

White Power, Yellow Gold:

Colonialism and Identity in the California and British Columbia Gold Rushes, 1848 – 1871

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Abstract

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The gold rushes of California (1849-1858) and British Columbia (1858-1871) were watershed moments in the history of colonialism on the Pacific Coast of North America. By reconstructing the Victorian worldview of the men who went west from the eastern United States and Britain, this dissertation offers a new interpretation of gold rush society and culture. The Victorian worldview of the miners was a variation on the Victorian worldview emerging in the East, but one that evolved first on the journey to the gold fields, then continually after the miners arrived. Race and gender were central to the how these men thought of gold rush society. In particular, they linked a constantly-changing definition of white manliness to justifications for colonial domination and judged both themselves and the people they encountered on this basis. But gold rush society was too dynamic, too variable, and definitions of white manhood too contested, to make this project easy or unanimous.

As a result, Victorian gold rushers looked to structures of political and legal authority, and to cultural meanings about behavior and appearance to try and reconcile their understandings of race and gender with the world they faced. How this process occurred varied between the two gold rushes. A transnational analysis reveals the importance that the movement of people, materials, and ideas from California to British Columbia had in terms of shaping this emerging

discourse. While regional factors acted to encourage different discourses about race and gender in California and British Columbia, the extensive ties between the two rushes also encouraged the emergence of a common, if constantly evolving, understanding of white manliness.

Ultimately, Victorian men in California and British Columbia would come to articulate a form of white manliness that blended aspects of martial and restrained white manhood into a new synthesis, one that anticipated later developments in the East.

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Dedication

For Cambria...

Introduction

Mining Gold, Remaking White Manhood

The initial discovery at the foot of the Sierra Nevada by a small group of Mormon laborers working for John Sutter was small, unexpected, and transformative. When the foreman, James Marshall, bent over to retrieve a few nuggets of gold from a newly built sawmill race in January 1848, he was standing on land that the United States had only just seized during the recent war with Mexico and whose inhabitants were overwhelmingly of native and Mexican descent.¹ Marshall's discovery at Sutter's Mill sparked one of the largest voluntary migrations in world history and greatly accelerated the incorporation of California into the United States. In turn, the California gold rush catalyzed a series of gold (and in some cases, silver) rushes throughout the western United States, Canada, the South Pacific, and eventually, Alaska.² In each case, the discovery of precious metal was a watershed moment in local histories of colonialism. The sudden and massive influx of outsiders and their intense focus on extracting wealth from the landscape forced massive changes on the pre-existing colonial societies, usually with especially disastrous results for the aboriginal population.

But change was in store not just for aboriginal populations. Gold rush society also forced a group of predominately male English-speakers of European descent who shared a set of values

¹ Azariah Smith, *The Gold Discovery Journal of Azariah Smith* ed., David Bigler (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996), pp. 108 – 109. On the Mexican-American War, see Robert Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). On the demographic composition of pre-rush California, see Rodman Paul, *California Gold; The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), pp. 23 – 29; Sucheng Chan, “A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush” in *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, eds. Kevin Starr and Richard Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 50 – 57. All quotes are as found in the sources, except where modified by square brackets or ellipses for clarity.

² Rodman Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848 – 1880* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1963); Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).

we today identify as Victorianism to contend with a complex and unfamiliar environment. These Victorian men came to dominate the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia. Far from being the antithesis of rough and tumultuous gold rush society, Victorian values became the main lens through which English-speaking migrants came to understand gold rush society. But this did not mean that Victorianism remained unchanged. Race and gender were two of the most important concepts that Victorians used to understand the nature of the gold rushes and in this dissertation I explore how these Victorian men used ideas of race and gender, and particularly of white manliness, to rationalize acceptable behaviors for themselves as well as for a range of racialized and gendered others within these colonial societies.

National and international trends influenced this colonial project. These English-speaking Victorian men brought cultural beliefs with them to the gold rushes. But gold rush societies differed dramatically from anything these Victorian men had previously experienced and they soon found themselves both creating new ideas and adapting old ones. This process began *en route* to California, but as other gold discoveries were made throughout the Pacific Rim, these ideas were transmitted to each new rush. But just as California was not Britain or New England, nor were these new gold rushes exact copies of California, and so ideas of what it meant to be a white man and the place of white men within a colonial gold rush society underwent constant evolution. This dissertation compares the gold rushes of California (1848-1858) and British Columbia (1858-1871) in order to better trace the development and transmission of these ideas which persisted in the West after the gold rushes and influenced the East. By contrasting these two similar and strongly related rushes, it is possible to weigh the relative impact of local, regional, national, and global forces influencing ideas of white manliness and of the place of white men in a colonial society.

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 occurred in the midst of a particularly dramatic transformation in the United States and Britain. Although the United States remained profoundly attached to agrarian and rural virtues, an ever-increasing percentage of its population lived in towns or cities. Each decade from 1830 to 1860, towns with populations of 2,500 or more grew by at least sixty percent, and from 1840 to 1850 that growth rate reached ninety-two percent.³ More and more, this growing urban population found itself restricted to wage labor of various forms. Though young men still dreamt of making enough money to start their own business, in reality, most made a living as permanent wage laborers, including in the developing area of white collar wage work.⁴ Across the Atlantic, the same economic and demographic transformations that were so dramatically reshaping North American society had been underway for some time, albeit in a modified form. In England and Wales, forty-one percent of the population lived in urban centers of 2,500 or more by 1850. A decade later it was forty-six percent and rising.⁵ Britain's greater degree of urbanization reflected, in part, that the industrial revolution occurred there first, prompting widespread social dislocation and discontent.⁶ As in the United States, young male urban workers, working in jobs ranging from laborers to clerks,

³ John Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), p. 71. To put this growth in perspective, however, it still meant that only one in five Americans lived in an urban center by 1860. See Charles Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, *A History of Urban America* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 26.

⁴ On this see Marcus Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery: The Anglo American Context, 1830 – 1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), esp. introduction; Thomas Augst, *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Christopher Clark, "The Consequences of the Market Revolution in the American North," in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800 – 1880*, Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), pp. 26 – 30. These changes affected the countryside as well. See Hal Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 16 – 31.

