Settler Nationalism and Literary Conservatism in Aotearoa New Zealand: The Case of C. R. Allen (1885–1962)

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Historiographical Introduction

Although there has been much research on the growth of literary nationalism in the British Empire's settler societies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, too much has been coloured by the modernist contributions of the interwar period and afterwards. This lopsided perspective is lamentable, though understandable. Settler societies such as Australia, Canada, and Aotearoa New Zealand were originally largely undeveloped colonies sparsely inhabited by Indigenous peoples and European immigrants. By the early 1900s, they had become full-fledged dominions that boasted self-governing parliaments, thriving cultural scenes, a largely native-born European-heritage population, and distinct dialects of English.[2]

Unsurprisingly, there was a growing awareness that the New World was growing apart from the Old. On the one hand, there were settler citizens who increasingly took pride in their New World societies, viewing them as Better Britains that had preserved the best aspects of the 'Mother Country' while casting off unwanted baggage such as its elaborate class system.[3] They resented the cultural

[1] I would like to thank the Editor-in-chief of the journal, Dr. Jatinder Mann and the two anonymous reviewers for their comments and feedback.
[2] For a classic study on this phenomenon, see Richard Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* (London: E. Arnold, 1905). On dialects specifically, see Miles Fairburn, "Is there a Good Case for New Zealand Exceptionalism?" in *Disputed Histories: Imagining New Zealand's Pasts*, eds. Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006), 148–149.
[3] On the concept of "Better Britain", see James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Wellington: Allen Lane, 1996), 303–312; Martin George Holmes, "Radicalism and Patrician Conservatism in Aotearoa New Zealand: The Case of William Downie Stewart Jr.," *Journal of Australian, Canadian, and Aotearoa New Zealand Studies* 2 (September 2022): 13–14, 27–28.

and political hegemony of Britain, whose elites, steeped in the aristocratic traditions so foreign to settler societies, tended to treat colonials with 'condescending patronage' and regard them as 'a slightly inferior class'.[4] This was especially the case after the First World War, in which the Dominions proved their mettle in defence of the Empire, and whose sacrifices forged closer bonds among their respective populations.

On the other hand, even those uncomfortable with self-congratulatory Better Britain rhetoric, such as the Aotearoa New Zealand poet Allen Curnow (about whom more later), recognised the inadequacy of trying to establish a New World society by transplanting the Victorian and Edwardian culture of the Old (even the perceived best parts).[5] Without profound reflection, such a transplanted culture could not develop healthily, and risked native-born settlers becoming alienated from their birthplace. This sense of alienation could be exacerbated by the fact that settler societies were originally ruggedly practical, and therefore not amenable to high culture, and were built on lands seized unscrupulously from Indigenous peoples. As Curnow remarked in 1960, 'The nineteenth-century colonists [to Aotearoa New Zealand] achieved their migration bodily, but not in spirit…Even as they proclaimed their emancipation, they heard the trap closing behind them.'[6] In his esteemed 2017 study of 1930s modernism in Aotearoa New Zealand, John Newton has referred to this phenomenon as 'critical' nationalism.[7] Aotearoa New Zealand's firebrand

[4] André Siegfried, *Democracy in New Zealand*, trans. E. V. Burns (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914), 45.
[5] Allen Curnow, *Looking Back Harder: Critical Writings, 1935–1984*, ed. Peter Simpson (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), 46–48.
[6] *Ibid*., 136.
[7] John Newton, *Hard Frost: Structures of Feeling in New Zealand Literature, 1908–1945* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2017), 149–185. Another helpful analysis is Andrew Dean, "Nationalism, Modernism, and New Zealand," *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 38, no. 1 (2020): 15–19.

modernists tended to be of the critical kind, and Curnow was their foremost theoretician.

Owing to space limitations, I cannot discuss the nuances of other settler societies in depth. Suffice it to say that critical nationalists existed throughout the British Empire's settler societies. They propagated their views by means of journals such as the *Bulletin* and the *Angry Penguin* in Australia, the *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow* in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the *McGill Fortnightly Review* and *Canadian Mercury* in Canada.[8]

These modernist firebrands relentlessly criticised the prevailing literary establishments. Their stereotypical members were religious middle-aged men and spinster women loyal to the cultural styles of Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Criticisms often verged on the malicious, as when A. R. D. Fairburn deprecated Aotearoa New Zealand's 'menstrual school' of poetry and F. R. Scott satirised Canada's 'Virgins of sixty who still write of passion'.[9] Although modernists took inspiration from their British counterparts and were not necessarily anti-Britain and anti-Empire, they satirised excessive deference to the British establishment. For example, Dennis Glover in Aotearoa New Zealand cheekily mocked 'our native birds that lushly sing / pip-toot pip-toot God save the King' and Scott in Canada ridiculed how 'Expansive puppets percolate self-unction / Beneath a portrait of the Prince of

[8] A good overview of the Canadian context is J. A. Weingarten, "Modernist Poetry in Canada, 1920–1960," in *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2015), 314–336. For a penetrating overview of the Aotearoa New Zealand context, see Newton, *Hard Frost*. An older study is Stuart Murray, *Never a Soul at Home: New Zealand Literary Nationalism and the 1930s* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1998). A good overview of the Australian context is Bruce Bennett, "The Short Story, 1890s to 1950," in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 156–179.
[9] Cited in John Stenhouse, "'Like Strychnine in Its Bones'? Puritanism, Literary Culture, and New Zealand History," *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 30 (2012): 161; F.R. Scott, "The Canadian Authors Meet," in *Selected Poems* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), 70.

Wales.'[10] In line with this perspective, critical nationalists were unimpressed by whitewashed official celebrations of settler societies. For instance, Glover wrote of his country's 1940 centennial: 'The politicians like bubbles from a marsh / Rose to the platform, hanging in every place / Their comfortable platitudes like plush / – Without one word of our failures.'[11]

The critical nationalist position was likely exacerbated by the fact that these conservative authors, speaking about respectable subjects in respectable tones, frequently had a sizable readership in their respective settler societies. This made them prominent figureheads of the kind of settler culture that modernists disliked so much. Recognising their isolation, many modernists became more highbrow, prioritising the purity of their audience (however small) over commercial success.[12] Even after they became the literary establishment, their works did not necessarily become best-sellers.

