

Introduction

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The essays in this collection are, in many cases, the first sustained discussion of the writers and their work, much of it resulting from primary research in rare book collections and local and overseas archives. In comparison to scholars and academics in Canada and Australia, those wishing to research New Zealand authors in the period this volume covers have in the past found only a limited number of sources and guides. *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, edited by Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998) provides succinct references to individual authors and entries on major works by the better-known. The biographical details of some (but by no means all) authors under review here can be found in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: Volume One, 1769-1869* (Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Department of Internal Affairs, 1990), and *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: Volume Two, 1870-1900* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books/Dept. of Internal Affairs, 1993), although there is little or no discussion of literary work. The second edition of *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, edited by Terry Sturm (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998) sets the authors we are concerned with within a historical narrative in the sections on non-fiction (Peter Gibbons), the novel (Lawrence Jones) and popular literature (Terry Sturm). Their treatment, in the context of a history stretching from pre-European contact to the present, is necessarily brief. Patrick Evans' *Penguin History of New Zealand Literature* (Auckland: Penguin, 1990) is somewhat dismissive of the colonial period, especially of its women writers. His reprise, *The Long Forgetting: Post-colonial Literary Culture in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2007), is more respectful, but as a discussion of nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature is necessarily cursory. Jenny Robin Jones' *Writers in Residence: A Journey with Pioneer New Zealand Writers* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004) is largely interested in the material conditions of writers' lives. *Maoriland: New Zealand Literature 1872-1914* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2006) by myself and Mark Williams is a discussion of late-colonial writing and includes chapters on Edith Searle Grossmann and Blanche Baughan. Terry Sturm has written a study of G. B. Lancaster, *An Unsettled Spirit: the Life and Frontier Fiction of Edith Lyttleton (G. B. Lancaster)* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003) which surveys both her literary output and her relationship with

the publishing world in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and England.

There are some specialised works of reference and critical discussion of the period that emerge from the women's movement and the centennial celebrations of women's suffrage in the 1990s: *The Book of New Zealand Women, Ko Kui ma te Kaupapa*, edited by Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold and Bridget Williams (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991) is largely biographical but has a limited discussion of some aspects of the literature; Heather Roberts' *Where Did She Come From?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987* (Wellington: Allen and Unwin and Port Nicholson Press, 1989) discusses a range of the lesser known nineteenth-century women writers.

During the last decade there has been increasing interest in settler literature among postgraduate students, some of whom are contributors to this project: Daphne Lawless' 'The Sex Problem: Femininity, Class and Contradiction in Late Colonial New Zealand Novels' (PhD. Diss., Victoria University, 2003); Teresia L. Marshall's 'New Zealand Literature in the Sydney 'Bulletin', 1880-1930, With a Literary Index (Volume Two) of the New Zealand Authors Listed in the 'Bulletin', 1880-1960' (PhD. Diss., University of Auckland, 1995); Kirstine Moffat's 'The Puritan Paradox: The Puritan Legacy in the Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life of New Zealand, Focusing Primarily on the Works of Novelists Writing between 1862 and 1940' (PhD. Diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 1999); Louise O'Brien's 'Hybridity and Indigeneity: Historical Narratives and Post-Colonial Identity' (MA thesis, Victoria University, 1996); John O'Leary's 'The Colonizing Pen: Mid-Nineteenth Century European Writing about Maori' (PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2001); Philip Steer's 'Disputed Ground: The Construction of Pakeha Identity in the Novels of the New Zealand Wars' (MA thesis, Victoria University, 2004); and Hamish Win's 'Reading Maoriland: New Zealand's Ethnic Ornament' (MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 2005).