⁵ Robert Woods, *The Demography of Victorian England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 360 – 362. The best account of what life was like in London during this period is Liza Picard, *Victorian London: The Life of a City, 1840 – 1870* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006).

⁶ David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 7 – 8, 15 – 49.

dreamt of accumulating enough capital to open their own business and perhaps to employ others.⁷ Increasingly, however, young men in Britain found less opportunity to move out of wage work. These demographic and economic changes, simultaneously affecting the two major empires of the English-speaking world, led to a trans-Atlantic conversation about the changing nature of society and its repercussions for young men and women in particular.⁸

These changes, and the social disorder they created, encouraged the formation of a distinctive set of values that we today label Victorianism. Victorianism, like any ideology, was not a static, nor a stable, construct. Instead it was constantly being created, re-created, and interpreted from a variety of perspectives. As such, there were significant regional and class variants of Victorianism, one of which, we shall see, emerged in the gold rushes in the West. That said, many of Victorian gold rushers shared similar backgrounds that shaped how they reacted to gold rush society. In particular, the gold rushers from the eastern United States and Great Britain tended to be from the middle-class societies where the popular, public discourse emphasized prudence, hard work, thrift, self-restraint, and sexual repression.⁹ In other words, the particular strain of Victorianism that was dominant in much of the urbanizing and industrializing areas of the eastern United States and Britain taught men to embrace the values of

⁷ In Britain, the goal was to be respectable, but as Newsome points out “respectability was essentially a middle-class virtue” and dependent upon economic self-sufficiency. Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, pp. 74 – 75. See also David Alderson, *Mansex Fine: Religion, Manliness and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 10 – 11.

⁸ Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery*; William Van Vugt, *Britain to America: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Immigrants to the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), pp. 3 – 4; Daniel Walker Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” in *Victorian America* ed., Daniel Walker Howe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), pp. 3 – 10. This is not to suggest that American and British urban spaces were interchangeable. American cities had a greater degree of social mobility and other differences that made them attractive to migrants from urban Britain. See Blake McKelvey, *American Urbanization: A Comparative History* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1973), pp. 27 – 28, 40.

⁹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds* (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 276 – 277; Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” pp. 14 – 16.

a restrained manhood.¹⁰ These values were partially a response to the uncertainty and confusion of the rapidly urbanizing and industrializing English-speaking Atlantic world.¹¹ The appeal of this strain of Victorianism was that, having arisen partly as a response to the social dislocation of an industrializing and urbanizing landscape, the values it promoted appeared to offer stability and order in the midst of change.¹² Given the long-standing (if sometimes adversarial) relationship between the United States and Britain, a shared language, deep cultural and social ties, and similar economic, demographic, and social changes, it is unsurprising that this particular strain of Victorian values took deep hold on both sides of the Atlantic, albeit with still significant variations.¹³ But while this particular strain of Victorianism, and therefore of white manliness, was dominant among middle-class society, especially in the towns and cities of the eastern United States and Britain, it was not uncontested.

The term “Victorian” is often used to describe anyone holding a range of nebulous and shifting values that we today associate with Victorianism. In this dissertation, however, the term is used more narrowly to describe a predominantly male, English-speaking population of European descent. This reflects the dissertation’s focus on this group and the need for a common descriptor that emphasizes a key trait, their worldview, that tied this often diverse group together.

¹⁰ Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 11.

¹¹ Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” p. 17. See also Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds*, p. 277; Christopher Lane, *Hatred and Civility: The Antisocial Life in Victorian England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 2.

¹² Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds*, p. 277; Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” p. 10.

¹³ Of course, this is not to say that Victorianism in Britain and the United States was identical. Local conditions affected the specific articulation of Victorian values. Nevertheless, in this respect, these societies had more in common than they what separated them. Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, pp. 7 – 12; Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds*, pp. 276- 277; Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” pp. 4 – 5, 14 – 15; Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 121 – 129; Susan Thorne, “The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds., Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 238 – 239.

Of course, men and women of any descent could, and did, hold these values, most notably women of European descent and the black population. As this dissertation will make clear, however, the racial and gender meanings attached to Victorian values in the gold rushes meant that the position of these “Other Victorians” in the colonial societies of the Pacific Coast was deeply contested.

One of the main challenges to the idea of restrained manhood came from those Victorians who argued that white men should be unconstrained and dominant. In other words, they argued that real men were martial.¹⁴ Martial manhood had particular appeal for those going west because of the way it emphasized personal freedom and dominance, especially over those believed to be inferior. Unsurprisingly, as we shall see, western stereotypes of the frontiersman, the pioneer, and the like were strongly associated with ideas of martial manliness and had a wide distribution in the popular culture of the eastern United States and Great Britain.¹⁵ In the cities and towns of the eastern United States and Britain, ideas of martial manliness remained a minority position, linked to the working class, soldiers and sailors, or associated (in slightly different forms) with the South or the “frontier.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, many Victorians in the eastern United States and Great Britain appear to have been eager to at least temporarily throw off the constraints of restrained manhood and to embrace an identity as martial men.¹⁷ Whether they adhered to a martial or restrained vision of Victorian manhood, many of the migrants from the

¹⁴ Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, p. 12.

¹⁵ Ray Allen Billington, *Land of Savagery/Land of Promise: The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 1981), pp. 130, 151 – 152; Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 83 – 85; John David Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840 – 1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 14, 30.

¹⁶ Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, pp. 12 – 13; John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 125. On the South see Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

¹⁷ Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*; Roberts, *American Alchemy*.

English-speaking world understood the gold rushes in relation to one, or sometimes both, of these strains of Victorianism. These Victorians would prove to be crucial in defining social and political order in the gold rushes of California and British Columbia.

One of the central arguments of this dissertation is that these Victorian gold rushers articulated an alternative vision of Victorianism, but one that was still inextricably linked to the mainstream of Victorian thought originating from the eastern United States and Britain. Calling these men Victorians has the advantage of identifying the most important, though not the only, characteristic these men shared: a common cultural heritage that deeply affected their perceptions and reactions to events around them. While these men tended to share other important traits like the English language and European descent, it was through and against this common (if contested) Victorian worldview that they framed their experiences.