After the First World War, these modernists became very vocal and prominent. After the Second World War, when the British Empire disbanded and settler societies became full-fledged independent countries, they gradually displaced them as the literary establishment. For example, in 1966, the Australian critic A. A. Phillips, who had once written an essay decrying the tendency of some cultivated Australians to deprecate their own culture by comparing it to an idealised English culture, happily declared that times had changed.[13]

It is therefore justifiable that scholars have paid close attention to modernist literary nationalism. Nevertheless, I think that this emphasis has at times been so

[10] Scott, "The Canadian Authors Meet," 70; Dennis Glover, "Explanatory," in *Selected Poems* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1981), 1.
[11] Dennis Glover, "Centennial," in *Selected Poems* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1981), 39.
[12] For example, see Newton, *Hard Frost*, 19.
[13] A. A. Phillips, *The Australian Tradition: Studies in a Colonial Culture*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Cheshire-Lansdowne, 1966), vii.

exclusive that the perspective of conservative settler authors, whom the modernists so often criticised, has been inadequately elucidated. Here, I am not referring to conservatives such as the Australian Martin Boyd, who intentionally emigrated from the New World to the Old, and who maintained little interest in settler literatures. Rather, I refer to those conservative authors who were active in, and who ultimately identified with, their respective settler societies.

The neglect of these persons and modernist criticisms of them risk giving the impression that they dismissed settler nationalism in favour of a transplanted, and therefore artificial and untenable, Britishness (or Englishness specifically, depending on the author in question). A few scholars have briefly remarked that this viewpoint is misleading in that conservatives often espoused a more conservative nationalism that combined loyalty to their new land with a continued fealty to the 'Mother Country'. I can cite only a few examples here. In Canada, Thomas E. Tausky notes that the Canadian Authors Association, founded in 1921 by conservatives such as Stephen Leacock and John Murray Gibbon to secure fair copyright laws for Canadian writers, espoused a 'conservative nationalism'.[14] In Australia, Ken Goodwin remarks that the poet and scholar A. D. Hope, though loyal to English culture and harshly critical of modernism, helped establish the first full-year course in Australian literature.[15] In Aotearoa New Zealand, Lawrence Jones suggests that Alan Mulgan, a writer profoundly influenced by England, nevertheless believed that Aotearoa New Zealand should foster a distinctive culture.[16]

[14] Thomas E. Tausky, "Nationalism," in *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, ed. William H. New (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 798.
[15] Ken Goodwin, *A History of Australian Literature* (London: Macmillan Education, 1986), 120.
[16] Lawrence Jones, *Picking Up the Traces: The Making of a New Zealand Literary Culture, 1932–1945* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2003), 75–76.

Most encouragingly in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, there has been a nuanced reanalysis of the Maoriland writers of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The 1930s critical nationalists had lambasted these pioneer writers, who wrote when 'Maoriland' was a popular name for Aotearoa New Zealand, because their understanding of settler identity was deemed too artificial. In their minds, Maoriland writing offered an overly optimistic portrait of the country that meshed transplanted Old-World identities – which, among other things, supplied an antiquated literary style – and a tactless mythologising of Māori people and use of Māori terminology that evaded the reality of colonial injustice and settler alienation from the land.[17]

In a 2006 monograph containing several case studies, which involved substantial archival research, Mark Williams and Jane Stafford sought to reassess the Maoriland writers. They argued that while modern-day readers sometimes find these writers cringeworthy, they are a 'formative part' of the country's literary history and ought to be remembered as such.[18] They emphasised that Maoriland 'constituted the first generation of cultural nationalism in New Zealand', and while it was 'less radical and more tentative' than the critical nationalism of the 1930s, its authors had variant views of Britain, the Empire, and literary style.[19] Although many were loyal to the British Empire and fond of British cultural influence, they engaged creatively and critically with these concepts as they set about developing the Antipodes.

This willingness to reassess maligned authors provides valuable context for rescuing conservative literary nationalists from the condescension of posterity. Nevertheless, there remains a lack of research – detailed case studies, especially –

[17] For example, see Curnow, *Looking Back Harder*, 47.
[18] Jane Stafford and Mark Williams, *Maoriland: New Zealand Literature, 1872–1914* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2006), 14.
[19] *Ibid.*, 14–16.

that explore conservative literary nationalism after the First World War, when conservative literary establishments came under sustained attack from, and were ultimately routed by, firebrand modernists. Leacock is an exception that proves the rule: as a first-class satirist and a noteworthy theorist of imperial federation, he has always been of interest to literary and political historians.[20] However, few others have been the object of such detailed research.

In Aotearoa New Zealand specifically, scholars know that conservatives remained the literary establishment until the 1940s. They remark that the 1930 anthology *Kowhai Gold* is regarded as symbolic of the conservatives' outlook and dominance.[21] Nevertheless, scholars talk about these figures in broad terms that frequently lack nuance. This is understandable to a degree, since modern-day readers sometimes find the prejudices of these conservatives quite jarring, their tactlessness regarding Māori, inherited from the Maoriland writers, being a case in point.

Nevertheless, this neglect becomes problematic at times. For example, in his acclaimed 2001 history, James Belich briefly talked about these 'happy exiles' from the Old World who, aware of their 'provincialism' in the Empire and reliance on Britain for high culture, self-consciously published 'dross' that lacked the incisiveness of the critical nationalists (or, for that matter, some Maoriland writers).[22] Belich fleetingly remarks that their most memorable works are those recounting 'the great recolonial pilgrimage' from the imperial periphery to its centre, where they melodramatically and uncritically praised what they saw around them, no matter how

[20] See, for example, Ron Dart, *Stephen Leacock: Canada's Red Tory Prophet* (Dewdney: Synaxis Press, 2006).
[21] Quentin Pope, ed., *Kowhai Gold: An Anthology of Contemporary New Zealand Verse* (London: J. M. Dent, 1930).
[22] James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland: Allen Lane, 2001), 333.

mundane or absurd.[23] Selecting Mulgan's 1927 account as an example, Belich rather crassly concludes: 'One feels that if a London policeman had knocked Alan Mulgan down and urinated on him, Mulgan would have sprung up and shaken him gratefully by the hand.'[24]

This kind of brief treatment of conservatives, while helpful to a degree, lacks the delicacy and detail to do full justice to their literary contributions. Case studies are therefore vital. This is especially important because, like the Maoriland writers until recently,[25] much of their work has been so neglected that it is nowadays accessible only through extensive archival research.

