, 1883, Christeson had expanded his operation to become a hairdresser and tobacconist,⁵⁷ and the following week the *Oamaru Mail* carried news of his marriage to Eveline Mary Stephens.⁵⁸ Christeson's commercial expansion continued into 1884 with the sale of imported bicycles,⁵⁹ and the erection of bathrooms, in stone.⁶⁰ However, Christeson's fortunes turned in 1889, when seven cases

⁵³ "Wanted Known – New Hairdresser" p 2.

⁵⁴ "Wanted – A Hairdresser" p 3.

⁵⁵ "The Oamaru Mail" p 2.

⁵⁶ "L.P. Christeson" p 3.

⁵⁷ "To Smokers" p 3.

⁵⁸ "Marriage: Christeson – Stephens" p 2

⁵⁹ "Bicycles! Bicycles!" p 3.

⁶⁰ "Tenders will be received" p 3. The architect is named, appropriately enough for this work, as Thomas Glass.

labelled "dried fish" were seized in his business premises.⁶¹ Subsequent inspection found the contents to be tobacco avoiding duty taxes, to which Christeson claimed to have no knowledge.⁶² Criminal charges followed,⁶³ resulting in a conviction for tobacco smuggling and a 100 pound fine⁶⁴. The impact of this on Christeson's reputation can be gauged from the notice carried by the *Oamaru Mail* in October 1889, that he had disposed of all his business in the town.⁶⁵

There's a gap in newspaper accounts of four years, but in 1893, Louis P Christeson started advertising in Wellington's *Evening Post* for an apprentice to start in his "superior Saloon" in Willis Street.⁶⁶ Thereafter advertisements relating to the commercial activities of Christeson in Wellington are frequent. Mention of his name reaches a peak in November, 1901, when the Oriental Hotel was destroyed by fire, with the neighbouring shop owned by Christeson being "ruined."⁶⁷ For the

⁶¹ "North Otago Times: Monday, January 7, 1889" p 2.

⁶² "Case Of Alleged Smuggling" p 2.

⁶³ "Smuggling 1,000lb of tobacco" p 2.

⁶⁴ "The Tobacco Smuggling Cases" p 4

⁶⁵ "Notice" p 3.

⁶⁶ "Wanted" p 3.

⁶⁷ "Fire At Wellington" p 4.

destruction of furniture and stock Christeson received £1000 in insurance,⁶⁸ and the following year he spent 12 months travelling through America, where he passed exams relating to the study of electrolysis and dermatology, and then toured "all the large cities of the United States in order to study fashionable styles of American ladies hairdressing."⁶⁹

I realise that in my truncated account of Christeson's activities the sensational elements tend to be more prominent, but the point to be heard here is that Christeson's 1890s respectability, which incorporates social, cultural, professional as well as architectural attributes, is built on a pretty dubious personal history. Christeson may appear to us from the comfort of his backyard as a respectable urbanite, and he may well be hard-working, but his character is far removed from the attributes of physicality and fair-minded egalitarianism the we celebrate the 1890s as codifying.

I would suggest a parallel distraction occurs with the verandah. Used to emphasise the

⁶⁸ "Big Blaze in Wellington" p 2.

⁶⁹ "Anglo-Colonial Notes. Personal Items" p 5

emergence of a New Zealand architecture, it actually entrenches imported values that include the lineage of classical traditions, conventional public/private demarcations, and narratives of heroic masculinity. Together these serve to reinforce a stable architectural continuity under a mask of regionalism.

The conservatory, I would suggest, is a far more subversive, independent and politicised spatial state. As a product of industrialised activity – new materials, global economic expansion, changing social classes – the conservatory is antagonistic to the sort of historical continuity that protects and promotes architecture as an independent edifice, as found in the verandah. That the conservatory matures in New Zealand simultaneously with the formation of our "national definition" should be seen as adding weight to a view that potential existed for it to emerge as the archetype for all New Zealand architectures.

We can see this in the paired photographs of the Christesons. Louis reclines between landscape and interior, in a pose of leisure, a full benefactor of the benefits of petit-bourgeois gentrification. Eveline is at work in a space of modernity, uninhibited by the

weight of architectural history, but in full understanding of the additional work this demands. That we can't see the other in either photograph is telling.