Ideas of martial and restrained manliness relied to a large extent on an array of racial and gender others to give them meaning. Only when values such as bravery, self-restraint, self-denial, and hard work were coded in racial and gender terms, tied to white male bodies, and juxtaposed against supposedly impulsive, hedonistic, and lazy aboriginals, women, the poor, criminals, or children, did they take on real meaning.¹⁸ In the nationally diverse and racially plural context of gold rush societies, ideas of race and gender would be crucial to this alternative version of Victorianism.

This dissertation focuses on how the Victorian men who went to the gold fields of California and British Columbia debated and sought to enact overlapping visions of white

¹⁸ The literature linking Victorianism, race, and gender to various forms of domination is vast, but a few representative works are Thorne, “The Conversion of Englishmen,” pp. 238 – 262; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003). That gender and race are social constructions has been so long and well-established that I, hopefully, need not cite the voluminous literature that demonstrates it. It should also be noted that the literature linking Victorianism and empire is undeveloped in the context of the United States.

manliness, and in so doing, to articulate differing versions of Victorianism. Overwhelmingly, this discourse about the nature of white manliness in the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia was carried on between people of European descent. Of course, at different times and in different ways, natives, Chinese, Latin Americans, blacks, and others who were affected by this process either challenged, subverted, or co-opted the discourse surrounding white manliness, but these challenges remained largely peripheral to the central debate among English-speaking people of European descent. Simply put, with firm control over the military, police, government, courts, press, and the economy, people of European descent had a vastly disproportionate effect on how people would be talked about and treated in the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia.

The sources these Victorians produced that exist and are accessible tend to share some key qualities. Though thousands of miles away from the population centers around the Atlantic, Victorian men often wrote either for eastern audiences, or with eastern audiences in mind. This trend is most obvious in personal correspondence and published accounts that were intended for eastern consumption, but even private diaries and journals tend to manifest varying degrees of concern with what eastern audiences would think of the diarist's actions. In addition, California and British Columbia newspapers often explained or defended life in the gold fields, clearly with an eye to both local consumption and eastern audiences. It would be easy to dismiss the sentiments espoused in this writing as gloss intended to maintain an aura of respectability to audiences at home while the participants did whatever they wanted in the gold fields. And while this may be true in some cases, the consistency of these attitudes, especially in private diaries and journals, suggests that many Victorian men remained deeply vested in standards of white manliness even as they questioned, challenged, and rejected aspects of those standards. This

dissertation therefore attempts to strike a delicate balance between trying to get at hidden meanings and values and paying attention to the importance of public (or at least overt) declarations of values by the gold rushers.

Victorianism, race, and gender existed in an intricate balance in the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia. Victorians generally believed that only men of European descent could live up to the high ideals of Victorianism, but they did not also believe that a man of European descent would therefore necessarily live up to those ideals.¹⁹ Victorians of all stripes believed that manliness required certain key characteristics such as bravery, emotional control, and self-reliance, while they also believed that darker bodies, and especially black bodies, were incapable of these virtues because those people were too effeminate. Therefore, while it was necessary to be a white man in order to be a respectable Victorian, men of European descent were ultimately judged on their behavior as to whether or not they were respectable.²⁰

A similar influence can be seen in Victorian concepts of race. In the mid-nineteenth century, a person's behavior and way of living shaped Victorian perceptions of that person's race. For instance, behavioral differences led some middle and upper class Victorians to see the lower class of England, for instance, as dark skinned, even black, while in other contexts Victorians saw the Irish and Spanish as "off-white" or "not quite white."²¹ In the United States

¹⁹ Conversely, from the perspective of most Victorians, only European women had the ability to live up to the standards of Victorian femininity.

²⁰ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 6 – 18.

²¹ The term "off-white" refers to a range of peoples occupying what Maria DeGuzmán calls the "critically unacknowledged third position" between a black-white binary understanding of race. Off-white peoples were often of European or mixed-European descent, but, for a variety of reasons, and in some contexts, were understood by people of Anglo-Saxon descent as problematic, occupying a blurry middle ground between white and non-white. See Maria DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo American Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. xxvii. I prefer the elegance of DeGuzmán's terminology to Roediger's "dark white" or "possibly non-white." See also David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey From Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), p. 4; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 132 – 180.

too, the more “noble” natives were generally described and depicted as looking like Europeans, while the “ignoble” ones were darker.²² The emphasis on behavior, which could change or be interpreted differently by different observers, meant that concepts of race and gender were open to debate in gold rush society. The emphasis on behavior also suggested that men of European descent had ample opportunity to degrade themselves if they failed to act respectably in the tumultuous world of the gold rush.

This emphasis on behavior and action brought with it profound insecurities for Victorian men. Not only did the ever-expanding influence of the market threaten both the urban and rural dweller’s financial and social status, but Victorian men could not even rely on innate characteristics such as sex and European descent to guarantee their self-worth. Victorian society interpreted financial failure, mental breakdown, criminal or socially disreputable activities, even social missteps as evidence of a weakness of character. This was especially troubling because character set respectable white man apart from criminals, women, children, and non-whites.

One value shared among Victorians of all stripes caused particular consternation, independence. For many Victorian men, concerns about being independent only compounded the fundamental uncertainty of their position in a rapidly changing world. In both the United States and Britain, Victorians exalted the idea of independence and made it a key trait of both manliness and whiteness. Being independent, or more to the point, not being dependent upon others, distinguished a man from a woman, a child, the aged, or the infirm. At the same time, being independent set one apart from an array of racialized others, most notably peoples of

²² Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978), p. 28.

African descent.²³ This is not to say that Victorianism endorsed American slavery (Victorians on both sides of the Atlantic condemned and supported it), but rather that it was a widely held belief that just as blacks in America were unsuitable for independence, so too were the blacks of Africa or the Caribbean unable to govern themselves.²⁴ The trait of independence lay at the heart of how Victorian men in the eastern United States and Britain thought about white manliness. And yet it was this trait, perhaps more than any other, that seemed to be imperiled by the very processes that helped to bring Victorianism into being.