C. R. Allen as a Case Study

To help rectify this shortcoming, I present in this article a case study of the prominent Aotearoa New Zealand conservative author Charles Richards Allen (1885–1962). A once-famous author maligned by the critical nationalists, Allen articulated a conservative understanding of national identity in the 1930s and 1940s, when Aotearoa New Zealand's literary establishment was changing. By consulting three archival collections, I have pieced together Allen's contribution to national identity. I focus on his three 1930s novels, which are his most famous and profound works: *A Poor Scholar* (1936), *The Hedge-Sparrow* (1937), and *The Young Pretender* (1939).[26]

[23] Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 333.
[24] *Ibid.* On Mulgan's book, see Alan Mulgan, *Home: A New Zealander's Adventure* (London: Longman's Green, 1927).
[25] Stafford and Williams, *Maoriland*, 20.
[26] C. R. Allen, *A Poor Scholar: A Tale of Progress* (Wellington: A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1936); C. R. Allen, *The Hedge-Sparrow: A Novel* (A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1937); C. R. Allen, *The Young Pretender: A Novel* (London: Massie, 1939).

I recognise that because of differences between settler societies and individual authors, one case study cannot elucidate all aspects of the subject. Nevertheless, an in-depth look at Allen, a leading Aotearoa New Zealand conservative, provides a robust biographical profile that can serve as a springboard for further research in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere. Allen is an excellent subject because he was a committed Anglophile who was quite prolific. Despite having become blind by 1916, he wrote – or, more commonly, dictated – numerous poems, several plays, six full-fledged novels, and at least one incomplete serialised novel; he also edited the well-known 1938 short-story collection *Tales by New Zealanders.*[27]

Crucially, he was also quite popular. Although his restrained writing style, which eschews dramatic plots, might strike modern-day readers as mundane, it resonated with many twentieth-century Aotearoa New Zealanders. In 1935, the literary-minded journalist Pat Lawlor highlighted this popularity and proclaimed Allen 'one of our most interesting writers'.[28] A year later, Robin Hyde, a celebrated author who disapproved of the modernists' sexism and dismissiveness of the conservative establishment, praised Allen's *A Poor Scholar*. She enthusiastically remarked: '"A Poor Scholar" came to hand yesterday and I spent nearly half last night reading it… [I]t's such a relief that some human and credible novels of New Zealand are getting themselves written (and published!).'[29]

Contemporary newspaper reviews were frequently glowing in their praise. Although the reviewers tended to be anonymous, their testimony is significant. In

[27] C. R. Allen, ed., *Tales by New Zealanders* (London: British Author's Press, 1938).
[28] Pat Lawlor, *Confessions of a Journalist, with Observations on Some Australian and New Zealand Writers* (Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1935), 170.
[29] Robin Hyde, Letter to C. R. Allen, 19 March 1936, RA+M REED 72/HYD, Heritage Room, Dunedin City Library, Dunedin, New Zealand.

1925, the *Dunstan Times* declared his first novel, *The Ship Beautiful*, a 'touching human story' and a great achievement for a blind man.[30] In 1928, the Auckland *Sun* judged the subsequent novel *Tarry, Knight!* to be 'a charming fantasy' by an up-and-coming writer.[31] In 1933, his poetry collections persuaded the *Auckland Star* that Allen 'has an established position in New Zealand letters', and reviewed Allen's most recent work in more detail and with greater praise than it did Curnow's.[32]

His 1930s novels raised his fame to new heights. The Wellington-based *Evening Post*'s review of *A Poor Scholar* noted that Allen had 'mastered the subtleties of his craft' and that the novel 'is likely to be rated high' for years to come.[33] A few years later, Dunedin's *Evening Star* proclaimed *The Young Pretender* a 'charming story' for which 'numerous readers should have cause to thank him' and the Dunedin's *Otago Daily Times* lauded *The Hedge-Sparrow*'s 'reflective dignity that will bring much pleasure to the people of this city.'[34]

Despite his popularity during his lifetime, works of Aotearoa New Zealand literary scholarship, so focused on the rise of critical nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s,[35] usually devote only a few lines to him, and never more than a couple of paragraphs. To this date, he has never been a main subject of an academic publication or an unpublished thesis.

A contributing factor to this neglect is the fact that Allen was neither a prominent publisher nor educator, and therefore not one of the conservatives most

[30] "Blind Author's Allegory," *Dunstan Times*, 15 June 1925, 7.
[31] "A New Zealand Playwright-Novelist," *Sun (Auckland)*, 20 January 1928, 14.
[32] "New Zealand Poets: Dunedin and Auckland," *Auckland Star*, 9 December 1933, 2.
[33] "'A Poor Scholar': Notable New Zealand Novel," *Evening Post*, 21 March 1936, 28. Other positive reviews included "'A Poor Scholar': C. R. Allen's New Novel," *Southland Times*, 28 March 1936, 11; "'A Poor Scholar': New Zealander's Novel," *Timaru Herald*, 21 March 1936, 12; "'A Poor Scholar,'" *Gisborne Times*, 14 March 1936, 3.
[34] "New Books: A New C. R. Allen Novel," *Evening Star*, 12 August 1939, 21; "A Story of Dunedin Life," *Otago Daily Times*, 11 December 1937, 4.
[35] Murray, *Never a Soul at Home*, 11–12; Newton, *Hard Frost*, 12–14.

responsible for upholding the establishment. This made it relatively easy for firebrand modernists to dismiss him without a fair assessment – or even a robust criticism – of his work. All too often, he was treated as a mediocre literary recluse who, plodding away in the southern city of Dunedin, became a hopeless nostalgic disconnected from contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand culture. Charles Brasch, the poet and long-time editor of the nationalistic *Landfall* magazine, was particularly uncharitable. In his 1980 autobiography, Brasch remarked, 'His mind and emotions seemed not to have developed, remaining fixed in the pre-war time of his growth; his work was pallid and trivial.'[36]

I agree that Allen was not a first-class writer. However, I contend that he was talented and that he engaged substantially with the question of Aotearoa New Zealand national identity. Even a passing glance at his life and work makes this clear. For example, Allen attended the 1951 Centennial Writers' Conference in Christchurch. Although details regarding his participation are sparse, he discussed literary affairs with nationalist luminaries such as Curnow and James K. Baxter, to whom he was not unsympathetic (see next section for further details).[37] He had a very good relationship with Hyde who, despite her criticism of the critical nationalists, was herself a nationalistic writer.[38] Allen also expressed respect for R. A. K. Mason, whom the critical nationalists regarded as a kindred spirit from an older generation, though details are once again elusive.[39] His editing of *Tales by New Zealanders* – a remarkable feat for a blind man – also brought him into contact with many authors. Although the book, like *Kowhai Gold*, is generally conservative, it included contributions from nationalist-minded authors such as the maverick socialist

