

**THE INFLUENCE OF “LANDSCAPE POETRY”  
ON THE CEYLONESE ENGLISH LITERARY IMAGINATION  
OF THE LATE-COLONIAL PERIOD**

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The present paper examines the influence of “landscape poetry” – a sub-genre and form that appears to widely engage the imagination of nineteenth century travelers and amateur writers in Ceylon – on the evolution of English poetry in that country during the first decades of the twentieth century. The discussion is anchored on a compendium of poems by Benjamin Bailey, *Poetical Sketches of the Interior of Ceylon* (1841), used in this study as a prototype for nineteenth century “landscape poetry” and works by Walter Senior and R.L. Spittel, especially, Senior’s *Vita Magistra* and Spittel’s collected poems in *Fallen Leaves*, which were composed between the 1910s and 1940s. The discussion makes connections between these poems and those composed by emerging writers – such as, for example, school students and contributors to magazines – who presumably drew inspiration from “landscape poetry” of the defined type and, in their search of themes and style, studied them as models. As such, the examination takes into account college magazines with a continuous history in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s – such as, for example, *The Aloysian* and *Our Boys* – and also the work of subsequent writers who in their work yet demonstrate a continuing influence of nineteenth century “landscape poetry”. As a method of inquiry, the exploration is based on a textual analysis of relevant poetry, and critical and historical literature within the framework of early-twentieth century Ceylonese/Sri Lankan writing. The study foregrounds the role of nineteenth century poetic influence on the shaping of early-twentieth century English poetry in the country, and the significance of nineteenth “landscape poetry” as a site of study: an area that has not received sufficient attention, despite its popularity and range.

**Keywords:** Early-twentieth century writing, influence in poetry, landscape poetry, Sri Lankan literature, Sri Lankan studies