The changing economic structure of the rapidly industrializing societies of Britain and the United States compelled more and more men to confront the possibility that they faced a lifetime of wage labor.²⁵ Nor was the Victorian period an era of uninterrupted prosperity, on either side of the Atlantic. Most importantly, over-speculation in railway stocks in Britain caused a major depression in 1847 that spread to the United States and lasted until 1848, when the discovery of gold in California flooded the market with easily available capital and provided what seemed at first to be an inexhaustible marketplace.²⁶ Contemporary Victorians therefore realized that not only was independence increasingly hard to obtain, it was also increasingly precarious. It was in

²³ Alderson, *Mansex Fine*, pp. 36 – 37; J. A. Banks and Olive Banks, *Feminism and Family Planning in Victorian England* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964), pp. 58 – 61, 71 – 82; Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 57; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830 – 1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 141 – 142; Fredrick Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), pp. xiiv, 6; Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp. 2 – 6, 103 – 111; DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow*, pp. xii – xvii; Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550 – 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*. Of course, the British were wary of “independence” when linked with republicanism, but agreed with the idea that respectable men were financially independent, in deliberate juxtaposition to women, children, non-whites, criminals, the insane, and the like.

²⁴ Thorne, “The Conversion of Englishmen,” pp. 238 – 248; Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery*; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Hazel Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and Black Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 89 – 130, passim; Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), pp. 37 – 42, 75 – 86.

²⁵ Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, pp. 3 – 49; Foner, *Free Soil*, pp. xi – xxxi.

²⁶ Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, p. 26; G. M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 53 – 54; Robert Martin, *Enter Rumour: Four Early Victorian Scandals* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), pp. 190 – 220.

this context that news of gold was first received. And it was out of this context that Victorians gave meaning to the gold mining and gold rush society.

The Victorians who went to the gold rushes did so to get rich, because wealth allowed men to be independent. But while the potential wealth offered by the gold rushes acted as a powerful draw for Victorian men, the actual conditions of the gold rush societies especially challenged Victorian ideas of restrained manhood. Some migrants tried to uphold these Victorian values in the gold fields, but it was not easy. The gold rush societies of California and British Columbia lacked many of the institutions of social control that provided the framework for order in the metropole of the eastern United States or Britain. For example, gold rush populations were diverse, mobile, and relatively anonymous. Families were fairly rare, and with them, so were the supposed moderating influences of white women, parents, and other authority figures. Social institutions such as churches were also only weakly established and haphazardly supported by the mass of miners. Finally, many of the miners, motivated as they were at least partially by a desire to challenge or reject some of the social mores of the metropole, and believing themselves only to be sojourning in the gold fields, had little desire reproduce the Victorian values of the East in their entirety.²⁷ But while the journey westward eroded the different strains of Victorianism, the Victorian gold rushers still remained firmly vested in their rudiments. These men could not help but to view the society around them through the lens of Victorianism, and while some men might celebrate aspects of gold rush society, most Victorians sought to impose a colonial order based on Victorian values that had been adapted to the conditions of gold rush society.

²⁷ For two suggestive works on the partial transmission of Victorian values during the California gold rush, see Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy*; Lewis O. Saum, *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), pp. 200 – 224.

Writing About Gold Rushes

Over a decade ago Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper observed that “colonial historiography has been so nationally bound that it has blinded us to those circuits of knowledge and communication that took other routes than those shaped by the metropole-colony axis alone.”²⁸ Histories of gold rushes are particularly vulnerable to this criticism. When the gold rushes of the mid-nineteenth century are treated as anything other than localized, episodic events, they are viewed through the lens of national development. In many of these narratives, the gold rush stands as a watershed moment in which the nucleus of a new state, or at least of a new social order, arises from the massive demographic, economic, and cultural transformations that occur in the aftermath of the discovery of gold. The underlying narrative of many accounts of gold rushes is that of the extension of state control and the incorporation of a previously “rowdy” gold field society into more “respectable” behaviors and pursuits.²⁹ Whether celebrating, or more recently, criticizing, this process, the vast majority of gold rush histories pay scant attention to other rushes, especially rushes that occur outside current national borders.³⁰

And yet there are compelling reasons to compare different gold rushes. First, and as we have already seen, Victorian gold rushers during the mid-nineteenth century generally shared the

²⁸ Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 27.

²⁹ See for example J. S. Holliday, *Rush For Riches: Gold Fever and the Making of California* (Oakland, Calif.: Oakland Museum of California, 1999); H. W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (New York: Doubleday, 2002); Malcolm Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ralph Mann, *After the Gold Rush: Society in Grass Valley and Nevada City, California, 1849 – 1870* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1982); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849 – 1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). This is not to criticize a generally excellent body of work, merely to point out a lacuna in the literature.

³⁰ Some exceptions are Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West*; Jay Monaghan, *Australians and the Gold Rush: California and Down Under, 1848 – 1854* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Jan Nicholson, “Procedures and Perceptions of Authority: The Gold-Rush Camps of Australia, Canada and the United States,” in *Public Administration: The Journal of the Australian Regional Groups of the Royal Institute of Public Administration* 32, 4 (1973), pp. 392 – 403.

same concerns about their place in a changing society. These men were particularly concerned about their ability to become economically self-sufficient heads of families, while avoiding boring or demeaning wage work. In other words, Victorian gold rushers throughout the mid-nineteenth century shared a concern about the society they came from and a hope as to what the gold rush would do for them. Second, gold rushes tended to take place on the periphery of imperial and national expansion. The discovery of gold therefore marked a watershed moment that created a new, or dramatically reshaped an old, colonial order, often with extremely adverse effects for the indigenous inhabitants. This is particularly important because the fluid and confrontational nature of colonial gold rush society (as well as its demographic characteristics) encouraged Victorian men to justify their attempts at domination through the language of race and gender. Third, and most importantly, an interconnected web of ideas, capital, technology, and people moved between the rushes, creating, transmitting, and maintaining a set of ideas and practices about life in the gold fields that was related to, but distinct from, the values and behaviors promoted in the core areas of the Victorian world around the Atlantic. This interconnected web constituted a gold field system: a set of shared practices, technologies, and languages that meant that Victorian gold miners working in diverse gold fields often had more in common with each other than with family and friends in their respective metropolitan centers. This was particularly important for how Victorian men came to articulate and perceive white manliness in the gold mines.