[36] Charles Brasch, *Indirections: A Memoir, 1909–1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 299.
[37] C. R. Allen, "A Quill Driver's Conclave," *Wooden Horse* 2, no. 4 (1951): 16.
[38] Murray, *Never a Soul at Home*, 165–198.
[39] C. R. Allen, "Editorial," *Wooden Horse* 1, no. 1 (1950): 3.

politician and novelist John A. Lee.[40] Thus, while Allen is often perceived as a peripheral figure in debates over Aotearoa New Zealand national identity, he was none the less a significant figure who pondered their implications. It makes sense that his fiction would reflect his views on the subject.

However, the existing scholarship on Allen is sparse and superficial. Most importantly for this study, because scholars and critics regard him as relatively unimportant, his precise relationship to literary nationalism has been left ill-defined. Commonly, he is identified with the conservative literary establishment whom the critical nationalists excoriated in the 1930s and soon afterwards displaced.[41] At the same time, some scholars have claimed that Allen's 1930s novels suggest that he became more nationalistic in later years.[42] They briefly remark that Allen, like Alan Mulgan, remained profoundly English, but realised that Aotearoa New Zealand culture was and should be distinct from Britain's.[43] Yet, these literary critics never elaborate on their theses, which are frequently based on passing references to *A Poor Scholar* and *The Hedge-Sparrow*. Scholars in other disciplines have also tended to overlook Allen. For instance, the historian Erik Olssen notes that Allen's novels, being set in the Edwardian era, are of sociological significance to historians, but offers no in-depth analysis of them.[44] In this article, I aim to rectify this neglect, beginning with a biographical sketch.

[40] For an insightful recent study of Lee, see Martin George Holmes, "Christianity as a Moral Force in the Fiction of John A. Lee," *Christianity and Literature* 70, no. 4 (2021): 404–419.
[41] J. C. Reid, *Creative Writing in New Zealand: A Brief Critical History* (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1946), 41. On this displacement, see Dean, "Nationalism, Modernism, and New Zealand," 20.
[42] Lawrence Jones, "The Novel," in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, ed. Terry Sturm, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Oxford University Press,1998), 141; Nelson Wattie, "Allen, Charles Richards," in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998), 8.
[43] Jones, *Picking up the Traces*, 75–76.
[44] Erik Olssen, *A History of Otago* (Dunedin: McIndoe, 1984), 163–164.

A Biographical Sketch of Allen

Lack of source material makes a comprehensive biography of Allen impossible. Nevertheless, enough material exists to make a rough sketch of his life. Michael Blain has provided some basic details.[45] Charles Richards Allen was born in London on 3 May 1885. His father, James Allen, had been born into a wealthy Anglified family in Australia, resided for a time in Aotearoa New Zealand, and was educated at the University of Oxford in England. Upon reaching adulthood, James married an English cousin and then moved to the southern Aotearoa New Zealand city of Dunedin, Otago, where he became a prominent landholder and city councillor. He briefly returned to England with his burgeoning family for further education. Charles Richards was born during this sojourn. Shortly afterwards, the family moved back to Dunedin. In 1887, James was elected to Parliament, and soon became a leading member in the Opposition (later the Reform Party), a conservative response to the reigning Liberal Party.

Being the scion of a leading colonial family, much was expected of young Charles Richards. This is especially the case because his elder brother, John Hugh, was a confident extrovert who distinguished himself at the University of Cambridge, became a successful lawyer, and died a heroic death while fighting in the First World War.[46] In contrast, Charles Richards was a timid youth afflicted by an eye condition that rendered him incrementally blind. In 1907, he enrolled at Cambridge, but his disability obliged him to drop out and return to Dunedin. This setback disturbed his high-achieving family. As John Hugh wrote to his sister in 1911, ‘I am very anxious

[45] Michael Blain, *Clergy in the Diocese of Dunedin, 1852–1919: a bibliographical directory of Anglican clergy who served in Otago and Southland*, 2003, 16, accessed 2 October 2022, http://anglicanhistory.org/nz/blain_dunedin2003.pdf.
[46] “Lieutenant J. H. Allen,” *Sun (Christchurch)*, 9 May 1916, 2.

about Charlie's eyes…it is beyond description distressing that he should be as handicapped as he is.'[47]

Seeking to be useful, he trained as a deacon in the Anglican Diocese of Dunedin – which, being perpetually short of clergy,[48] was willing to take on a disabled man – and was ordained in 1909. He served as a deacon at the Allens' Anglo-Catholic Parish of All Saints', North Dunedin, from 1909 to 1916. As a devout Anglican, Allen was ashamed of 'making an asylum of the Church'.[49] He also felt like a modest ecclesial career would disappoint his father, who after Reform's 1912 election victory became the Minister of Defence. This position made James Allen one of the country's most important statesmen upon Aotearoa New Zealand's entry into the First World War. Before this titan, his son felt incredibly inadequate as a lowly deacon: 'I feel that this is a poor return for all the money you have spent on my education, especially in view of the mess I made of things at Cambridge.'[50]

This feeling of inadequacy was exacerbated when, in 1916, he was obliged to resign after having become totally blind. According to a special preface inserted into the copy of his first novel, *The Ship Beautiful*, held by the University of Otago's Special Collections, his self-esteem seems to have been so low that, when he thought he could get away with it, he used to pose as a wounded veteran after the war.[51] For the rest of his life, he was convinced that having become disabled at so

[47] Ina Montgomery, *John Hugh Allen of the Gallant Company: A Memoir* (London: Edward Arnold, 1919), 77.
[48] Blain, *Clergy*, 5–6.
[49] C. R. Allen, Letter to James Allen, 12 March 1914, MS-0774, C. R. Allen Papers, Hocken Library, Dunedin, New Zealand.
[50] Allen, Letter to James Allen, 12 March 1914.
[51] C. R. Allen, "Something About This Book," in C. R. Allen, *The Ship Beautiful* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1925), 1, Special Collections, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

tender an age, his life was inherently uninteresting when compared to those around him.[52]

With this background in mind, it is easy to see why Allen became associated with the country's conservative literary establishment. His family, being wealthy and thoroughly English, maintained strong ties with the United Kingdom (UK). Above all, an English education was regarded as proper. Allen's failure to obtain a Cambridge degree grieved him deeply and helps explain his dogged loyalty to the British connection, and especially to English culture and its most venerable literary forms. His association with the Diocese of Dunedin would have assisted him in this task, since in the Edwardian era, Dunedin Anglicans were fiercely loyal to the British Empire and to England.[53] Finally, his becoming blind during the war explains why his fiction focuses on the Edwardian era: it was the period of his adulthood in which he literally saw the world around him and participated in it relatively actively.