REFERENCES

- "Anglo-Colonial Notes. Personal Items" *Evening Post* (2 July 1902): 5.
- Armstrong, I. *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008
- "Bicycles! Bicycles!" *Oamaru Mail* (10 June 1884): 3.
- "Big Blaze in Wellington" *Poverty Bay Herald* (25 November 1901): 2.
- "Bulbous Plants Lyttelton" *Times* (13 January 1888): 3.
- Cairns, Craig "Botanic Gardens and the Aesthetics of Artifice" *Journal of Scottish Thought* (2018): 95-109.
- "Case Of Alleged Smuggling" *Otago Daily Times* (7 January 1889): 2.
- "Conflagration Of Wynyard House" *New Zealand Herald and Auckland Gazette* (6 October 1841): 3.
- Crary, Jonathan *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999
- Dalziel, Raewyn "An experiment in the social laboratory? Suffrage, national identity, and mythologies of race in New Zealand in the 1890s" *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race* ed Ian Christopher Fletcher, Philippa Levine and Laura E. Nym Mayhall. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2000: 87-102.
- Davidoff, L. and C. Hall *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middleclass, 1780-1850* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991
- "Eight-Roomed House" *New Zealand Herald* (21 January 1890): 2.
- "Electricity Or Steam" *New Zealand Colonist and Port Nicholson Advertiser* (22 November 1842): 4.
- Elliott, Paul "Creating Suburbia: The Gardenesque, Place, Association and the Rustic Tradition" *Garden History* (Autumn 2018) 46(1): 51-71.
- "Fire At Wellington" *Evening Star* (25 November 1901): 4.
- "For Sale: A Glass Roofed Room [Advertisement]" *Wellington Independent* (31 December 1863): 1.
- "For Sale: A Handsome Property [Advertisement]" *Otago Daily Times* (1 August 1862): 3.
- "For Sale: Charming Suburban Residence" *Press* (6 January 1890): 8.
- "Freehold Property at Kai Warra Warra [Advertisement]" *Wellington Independent* (19 April 1861): 2.
- Friends of Karori Cemetery "Louis Peter Christeson" <https://friendsofkaroricemetery.co.nz/louis-peter-christeson/>
- Hultzsch, Anne "From Encyclopaedia to magazine, the Loudons, the public, and the architect in 1830s Britain" *The Journal of Architecture* (2020) 25(7): 844-872.
- Jones, Elizabeth "Suburban Sinners: Sex and disease in the Cockney School" *Leigh Hunt: Life, Poetics, Politics* ed Nicholas Roe. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003: 78-94.
- "L.P. Christeson" *Oamaru Mail* (2 November 1883): 3.
- "Local and General News" *Feilding Star* (13 February 1895): 2.
- Loudon, John Claudius *A short treatise on several improvements, recently made in hot-houses* Edinburgh: J.C. Loudon, 1805
- Loudon, John Claudius "Introduction" *Architectural Magazine* (March 1834) 1: 1-12.
- Loudon, John Claudius *Remarks on the Construction of Hothouses* 1817.
- Loudon, John Claudius *Sketches of Curvilinear Hothouses* London: J. Taylor, 1818.
- Loudon, John Claudius *The green-house companion* London: Whittaker Treacher & Co., 1824.
- Loudon, John Claudius *The Green-House Companion; Comprising a General Course of Green-House and Conservatory Practice Throughout the Year* London: Harding, Triphook, and Lepard, 1832.
- Macarthur, John "Colonies at Home: Loudon's Encyclopaedia, and the Architecture of Forming the self" *Architectural Research Quarterly* (1999) 3(3): 245-58.

- McKay, Bill "The Story up to Now" *KOHA An Offering of New Zealand Architecture and Design* (2016) 1: 1, 4-7.
- "Marriage: Christeson - Stephens" *Oamaru Mail* (28 December 1883): 2.
- "Miscellaneous" *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator* (31 October 1840): 4.
- "Mr Hansard is instructed to offer [Advertisement]" *New Zealander* (12 May 1860): 1.
- Mitchell, David and Gillian Chaplin *The Elegant Shed: New Zealand architecture since 1945* Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1984
- Morris, Colleen "The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge: John Claudius Loudon and his Influence in the Australian Colonies" *Garden History* (Spring 2004) 32(1): 101-123.
- "North Otago Times: Monday, January 7, 1889" *North Otago Times* (7 January 1889): 2.
- "Notice" *Oamaru Mail* (12 October 1891): 3.
- "The Oamaru Mail" *Oamaru Mail* (22 September 1883): 2.
- "Quarter-Acre, Norfolk Street" *Otago Daily Times* (20 January 1890): 4.
- Sicher, Efraim "By Underground to Crystal Palace: The Dystopian Eden" *Comparative Literature Studies* (Fall 1985) (22)3: 377-393.
- Sinclair, Keith *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for a National Identity* Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986.
- Skinner, Robin "Whare in the Bush" *Fabrications: The journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand* (2008) 18(1): 56-73.
- Sloterdijk, Peter "The Crystal Palace" trans Michael Darroch *Public* (2008) 37: 11-16.
- "Smuggling 1,000lb of tobacco" *Evening Star* (24 January 1889): 2.
- "Tenders will be received [Bath-rooms (stone)]" *North Otago Times* (26 November 1884): 3.
- Thompson, Melissa "Georgian and Regency conservatories: their structural and social integration with the house" *Occasional Papers from the RHS Lindley Library* (2019) 17:34-53.
- "To Smokers" *Oamaru Mail* (18 December 1883): 3.
- "The Tobacco Smuggling Cases" *Otago Daily Times* (6 February 1889): 4.
- "Wanted" *Evening Post* (15 November 1893): 3.
- "Wanted – A Hairdresser" *Oamaru Mail* (20 April 1882): 3.
- "Wanted Known – New Hairdresser" *Oamaru Mail* (9 March 1882): 2.
- Wood, Peter "The Bach: The Cultural History of a Local Typology" *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* (2000) 11(1): 44-60.

IMAGES

- "Briscoe & Co Ltd. A residence, Invercargill, with Marseilles Tile roof. From the extreme south to the sunny north of New Zealand, the Marseilles Roofing Tile has found its way. It will suit any climate" [1906-1908]. [Ephemera of octavo size relating to building material and supplies in New Zealand]. Ref: Eph-A-BUILDING-SUPPLIES-1907-01-40. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
- "Howorth, Charles Henry, 1856-1945. Howorth, Charles Henry, 1856-1945: Wharepaka 1907" Ref: C-053-019. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
- "Man in the back garden at the residence of Louis P Christeson at 213 Willis Street, Wellington." Harkness, W E: Photographs. Ref: 1/2-062476-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
- "Petone seen from above Sir James Hector's house, Ratanui" Barton, C. Hector and Barton family photographs. Ref: 1/4-063723-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
- "Woman in a glasshouse at the residence of Louis P Christeson at 213 Willis Street, Wellington." Harkness, W E: Photographs. Ref: 1/2-062480-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.