This is not to say that the gold field system lent itself to creating a static, unchanging conception of what it meant to be a white man. Existing roughly from 1848 to the 1870s, the system spanned a time period in which rapid changes were occurring in economics, society,

culture, technology, and politics.³¹ Large-scale economic and cultural changes in the eastern United States and Europe also impacted the gold field system, most particularly the shift to large corporations and the growing acceptance of wage labor. Indeed, the gold field system eventually evolved away from the social-cultural system it had once been into an economic network of mines that persisted long after the “rush” had passed. Gold rushes end not when the gold runs out, but when the gold becomes less accessible and major companies employing wage labor utterly dominate what remains.³² Indeed, this transition helped to fuel the gold rush system, as the end of one rush, as in California, encouraged many gold seekers to create new rushes, as in Nevada, Idaho, Colorado, Montana, and British Columbia. Even at a given time, however, the gold field system was not completely homogenous. While the flows of people, ideas, technology, and capital encouraged homogeneity, local conditions also had a profound effect on the nature of gold rush society in a given location. Factors such as the environment, demographics, and local histories of colonialism all affected power relationships and therefore how Victorians understood and talked about white manliness and the nature of gold field society.

Though the gold field system acted as a counter to local influences in the individual gold rushes, thereby encouraging a greater commonality in attitudes and practices, it was also important as a primary avenue for the propagation of change. The gold field system meant that participants in a particular rush looked to earlier and concurrent rushes for innovations and ideas. Innovations, most obviously technical innovations, but also social, economic, and cultural innovations, moved through the gold field system and were adopted or modified.

³¹ In other words, from the start of the California gold rush and ending with the last major gold rush in the lower 48 states in the Black Hills. The Klondike Gold Rush, starting in 1896, looked back nostalgically to the earlier gold rushes, but was not really part of the system. For an excellent discussion of the Klondike, see Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers*.

³² The social meaning attached to gold is what separates a gold rush from a mining boom.

What made the gold rush system of the mid-nineteenth century so unusual was the way that it so clearly bound various American and British colonial possessions all around the Pacific and North American West together. Comparison of different sites in this gold field system provides a means for both examining the impact of the gold field system itself and for throwing into stark relief the common trends and specific differences of colonialism in California and British Columbia.

Given that histories of gold rushes have been so “nationally bound,” it is perhaps not that surprising that the importance of connections between rushes have been systematically underestimated. More surprising is the way in which these narratives, while often depicting the growth of state power, its consolidation in the hands of a specific group of Victorians who called themselves white men, and the often disastrous repercussions of the gold rush on non-white and especially indigenous populations, rarely explicitly analyze gold rushes through the lens of colonialism.³³ Those analyses that do incorporate colonialism as a framework tend to be focused on the relationship between natives and newcomers in the British Columbia gold rush, reflecting the heavier emphasis on colonialism in Canadian and native historiography.³⁴ In this, scholars of the California gold rush reflect prevailing historical trends in the historiography of the United States. While American historians have long been comfortable analyzing other nations’ territorial holdings through the lens of colonialism, they have been far more reticent to apply the same framework to their own country’s national expansion, especially in what is now the lower

³³ An exception to this is Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*.

³⁴ See for example Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian – European Relations in British Columbia, 1774 – 1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1977), pp. 95 – 118.

forty-eight states.³⁵ Even today, American scholarship on the West has not thrown off entirely the influence of the Turner thesis, whose idea of the “frontier” masked what was in fact the process of colonization. And yet gold rushes were profound colonial moments. They marked a massive influx of diverse immigrants who established a society and economy that systematically worked to the benefit of certain groups and individuals over others. Though gold rushes lasted anywhere from months to years, the changes they wrought had lasting repercussions.

To say that the gold rushes of California and British Columbia were colonial societies is to say that they shared fundamental similarities with the societies of the eastern United States and Britain. Both California and British Columbia were territories claimed by aggressively expanding empires in which the newly-arriving Victorians dramatically altered older forms of government and society to something they believed was more equitable, fair, and responsible for all residents. In actuality, these changes disproportionately benefitted themselves and their countrymen while systematically denying the rights and privileges of those deemed non-white or otherwise unsuitable for colonial society and government.

Though the impact of the metropole on colonial spaces has long been acknowledged, recent scholarship on empire has revealed how logics of racial and gender domination formed in

³⁵ In fairness, there are exceptions to this general rule. Works with a focus on native history or on the United States’ overseas holdings and influence are far more likely to see these actions as part of a system of colonial expansion. For some noteworthy recent works that reflect this, see Jeffery Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008); Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*; Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Two textbooks from the “new western history” school argue persuasively for the need to view the American west as a colonial space. See Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987) and Richard White, *‘It’s your misfortune and none of my own’: A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

colonial societies deeply affect the social order and cultural beliefs of the metropole.³⁶ As colonial holdings of the United States and Britain, respectively, California and British Columbia were therefore both significantly different from their metropolises but also fundamentally bound up with the societies from which they had emerged. Both the United States and Britain had long histories of colonization and extensive colonial holdings, and California and British Columbia need to be understood within this larger context.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Britain's empire reached its greatest territorial expanse, adding some 400 million people, mainly in Asia and Africa, to its already extensive empire.³⁷ Of course, some imperial possessions were of far greater economic and strategic value than others. India, the Cape Colony, the colonial possessions in the Caribbean, and the concessions in China ranked as some of the most important of British colonial holdings; British Columbia was, as one aptly titled book put it, on the edge of empire.³⁸ While these colonial possessions allowed Britain to expand its economic and military dominance, they also served as a way for Britons to assert their cultural superiority as a whole, and the superiority of their young men in particular, over a range of colonized peoples. In a variety of colonial settings, British colonial officials, merchants, and missionaries claimed that the non-white peoples over whom they ruled were ill-suited to self-government because they lacked the character necessary to make wise and

³⁶ See for example Paul Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 23 – 25; Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004); Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

³⁷ Timothy Parsons, *The British Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A World History Perspective* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p. 3.