Allen had long been fond of writing; as early as 1908, he wrote a short story for the *Otago Witness* newspaper.[54] Now bereft of a career, he invested more time in his hobby. Sometimes, he dictated to his amanuensis, and other times he typed and trusted this person to polish the manuscript – inevitably littered with typos – for publication.[55] During the 1920s, he published several works, most notably three novels.[56] By his own admission, the novels, while a success with readers, were somewhat amateur.[57] According to the special preface in *The Ship Beautiful*, this first

[52] C. R. Allen, "A lot of Pictures. Memories of Sixty Years," 1951, 1–2, Heritage Room Dunedin, City Library, Dunedin, New Zealand.
[53] For an in-depth discussion, see Martin George Holmes, "'Under Compulsion of Honour and Duty': The Anglican Church in Dunedin during the First World War, 1914–1918" (BA [Hons] thesis: University of Otago, 2016).
[54] C. R. Allen, "The Pig-Skin Satchel," *Otago Witness*, 23 September 1908, 89.
[55] C. R. Allen, "My Six Novels: How a Blind Author Works," *New Zealand Magazine* (July 1939), 12.
[56] C.R. Allen, *The Ship Beautiful: A Two-fold Tale* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1925); C. R. Allen, *Brown Smock: The Tale of a Tune* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1926); C. R. Allen, *Tarry, Knight! A Study in Stained Glass* (London: John Hamilton, 1927).
[57] Allen, "My Six Novels," 11.

novel – a fantasy – was an awkward marriage of an adolescent prose work with a light-hearted tale he wrote to educate children at All Saints'.[58] In contrast, he regarded his 1930s novels as sophisticated contributions to Aotearoa New Zealand literature.[59] The 1930s novels are heavily autobiographical: all are based in Dunedin before the First World War and focus on characters trying to balance their affection for England with the reality of life in the Antipodes. Hence my prioritisation of them in this article.

After the publication of *The Young Pretender* and the edited *Tales by New Zealanders*, Allen turned his attention to more low-key projects. I have been unable to discover why, though I suspect that he, as a blind man, found editing a collection and completing lengthy novels – *The Young Pretender* was so long that he struggled to find a publisher[60] – quite taxing. He focused on writing poetry and literary criticism (often about long-dead British notables) for local periodicals such as the *Evening Star* newspaper.[61]

Throughout his whole literary life, Allen identified as a conservative and an Anglophile.[62] He was an English-born New Zealander; his literary influences were almost invariably English; his favourite authors included William Shakespeare and William Wordsworth. He believed that Aotearoa New Zealand literature was at its best when writing about the New World under the benevolent shadow of the Old.[63] In these respects, Allen was similar to many Maoriland writers. However, having lived through the First World War, he did not share the Maoriland generation's optimistic

[58] Allen, "Something About This Book," 1.
[59] Allen, "My Six Novels," 11–12.
[60] *Ibid*., 12.
[61] A catalogue of these publications is contained in C. R. Allen, Miscellaneous Writings: Clippings of verse and prose from various newspapers and also reviews of the author's work, Special Collections, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.
[62] Allen, "A lot of Pictures," 2.
[63] Lawlor, *Confessions of a Journalist*, 170.

and rather naïve vision of evolving a national literature, in his words, 'out of Maori folk-lore and the romance of the pastoralist.'[64] To him, the self-congratulatory romanticisation of colonial beginnings did not conduce to profundity, not least because those days were not conducive to high culture. More sober reflections were necessary.

On this latter point, he concurred with the critical nationalists. However, he staunchly opposed their pivot away from venerable British literary fashions, since these fashions provided a cultured forum in which to explore the dichotomy between settler society and metropole, between the New World and the Old.[65] As explored below, Allen wanted to find a fulfilling means by which one could be a proud Aotearoa New Zealander, part of a society enriched and maintained by British culture, while nevertheless acknowledging and appreciating its distinctiveness from the 'Mother Country'.

Despite Allen's conservatism, which he believed made him a literary 'Outlaw' by the 1930s, he kept abreast of contemporary trends in Aotearoa New Zealand literature.[66] For instance, he met with critical nationalists and read periodicals such as *Landfall*, *Tomorrow*, and *Phoenix*.[67] Allen had some sympathy for these nationalists, whom he praised for giving Aotearoa New Zealand authors an indispensable platform for their work.[68] At the same time, he considered their dismissiveness of those outside their select group tiresome and uncharitable: 'We have celebrated the virtuosities of the pioneers. Is it not time to salute the virtues of our contemporaries where they are discernible?'[69] For this reason, in 1950, he

[64] Lawlor, *Confessions of a Journalist*, 170.
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] *Ibid*.
[67] Allen, "Editorial," 3.
[68] *Ibid.*
[69] Allen, "A Quill Driver's Conclave," 15.

founded a new literary periodical, the Dunedin-based *Wooden Horse*, to occupy a 'middle position' between the sternly nationalistic *Landfall* and more frivolous popular magazines such as the then-defunct *Bright*.[70] He worked hard to ensure good content, both fiction and non-fiction. He began serialising a new novel, *Local Habitation*, and encouraged contributions from local notables such as the Anglican theologian L. G. Whitehead and the literary critic W. F. Alexander.[71]

Despite his best efforts, the *Wooden Horse* never achieved a national readership, and nationalists such as Brasch dismissed it as mediocre and old-fashioned.[72] The magazine became defunct at the end of 1951, after eight issues, possibly owing to lack of funds. The abrupt swiftness with which *Local Habitation* ended suggests that it remained unfinished. Allen never seems to have completed this seventh novel, though he continued to publish minor articles and poems until his death in 1962.

