

Editor's Introduction

An underlying theme in this issue is that of place and environment, but the articles build upon a wide range of conceptual approaches, locations, human activities and agency. We begin with Jonathan West's article on New Zealand lakes. An environmental historian, and J.D. Stout Fellow at the Stout Research Centre in 2019, West's research comes at a critical juncture when the declining quality of freshwater is the focus of intense national debate and argument. As West points out, the pollution in our lakes is the result of the farming practices and the residential uses of the land around them and resolving or mitigating problems decades in the making is going to pose very difficult questions for us all.

Remaining within a rural context but posing a very different set of questions, Rebecca Ream conducted interviews with rural farming women in the Wairarapa to see if the colonial belief in an ideal arcadia, or a rural paradise, still retained resonance among these descendants of European settlers. Drawing upon conceptual approaches developed by Donna Haraway, Ream suggests new ways of understanding the connections her interviewees made between home and land. Next Diego Bonelli explores another lens through which the New Zealand landscape was framed, this time in pursuit of national goals. Examination of the films produced by the Government Publicity Office in the middle decades of the twentieth century leads Bonelli to argue that the focus had shifted from rural to urban and suburban spaces, including the beaches, with the goal of attracting both immigrants and tourists.

Between the farms and the cities many New Zealanders lived in small townships during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Philip Jane explores the life of a provincial musician in Hawera during this period. In the process he reveals the high quality and rich range of musical activity, events and performances that emerged from the influence of a relatively small number of musical leaders. Staying with the focus upon small town New Zealand, Hugh Morrison looks at an autobiography, a family artifact, written in 1946 as part of a school assignment by a girl living in Oamaru. The autobiography, he argues, gives us insights into growing up during the interwar period in small-town and middle-class Pākehā New Zealand, and contributes to our understanding how children or young people narrate their lives through formal writing.

In the final articles the global context is brought more explicitly into the frame. During the Second World War many New Zealanders had their first experiences of places overseas. Focusing upon soldiers' perceptions and reactions to places in the Middle East, Josh King explores the clashes between preconception and experience that were sometimes accompanied by what he describes as a 'vernacular orientalism.' In the last article John O'Leary examines the practice by Sir George Grey of collecting indigenous human remains in the nineteenth century and sending them to researchers in Europe. He draws attention to the role of class and status in this practice, and also assesses the significance of this activity in Grey's intellectual life, his subsequent reputation, and the shifting perspectives among historians in the present.

In December 2020 we will publish a thematic issue, *Colin McCahon: Life and Afterlife*, edited by Luke Smythe and Rex Butler of Monash University. The June 2021 issue of the journal is open for submissions on all subjects within the broad multidisciplinary remit of New Zealand studies. Submissions are double-blind peer reviewed, and we urge potential contributors to allow sufficient time for this process, which can be lengthy, to take place.