³⁸ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*.

informed decisions for themselves. In contrast, British colonial figures claimed that they were gentlemen: honest, upright, courageous, and god-fearing.³⁹

The understandings of race and gender formed in the colonies flowed into the metropole where they were digested and transmitted back out to the colonies. Though British Columbia was only a minor part of this colonial system, understandings of race and gender formed in other colonial holdings and in the British metropole also affected it.⁴⁰ The history of British colonization also meant that the British looked warily toward the United States. Having fought the American War of Independence and then the War of 1812 against the United States, British colonial officials in London and in British Columbia were predisposed to see the most serious threat to British Columbia to be annexation by the United States or corruption by American political beliefs.

Events in the mid-nineteenth century seemed to underscore this threat. The United States had long claimed to be an empire (its westward expansion and territorial ambitions made it hard to deny), but it claimed to be, in the words of President Thomas Jefferson, an “Empire of Liberty.”⁴¹ But whatever stories Americans chose to tell themselves about their national expansion, the fact remained that since the defeat of British in the Revolutionary War, the United States had rapidly spread westward, fending off or invading competing European empires,

³⁹ See, for example Andrew Porter, “Introduction,” *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, eds. Andrew Porter and Alaine M. Low, vol. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 22 – 24; Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, pp. 92 – 93; Catherine Hall, “Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century,” *Gender and Empire*, Philippa Levine, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 46 – 76; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘manly Englishman’ and The ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

⁴⁰ The starkest example of this is the way in which the conflict known as the Indian Rebellion, Indian Mutiny, or Sepoy Mutiny affected understandings of race throughout the British Empire. Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 16 – 17. See also Hall, *Civilising Subjects*.

⁴¹ On the idea and reality of the “Empire of Liberty,” see Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

annexing native land in a series of duplicitous treaties and brutal conflicts, and enforcing a social order clearly based on white supremacy, the expropriation of resources, and, in some cases, slavery.⁴² This drive for continental empire found its fullest expression in the mid-nineteenth century with the emergence of Manifest Destiny, the idea that the United States, driven by population growth and blessed by God with the perfect political system, would inevitably extend over the entire continent, and possibly beyond.⁴³ In 1846, President James Polk used the idea of Manifest Destiny to help justify the Mexican-American War in which the United States conquered and added a vast territory to the United States, including what would become the state of California.⁴⁴ As in the British Empire, ideas about race and gender formed in the periphery of empire were transmitted back to the metropole of the eastern United States, where they helped to inform the national discussion about the nature of white manliness in Victorian America.⁴⁵ And, as in the British Empire, the expansion of the U.S. empire confirmed for Victorian Americans that white men should rule over a range of non-white others, be they enslaved or semi-free.⁴⁶ These ideas would be, as we shall see, brought to California and British Columbia, where they would be reshaped to deal with the particular conditions of the gold fields.

Related to, but distinct from, the discourse surrounding the colonial empires of the United States and Britain was the discourse surrounding slavery, abolitionism, and white manliness.

⁴² There is a vast literature on US-native interactions and westward expansion, but see, for example Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650 – 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673 – 1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); James Merrell, *The Indians New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors From European Contact Through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

⁴³ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 220 – 228; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, p. 272.

⁴⁴ On the Mexican-American War, see Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*.

⁴⁵ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*; Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, pp. 23 – 25, 91 – 94, 129 – 170.

⁴⁶ In the context of the white supremacist politics and society of the mid-nineteenth century U.S., I hesitate to describe any non-white group as unambiguously “free” in the United States because of the way non-whites were so thoroughly and pervasively discriminated against.

The British Empire abolished the international slave trade in 1807 and followed up in 1833 by abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire, coinciding with the start of a long period of imperial expansion.⁴⁷ These two trends were not unrelated. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Victorian emphasis on independence meant that many British subjects saw slavery as a gross violation of basic values.⁴⁸ At the same time, however, it was also a common belief among the English that their colonial subjects, especially those recently emancipated, were unsuited to self-government. Therefore, in the eyes of the English, while slavery was an imposition upon the independence of non-whites, these same people needed British governance to ensure a society where they would not dominate one another. This need signified the superior attributes of white manhood manifested by the British.⁴⁹ As a result, the British were able to easily reconcile ideas of colonialism, abolitionism, and white manliness by the time of the California and British Columbia gold rushes.

In the United States, partly because the institution of slavery continued to exist until near the end of the British Columbia gold rush, the relationship between colonial expansion, slavery, and white manhood was far more contentious. In the years leading up to the American Civil War, public opinion in the northern and southern states hardened over the issue of slavery, and especially over the question of whether slavery should be allowed to expand into the western territories. In the southern states, most whites argued that their status as white men and women

⁴⁷ Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 2 – 3.

⁴⁸ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 27; Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 150 – 171.

⁴⁹ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 27; Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, pp. 173 – 174, 199 – 200.

depended on the preservation of the institution of slavery.⁵⁰ By the middle years of the nineteenth century, many commentators in both the northern and southern states believed that in order for slavery to survive, it would have to expand westward, and this, combined with a deepening concern about the political balance of power between free and slave states, made the expansion of slavery into the western territories a hot-button issue. In the North, criticism of slavery gained widespread traction with the emergence of anti-slavery, as opposed to abolitionist, thought. While abolitionism argued that slavery was a moral wrong, anti-slavery argued that slavery posed a direct threat to the economic and political well-being of white men and, indeed, to the entire foundation of the Republic.⁵¹ Crucially, this criticism of slavery was rooted in the belief that blacks in general, and slaves in particular, were unsuited to participation in a republican form of government, a conclusion that would have been supported by pro-slavery whites as well.

There were always those voices in the Northern states who agitated not only for the end of slavery, but for meaningful political participation (if not necessarily social equality) of non-whites.⁵² Only with the mounting losses of the Civil War would these views gain widespread (albeit temporary) traction and support, most notably in the period of Congressional Reconstruction from 1867 to 1877. Nevertheless, throughout both gold rushes, much of the black population and a significant minority of white allies would challenge the political

⁵⁰ For two slightly different perspectives on the relationship between slavery and white manliness in the South, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) and Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁵¹ On the characteristics and crucial role of anti-slavery thought in propelling slavery to the fore of Northern politics, see Foner, *Free Soil*.

⁵² Advocates of these positions tended to fall into the Abolitionist, as opposed to anti-slavery, camp. A good survey can be found in Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

exclusion of blacks in California, and would agitate for greater social equality in British Columbia. Such activism was not limited to the black population. At various times and places the Chinese and Latin American populations, for instance, also pressed for a greater degree of inclusion. These voices remained a minority, however, and while the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia did have enormous potential to realize a less-racist social and political order, for many of the European migrants, the idea of a racially-stratified society dominated by white men was never seriously questioned.