The Englishness of *A Poor Scholar*

Allen's nuanced conception of Aotearoa New Zealand national identity is a major theme in his 1930s novels. *A Poor Scholar* is a case in point. It follows the story of Sir Frederick Lawrence, better known as 'Ponto', a clever boy of lower-middle-class background from Dunedin who manages, through diligent study, to win a Rhodes Scholarship and become a prominent public figure. The novel's most remarkable aspect – which, startlingly, no critic seems to have emphasised until now – is Allen's Anglicisation of Dunedin. The city was founded by Presbyterian Scottish settlers affiliated with the Free Church of Scotland. English settlers, and especially English

[70] Allen, "Editorial," 3.
[71] L. G. Whitehead, "Cloud of Witnesses IX – The Very Reverend John Dickie," *Wooden Horse* 2, no. 4 (1951): 28; W. F. Alexander, "The Stevenson Centenary," *Wooden Horse* 1, no. 4 (1950): 18–20.
[72] Brasch, *Indirections*, 299.

Anglicans, have always constituted an influential minority. Nevertheless, the city's Presbyterian Scottish character was potent in the Edwardian era.

In *A Poor Scholar*, however, Dunedin is portrayed as thoroughly English in heritage and culture. The plot is heavily influenced by national identity. Born in Aotearoa New Zealand to an English immigrant widow, Ponto grows up in North Dunedin, where the bell of All Saints' periodically calls its worshippers to prayer and inhabitants play cricket – that quintessential English game – on the green outside the church.[73] There is only one significant Presbyterian character, Andrew Barrie, one of Ponto's academic mentors. Significantly, he is tolerant of Anglicanism, as proven by his friendship with the Anglo-Catholic vicar of All Saints' and his lack of interest in evangelising the nominally Anglo-Catholic Ponto.[74]

In as much as it was possible in the settler societies, Ponto's academic rise mirrors that of an ideal English grammar-school boy: after distinguishing himself at his local school and as a chorister at All Saints', he wins a scholarship to Otago Boys' High School.[75] He learns Latin and plays rugby; his skill at the latter earns him local renown. To maximise his chance of winning a Rhodes Scholarship, he becomes the school Dux and enrols in an elite preparatory institution run by an Oxford alumnus.[76] He ends up winning a Rhodes Scholarship and goes to England, where he experiences a crisis of national identity.[77] The novel concludes with him returning to Dunedin as a prominent figure many years after he has resolved his internal doubts.[78]

[73] Allen, *A Poor Scholar*, 21–26.
[74] *Ibid.*, 99–100.
[75] *Ibid.*, 112–113.
[76] *Ibid.*, 199.
[77] *Ibid.*, 259–278.
[78] *Ibid.*, 279–287.

Of course, Ponto is aware that Aotearoa New Zealand is not England. His mother's nostalgia for England reminds him that the lonely bell of All Saints' pales in comparison to the merry chorus of England's church-laden landscape.[79] For the same reason, he knows that Aotearoa New Zealand's increasingly egalitarian culture is driving the English custom of calling respectable persons 'sir' into disuse.[80] In consequence, Ponto learns not to take England for granted, as some English-born persons do.[81] He latches onto the Marsh family, who are part of the Anglified colonial elite that dominated public life before the Liberal election victory of 1890, whom Ponto idolises for remaining loyal to English ways.[82] He befriends Harold Marsh, a fellow-chorister, and is unconsciously smitten with Harold's sister, Pauline. As befitting a scion of the elite, Harold travels to Canterbury, an Aotearoa New Zealand region that had been founded to transplant the best aspects of England to the Antipodes, for his secondary education. When Ponto visits him and learns that Harold plans to pursue his tertiary education at the University of Cambridge, his devotion to the 'Mother Country' is intensified.[83]

Allen's Anglicisation of Dunedin stems from his desire to maintain the importance of the British connection in his own time by explaining the significance of this connection in the Edwardian era, that cherished period before the horrors of the First World War. He identifies this British connection with Englishness specifically because he was English-born, appreciative of English literature, and forever scarred by the fact that his sight was ruined while studying at Edwardian Cambridge. To remember or to recast Dunedin as thoroughly Anglified, and then to emphasise the

[79] Allen, *A Poor Scholar*, 20–21.
[80] *Ibid.*, 32.
[81] *Ibid.*, 170, 228.
[82] *Ibid.*, 148.
[83] *Ibid.*, 165–178.

glory of Canterbury, reflects his love of England and his desire for Aotearoa New Zealand to draw deeply from the well of English culture. Nevertheless, Ponto's crisis of national identity shows that Allen rejected the idea that Aotearoa New Zealanders should – or could – deny a separate Antipodean heritage. When Ponto arrives in England, he is predictably awed by the great sites. Yet**,** he also feels an 'intolerable loneliness' because, confronted with England for the first time, he realises that he can never be as authentically English as those around him.[84] Likewise, the English people who meet Ponto are disappointed that he lacks the rugged flair expected of a colonial: 'He had not invaded Oxford. Oxford had invaded him.'[85]

This existential crisis induces an epiphany in which he 'rediscovered New Zealand for himself'.[86] Allen does not provide details: once the epiphany happens, he moves on to the epilogue in which the mature Ponto – now Sir Frederick Lawrence – returns to Dunedin after the First World War. We learn that Harold died in the war and that Pauline, a spinster, seems not to have reconciled herself to the end of the colonial era.[87] We can also surmise that Lawrence, a senior figure married to an Englishwoman, is now secure in his identity. Although precise details are not given, Lawrence is clearly an Anglified New Zealander. The overall conclusion of the novel, therefore, concurs with Jones's passing comment that Allen, like Mulgan, believed that 'in the future New Zealand will build its own version of English culture.'[88]

The Anglified Nationalism of *The Hedge-Sparrow*

[84] Allen*, A Poor Scholar*, 264.
[85] *Ibid.*, 274.
[86] *Ibid.*
[87] *Ibid.*, 285.
[88] Jones, "The Novel," 141.

Allen's next novel, *The Hedge-Sparrow*, is more explicitly political. It follows the story of two childhood friends, Nicholas Broadbent and John Mainwaring, whose families embody the political divisions of Edwardian Aotearoa New Zealand. Nicholas's father, Hannibal, is an impoverished political radical who stands to the left of the reigning Liberal Party. John's father is a wealthy doctor who, by serving as a long-standing conservative member of the House of Representatives, has become a respected member of the colonial elite. The two families grow close after John's father saves Nicholas from a debilitating illness, even funding a trip to the countryside to recuperate. A grateful Hannibal pledges his political loyalty to the doctor despite his and his son's radicalism.

