



# Our lands, our selves: the postcolonial literary landscape of Maurice Gee and David Malouf

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**Abstract:**

Landscape is an enduring feature of Antipodean settler literature. Postcolonial fiction in New Zealand and Australia draws on pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial narratives of landscape to create compelling representations of place and people. In the adult fiction of New Zealand author Maurice Gee and Australian author David Malouf, characters typically turn to the landscape at moments of crisis or transition. Close analysis of Gee's and Malouf's fiction demonstrates that the physical environment serves as a touchstone for personal and national identity throughout personal and national histories. From childhood to old age, characters seek self-definition by locating themselves within their physical environment, rather than by directly referencing their social or cultural context. Individual life stages are shown to be analogous to early stages of national development for New Zealand and Australia – the

journey from colonial child to mature identity for both the individual and the nation is figured through landscape images. However, Gee and Malouf also use the relationship between characters and landscape to reflect social attitudes and values, demonstrating a connection between confident identification with the 'other' of the landscape and the ability to integrate meaningfully with the 'others' of human society. Thus landscape functions in these texts as a means of both reflecting and constructing identity in postcolonial New Zealand and Australia.

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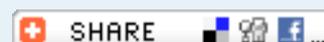
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