In addition to deep divisions over whether non-whites, and especially blacks, were suitable participants in the political system, slavery and debates over emancipation also informed how Victorians in the United States and Britain viewed the labor of non-whites. The linking of non-white bodies with productive labor had long antecedents in the European imagination, but the institution of slavery had done much to strengthen these links and to establish a global economic order reliant on cheap, exploitable, often non-white labor.⁵³ These understandings of non-white bodies as suited to productive labor persisted after the end of slavery, and were widely shared among both supporters and critics of slavery. The major difference of opinion was over whether non-white labor was a good thing for whites or not, whether non-white labor represented freedom from drudgery or unfair competition. This debate was heightened in the gold mines of California and British Columbia, where the place and acceptability of wage labor in general was hotly contested, a debate that grew only more bitter when the laborers were considered to be non-white.

That gold rushes are colonial moments has important ramifications for the subject of this study: how a diverse group of Victorians, predominately hailing from the eastern United States

⁵³ See, for example Jennifer L. Morgan, “‘Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder’: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology,” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (January, 1997): 167 – 192; Jordan, *White Over Black*.

and Britain, thought about, talked about, and performed identities as white men. How individuals and groups conceive and categorize themselves and others cannot be divorced from the relationships of power in which they exist. Scholars have demonstrated how, since at least the mid-nineteenth century, white manliness has been assumed to be the normative identity of a citizen of the United States, while scholars working on Britain have reached much the same conclusion.⁵⁴ In the colonial societies of gold rush California and British Columbia, the question of how to define whiteness and who qualified as white stimulated considerable debate among Victorians. At the crux of these discussions were the ways in which the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia posed challenges to understandings of whiteness generated around the Atlantic world. Indeed, it has been oft-remarked, but little analyzed, that the boundaries of the category of whiteness were more inclusive in the West than in the East, particularly with regard to the Irish.⁵⁵ Arguments either that race was largely irrelevant in California or that racial categories unproblematically expanded to encompass a wider range of people in the West miss the mark, however.⁵⁶ As this study shows, what happened was that national origin and religious affiliation lost some importance for determining whiteness at the same time that other signifiers (largely based on behavior and appearance) came to have greater meaning. The shifting boundary of the category of whiteness both affected, and was influenced by, the relationships of power in the colonial societies of California and British Columbia. This study tells that story.

⁵⁴ For the American context see Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, pp. 5 – 11, 23 – 24, 89 – 100, 126; Ian Haney López, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006). For Britain, see Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 20 – 27, 211 – 213, 249; Zine Magubane, *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 132 – 152.

⁵⁵ See for example R. A. Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish, 1848 – 1880* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), pp. 3 – 13; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 5.

⁵⁶ Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 3.

Whiteness cannot be understood in a vacuum, however. Instead, an individual or group's self-identification (or labeling) as white, non-white, or off-white intersected with a variety of other identities, including gender. As Anne McClintock has argued, in the colonial project "gender power was not ...an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class or race. Rather, gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise."⁵⁷ The demographic characteristics of the gold rushes (large masses of generally young men with few families or "respectable" women present) combined with the fact that so many Victorians were motivated to go to the gold rush in response to perceived economic and social challenges to their status as men in the East, made gender exceptionally important for understanding how Victorian men thought of themselves and of others. Indeed, considerations of gender and race were so bound up together in the gold rushes of California and British Columbia that one category is illegible without the other. Victorian men in California and British Columbia never aspired to simply be men, nor did they want to be only white. They wanted to see themselves, and have others see them, as white men.⁵⁸

Gold rushes have long fit uncomfortably into the national narratives of the United States and Canada. In the United States, Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis of slowly advancing frontiersmen and farmers left little room to explain the rapid development of California and undercut the ability of historians to see national expansion as colonization.⁵⁹ The new western history that eventually replaced Turner's thesis has had only slightly more success in placing the

⁵⁷ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 6 – 7.

⁵⁸ In stressing the intersectionality of identity, I am part of a growing scholarly consensus. See Robert McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863 – 1913* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), pp. xiv – xv; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2005), p. 7; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 4 – 7; Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 2 – 7.

⁵⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1996).

gold rushes into a wider historical narrative. As an example, one of the standard textbooks to come out of this movement examines California gold almost exclusively as a motivation for migration, while other gold rushes receive scant mention.⁶⁰ In other words, gold rushes are interesting for what they led to, not what they were.

Canadian historiography has had a similar problem with its gold rushes. The staples theory advanced by Harold Innis and others in the 1920s held that the exploitation of staple goods such as furs and timber created the institutions that controlled the Canadian west and shaped western development.⁶¹ Like its Turnerian counterpart to the south, this framework left little room to satisfactorily explain or explore the gold rushes of the Pacific Coast. After 1945, however, Canadian historiography began to shift away from the more rigidly economically deterministic models of the pre-World War II era and instead began to interpret the West as an imperial domain. With historians of aboriginals leading the way, Canadian historians have shown far more willingness than their southern counterparts to analyze western history and national development as an imperial history.

The culmination of this development is Adele Perry's *On the Edge of Empire*. Perry draws on insights from Canadian, native, and British imperial historiography to explore the failure of British Columbia's gold rush society to live up to the hopes of imperial observers for an "orderly, respectable, white settler colony." Perry argues that ideas of race and gender remained remarkably fluid throughout the gold rush period in British Columbia, despite the best efforts of colonial elites and reformers to create a society "anchored in respectable gender and

⁶⁰ White, "It's Your Misfortune", 189-193, 202.