The novel then focuses on Nicholas's struggle to maintain his radicalism in the face of the Mainwarings' generosity. Although he refused to abandon his politics, Nicholas finds that he can no longer hate John because of his class affiliation.[89] The two end up becoming friends, and Nicholas is invited into the world of the colonial elite, which he enjoys despite his best efforts.[90] Their backgrounds, personalities, and political convictions eventually bring them into conflict. Even as children, John feels intimidated by Nicholas because when Bret Greenaway, one of their mutual friends, was drowning, Nicholas unhesitatingly jumped in to save him while John, bred to be a leader, was paralysed by inaction.[91]

As adults, John studies law at Cambridge and, after his father's death, returns to Dunedin to take his place as the local conservative candidate. Although he wins the next election, he lacks confidence and a clear political programme.[92] In contrast, Nicholas trains with dogged determination to become a solicitor in Dunedin, Bret

[89] Allen, *The Hedge-Sparrow*, 55.
[90] *Ibid.*, 57–58, 111.
[91] *Ibid.*, 124, 191.
[92] *Ibid.*, 178–181.

Greenaway's grateful father having supported his education and promised him a job. During the First World War, both men enlist. John returns as a nervous wreck while Nicholas returns as a war hero.[93] Emboldened by his prowess in war, and more self-consciously nationalist after having travelled to the 'Mother Country' and realised his love for Aotearoa New Zealand, Nicholas beats John in the first post-war election.

The overall theme of this novel is that of Aotearoa New Zealand's coming of age. John represents the decline of the self-consciously English colonial elite in the Edwardian era, which since the 1890s had suffered at the hands of the reigning Liberals. He lacks confidence because, unlike his father, he inherited his privileged position and therefore lacks the willpower and initiative to respond constructively to the growth of Aotearoa New Zealand national identity.[94] He simply polishes his received pronunciation at Cambridge and hopes that he can live off his father's political legacy.[95] Nicholas represents the assertiveness of Aotearoa New Zealand nationalism during this period. Admittedly, he is patronised by the Mainwarings and others. Nevertheless, it is his determination and ambition that enable him – a poor boy – to establish a legal career, distinguish himself in war, and become a local politician. His victory, we are given to understand, represents a new chapter in Aotearoa New Zealand history.

Despite this overtly nationalist theme, Allen betrays his Anglophilia. Nicholas's nationalism does not challenge Allen's vision of an Anglified Aotearoa New Zealand. Critically, he identifies Nicholas as an independent radical rather than – as would be more historically plausible – a member of the Labour Party.[96] During this period, Labour members almost all opposed the First World War, were ambivalent about the

[93] Allen, *The Hedge-Sparrow*, 218–219, 221.
[94] *Ibid*., 182.
[95] *Ibid*., 156.
[96] *Ibid*., 241.

British Empire, and were extremely hostile to the upper classes. In contrast, however sincere his radicalism, Nicholas hobnobs with the elite and aspires to be a genteel solicitor. He unhesitatingly enlists to fight in the war and is glad to go on a 'pilgrimage' to England during hostilities.[97] Although he recognises his love for his native country, he does not repudiate Britain or the British way of life, and he still interacts amicably with John Mainwaring and other members of the old elite. Even in his victory speech, the rhetoric of class conflict is absent, Nicholas merely professing the importance of 'real reform'.[98] All this indicates that while Allen recognised that a changing of the political guard had taken place during this period, he hoped that Aotearoa New Zealand would maintain an Anglified identity.

English-New Zealand Ties in *The Young Pretender*

Literary scholars tend to neglect *The Young Pretender*, Allen's third novel of the 1930s. Their neglect is understandable from a literary perspective, for the novel is appallingly overwritten. Despite this shortcoming, *The Young Pretender* reflects Allen's nuanced understanding of Aotearoa New Zealand national identity no less than *A Poor Scholar* and *The Hedge-Sparrow*. It follows the story of King Dale, the child of a wayward son of an English peer, Lord Frayling, who has joined the theatre. He has separated from King's mother, who had been unfaithful to him, and maintains no contact with her or his aristocratic family. While on tour, he becomes terminally ill in Dunedin and, wishing to keep King from his mother, seizes on a note he has unexpectedly received from Bernard Foster, an alumnus of his old English public

[97] Allen, *The Hedge-Sparrow*, 210.
[98] *Ibid*., 243.

school. Although he barely knew Foster during that time, he implores him to be King's ward. Foster uneasily accepts this burden.

The rest of the novel charts King Dale's adaptation to his new life in Dunedin. A retiring Englishman, Foster is a schoolteacher and a bachelor who moved to Aotearoa New Zealand after the traumatic death of his fiancée. He is not particularly happy about living in Aotearoa New Zealand but feels unable to return to the 'Mother Country'.[99] He lives with two other bachelors: Donny Shand, a first-generation Aotearoa New Zealander of Scottish heritage who is a noteworthy sportsman, and Desmond Knight, an expatriate English journalist obliged to live in the Antipodes because of his weak lungs, and who is forever complaining about Aotearoa New Zealanders' provincialism. The three men, the 'Triumvirate',[100] are constantly thinking and arguing about Aotearoa New Zealand culture and its relationship to the UK.

Foster takes his ward duties seriously. He enrols King, nicknamed 'The Young Pretender' on account of his name, in the state school system and, though a lapsed Anglican himself, makes sure that King goes to St. Paul's Cathedral on Sundays.[101] Like Ponto in *A Poor Scholar*, King joins the choir and excels academically at school. Upon reaching adolescence, King is despatched to Donny's *alma mater*, an elite secondary school in Wellington (we are not told the name). However, unlike Ponto, King prefers the life of the theatre to that of the academy. Eventually, King's mother comes to town and tries to persuade King to live with her in England. King chooses to remain with the Triumvirate.[102] However, during the war, he receives an urgent communication from his grandfather, Lord Frayling, whose remaining sons have died

[99] Allen, *The Young Pretender*, 43, 45–46.
[100] *Ibid.*, 3.
[101] *Ibid.*, 92–93.
[102] *Ibid.*, 383.

in battle and who now regards King as his heir. With Foster's blessing, the Young Pretender leaves Dunedin for England to assume his birth-right.