Katherine Mansfield and Ngaio Marsh both have international reputations which are reflected in Mansfield's case in scholarly editions of her letters and notebooks—*Collected Letters*, 4 vols. (vol. 5 forthcoming) edited by Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-1996) and *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, 2 vols., edited by Margaret Scott (Lincoln: Lincoln University Press/Wellington: Daphne Brasell, 1997). There is a body of critical literature on Mansfield, although much material in the notebooks awaits commentary. In the case of Marsh, there are biographies and autobiographies but less critical commentary than is perhaps warranted. Hyde is the focus of a large and on-going research project, which has produced editions of a substantial amount of hitherto unpublished material. But critical

commentary is still ongoing. But the other writers in this collection have attracted little more than the occasional journal article, which we note in the bibliographies of individual essays.

This collection of essays, then, gives a focused detailed reading of a group of writers who in most cases have not hitherto enjoyed critical attention. The assessments are based on primary research, but go beyond the normal remit of reference in being opinionated and argumentative. As is proper for an effective research resource, these essays point to further research directions. The critical disdain that the literature of the colonial period has attracted has been modified in recent years. But there are still areas about which we do not know nearly enough, and there is still a variety of archives and collections that have not been fully examined. We hope that the specificity of the discussions here, many based on original archival examination, will be suggestive in this respect. The material circumstances of these writers are crucial to their art. Many of them were journalists or supported themselves by writing for newspapers and magazines both in New Zealand and overseas, Australia, the US as well as the more obvious market of England. How were these writers' relationships with newspapers configured? What kind of literature was published in New Zealand newspapers? Papers Past, the New Zealand National Library digital edition of a selection of colonial newspapers, suggests that many of the authors featured in this volume had lengthy, complex, and mutually rewarding relationships with newspapers. What does this suggest about the publication opportunities for books? What was the state of publishing institutions in the colonial world? Many of the books here had overseas publishers and New Zealand readers. What was the relationship between the two, in terms of the commercial world the books existed in, and in terms of the way both reader and writer saw their audience? How did the dual audiences of dual reputations, local and overseas, of writers such as G. B. Lancaster, Louisa Baker or Ngaio Marsh work? This material here relates to the general consideration of audiences and readership and has links with various national book history projects. Book and Print in New Zealand: A Guide to Print Culture in Aotearoa, eds. Penny Griffith, Ross Harvey and Keith Maslen (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997), is a useful resource in this respect to read against the specific essays in this collection.

It is obvious that many of writers in this collection wrote in terms of orthodoxies and ideologies particular to the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Religion is a feature of many of the writers' work, both in terms of the Christian denominations that were part of the fabric of settler New Zealand society, and in terms of the alternatives which suggested themselves to the doubtful Victorian or the spiritually inquiring early modernist. Many of these women wrote to further the cause of feminism, but it is feminism in its

nineteenth-century garb, with the obligatory add-ons of suffrage and temperance, or in its early twentieth-century garb where the cause of sexual freedom is often expressed in rhetorics that seem to the modern ear empurpled and overblown. How far and in what form are the interests we as twenty-first century readers have — in gender, ethnicity, nationalism, the postcolonial — reflected in these writers? Only detailed reading of their work in its primary context will enable us to avoid a presentism that distorts the basic positions from which they wrote.

Ultimately these essays are about literature and the relationship of these writers with the dominant literary forms of Victorian culture. The New Zealand Electronic Text Centre's [Nineteenth Century New Zealand Novels Online Collection](#) is a useful complementary source for further work in this area. How does settler writing over the century adapt formally, from the autobiographies and letters of the early generation of settlers to the more mannered and consciously invented worlds of later in the century? These writers deploy a variety of generic modes, from romance and adventure stories exploiting the strangeness of place (for an overseas audience but also for an increasingly urban local readership), to what Patrick Brantlinger calls 'imperial gothic', to the novel of the New Woman, to intimations of modernism. Are these conventional critical descriptors correct or useful? Did these writers develop new forms or simply inherit and imitate forms from elsewhere? What connections do New Zealand writers in this period have with other colonial literatures — Australia, Canada, South Africa, India? There is a great deal of exciting work to be done in this area, and the editors hope that this collection of essays will both contribute to and stimulate such activity.