This novel reaffirms Allen's belief that Aotearoa New Zealand, though increasingly self-conscious of its own identity, should remain thoroughly Anglified. King comes to love his adopted region in the way that 'all Otago provincials by birth or adoption' have come to love it.[103] Having planted deep roots in Aotearoa New Zealand, he declares his intention at the end to return to the Dominion.[104]

Nevertheless, as in *A Poor Scholar*, Dunedin – and, indeed, Aotearoa New Zealand in general – is portrayed as thoroughly English. This is symbolised by the character of Shand: though a native-born Aotearoa New Zealander of Scottish descent, we are told that his Scottish father, an army veteran, was a practising Anglican who had served in an English regiment.[105] He himself excels at cricket and attended the colonial equivalent of an English public school.[106] Although Allen briefly mentions the Presbyterian origins of Dunedin,[107] he once again portrays the city as intensely Anglican and English. The bell of St. Paul's reverberates through the city centre like that of All Saints' in North Dunedin;[108] the venerable church at Waikouaiti, a small settlement close to Dunedin, seems to Foster an idyllic 'little piece of England'.[109] The overall plot is also thoroughly English, since Foster's guardianship of King stems from the hallowed bond between two alumni of an English public school, something that all those around Foster – both foreign- and Aotearoa New Zealand-born – seem to consider comprehensible and justified.

[103] Allen, *The Young Pretender*, 376.
[104] *Ibid.*, 390.
[105] *Ibid.*, 23–24.
[106] *Ibid.*, 24.
[107] *Ibid.*, 301.
[108] *Ibid.*, 369.
[109] *Ibid.*, 266.

Allen and Englishness After the 1930s

Although this article has focused on Allen's 1930s novels, I wish to emphasise that he maintained his Anglified vision after the critical nationalists became the establishment. His serialised novel of the early 1950s, *Local Habitation*, closely resembled the plot of its 1930s predecessors: a sickly English boy, Phillip Fitzherbert, is sent to Dunedin before the First World War to recuperate with his wealthy uncle. He ends up developing great affection for the Antipodes, which leads to a contemplation on the meaning of Aotearoa New Zealand national identity. Upon arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand, young Phillip is startled to see how profoundly British the local population was determined to be.[110] Reflecting on his childhood memories twenty years later, the mature Fitzherbert acknowledged that it was no longer appropriate to ape the 'Mother Country' and deny the existence of a separate Aotearoa New Zealand culture: 'I think it is time that people in this country of my adoption ceased to belittle their own tradition and their own literature.'[111] At the same time, he stated that because of England's enormous historic and contemporary influence on Aotearoa New Zealand culture, 'I do not believe that New Zealand will ever have a literature that is entirely its own.'[112]

This sentiment is also reflected in 'Canterbury', a lengthy poem he published in the *Wooden Horse* in late 1950.[113] Although unimpressive as poetry, this ode to the Canterbury settlement boldly illustrates his vision of an Anglified Aotearoa New Zealand. It begins by celebrating St. Augustine of Canterbury's evangelisation of the English and the fruits of this faith in the piety of the Middle Ages. He then notes that

[110] C. R. Allen, "Local Habitation: Chapter Two: By the Waters of Babylon," *Wooden Horse* 1, no. 2 (1950): 5.
[111] C. R. Allen, "Local Habitation: Chapter Three: Sally," *Wooden Horse* 1, no. 3 (1950): 35.
[112] *Ibid*.
[113] C. R. Allen, "Canterbury," *Wooden Horse* 1, no. 4 (1950): 29–31.

despite the assaults of modernity that shook Christian England to its core, Canterbury remained a rallying point: 'The Church despoiled, her children starved. Then Mammon reared his brazen head, / But Canterbury still was a shrine / For Word in bread, in book, in wine.'[114]

He then describes the founders of Aotearoa New Zealand's Canterbury settlement as pious pilgrims. With their 'new hopes and time-worn faith', these mostly English settlers emigrated to the Antipodes, where they hoped to establish a godly society.[115] He notes that over time, Aotearoa New Zealand – Canterbury included – has developed its own national identity, most notably by means of 'our baptism in war' from 1914 to 1918.[116] Nevertheless, he concludes, even as New Zealanders build up their own country, the cultural link with England remains unbroken: 'Through English shires and Scottish glens, wherever British flowers have blown. / Let Hampshire's Christchurch sent a word of Christchurch to a Devon combe. / So be our Canterbury shrine / For Word in bread, in book, in wine.'[117]

Conclusion

In this article, I have provided a more nuanced interpretation of how one conservative author in the British Empire's settler societies, C. R. Allen, interpreted national identity in the early to mid-twentieth century. I have argued that although Allen is rightly associated with the conservative literary establishment of Aotearoa New Zealand literature, he nevertheless pondered issues of national identity. He disagreed with critical nationalists such as Curnow who deplored reliance on, and deference towards, older British literary styles and sensibilities. He believed that

[114] Allen, "Canterbury," 29.
[115] *Ibid.*, 30.
[116] *Ibid.*, 31.
[117] *Ibid.*

Aotearoa New Zealand, though by necessity independent of Britain, should remain thoroughly Anglified. The plots of his three 1930s novels all include a reflective reconciliation between settler and metropole identities, as do later writings. His profound respect for English authors such as Wordsworth and Shakespeare help explain his reasoning here, as do his comments in *Local Habitation* about Britain's influence on Aotearoa New Zealand being too foundational to repudiate. These views were intensified by personal factors: his blindness in 1916 encouraged a preoccupation with the Edwardian era and his birth, family background, and reluctant departure from Cambridge encouraged deference to English culture.

While Allen was only one conservative author writing in one settler society, I think that this case study is of wider significance. Owing to the focus on firebrand modernist nationalists in the British Empire's settler societies, the conservative authors whom they drove to the literary margins remain understudied and frequently misunderstood. It is my fond hope that this study will inspire further research into how they conceived of national identity. In Aotearoa New Zealand, a detailed study of Alan Mulgan's life and work would show how another antipodean Anglophile interacted with Aotearoa New Zealand nationalism. In Australia, further research into the nationalist views of conservatives such as A. D. Hope would be beneficial, and in Canada, more research on the nationalist views of figures affiliated with the Canadian Authors' Association would be most welcome.

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