⁶¹ The seminal work in this field is Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (1930; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1962).

racial behaviours and identities.”⁶² Perry details how the non-white population of the colony, combined with its rough, male-dominated, mining character, frustrated reformers’ efforts to impose a hegemonic definition of white manliness onto the settler society. Even the introduction of white women, what Perry calls “that well-worn imperial panacea,” through assisted immigration schemes, proved to be far less than the success of which colonial reformers dreamt.⁶³ As Perry is careful to point out, however, colonial society did undergo radical transformations during the gold rush period. While never to the extent the reformers wanted, the colonial government in British Columbia succeeded in regulating some aspects of European behavior and some types of native-settler interactions. The result was an evolving colonial society in which ideas of race and gender were inextricably bound up with each other and with relations of power.⁶⁴

However, while Perry has set the standard for cultural history in British Columbia, in focusing on “the fault line that cut most strongly through British Columbia at this particular moment in history,” that is, on the division between whites and natives, she misses the ways in which the rhetoric and reality of nationality combined to make race and gender in British Columbia more contested than indicated in her work.⁶⁵ To an extent, Perry is correct: the native-white binary was a powerful discursive force in colonial British Columbia, helping the Victorians define savagery and civilization. While important, this emphasis on binary native-white relations obscures the multi-racial and bi-national reality of gold rush society in British Columbia. In particular, while Perry notes the existence of different groups within settler

⁶² Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, p. 3.

⁶³ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 4, 124 – 193.

⁶⁴ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 194 – 198.

⁶⁵ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, p. 9.

society, focusing on the divisions between elite factions and what she characterizes as an undifferentiated mass of rough backwoodsmen and miners, she does not address fully how nationality came to be, at certain times and places, more important than race in organizing the society of the colony. As this dissertation makes clear, the colonial elite of British Columbia feared the American population and experimented with some radical policies designed to limit the participation of Americans in the colony. In so doing, British and American Victorians engaged in vigorous debate over the meaning and significance of white manliness in British Columbia.

In contrast, the literature on the California gold rush, though far more extensive, has yet to apply a colonial framework fully to an understanding of the gold rush. One of the works that comes close is Susan Lee Johnson's *Roaring Camp*.⁶⁶ Johnson's work grows out of the new western history (which is itself an outgrowth of the new social history), but she also shows a keen awareness of the intersection between culture and society in her work. In *Roaring Camp*, Johnson depicts a vast and diverse society in the southern mines of California in which "Anglo-Americans" struggled to create a new social order in the rough, mixed-race, and homosocial world of the gold fields. For Johnson, the real story is in the day-to-day interactions between her subjects, in the way they worked and played. As a result, the impact of the colonial state, and the process through which it was created and enacted in the gold fields, is left blurry and ill-defined. This dissertation will act as a corrective to that, showing that the way Victorian men talked about themselves had political as well as social ramifications for gold rush society.

Like Perry, Johnson devotes considerable attention to the arrival of white women in the gold fields. But where Perry sees the arrival of white women as taking place within a pre-

⁶⁶ Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

existing colonial structure, for Johnson, the arrival of white women in California is a catalyst for major changes in the social dynamic of the southern mines.⁶⁷ In particular, Johnson argues that “Only when women joined these men in California did a middle class begin to take root.”⁶⁸

One of the other most notable works on the California gold rush in recent years, Brian Roberts’s *American Alchemy*, rightly takes issue with this assertion. Unlike Johnson, Roberts’s work is a product of the cultural turn, and his book is therefore far more grounded in the national literature on culture, class, and identity. Roberts argues that the men from New England who went west to California were, or aspired to be, middle-class and he sees much of their motivation in a short-term revolt against middle-class values.⁶⁹ To Roberts, these men went to California to slum, to move “away from the social restraints of the home [and] down the social scale...into the real depths and spaces occupied by lower classes and ethnic others.”⁷⁰ Respectable middle-class men could descend the social scale like this because this movement was, ultimately, only transitory. They understood that they would never fully embrace the life they witnessed, but instead would return to the white women and families they had left behind.⁷¹ Accordingly, Roberts devotes much of his work to the families and especially the white women these men left behind and for whom they framed their narratives of the gold fields. This dissertation draws heavily on Roberts’s insights, but places a greater emphasis on the economic, social, and political relationships embedded in the colonial state to reevaluate his central paradigm of slumming and to argue that what these men experienced was not a temporary social descent

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 279 – 281.

⁶⁸ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, p. 280.

⁶⁹ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 2 – 8.

⁷⁰ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, p. 219.

⁷¹ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 219 – 220.

(though it was that too), but an experience that provided the material for them to begin articulating a new strain of Victorianism.

The Work Ahead

The discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in California in late January, 1848 was only one of several major events to reshape much of the western world that year and, initially, the discovery of gold seemed to be of minor concern when compared to events elsewhere. In the United States, far more attention was given to the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the end of the Mexican-American War, and the expansion of the United States into over 500,000 square miles of new territory which reopened old divisions about the extension of slavery.⁷² Americans also looked east, across the Atlantic, where an ongoing famine forced more and more Irish to emigrate to the United States, where they congregated in major port cities, exacerbating racial and religious tensions.⁷³ In Europe, almost all attention was focused on the continent where a series of revolutions challenged governments from France to Austria-Hungary. The social turmoil caused by these revolutions and the counter-revolutionary reactions they provoked added

⁷² Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco: History Co., 1886), pp. 116 – 117; Elisha Oscar Crosby, *Memoirs of Elisha Oscar Crosby; Reminiscences of California and Guatemala from 1849 to 1864*, ed. Charles A. Barker (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1945), pp. 4 – 6; Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*.

⁷³ Robert Alan Goldbert, "Conspiracy Theories in America: A Historical Overview," in ed. Peter Knight *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2003), p. 4; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788 – 1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 317 – 321; Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800 – 1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), pp. 1 – 16, 33, 39, 41, 118 – 120.

to the flows of transatlantic migration in the coming years.⁷⁴ With Europe aflame, domestic problems in the East, and a war successfully concluded in the West, it is understandable that audiences in the Atlantic world initially paid little attention when newspaper reports began to circulate claiming gold had been discovered in California.

Other considerations also acted to mitigate early enthusiasm about the gold discovery. The most important factor was a well-deserved sense of skepticism about any news from California. Those Americans familiar with California knew it mostly through accounts like Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* and John C. Fremont's report on Oregon and California. Both accounts depicted California as an isolated location with potential agricultural or ranching wealth.⁷⁵ Readers in the East were cautious of being made fools and were well aware of the long tradition of questionable reports and tall tales that emanated from the West.⁷⁶ Consequently, most readers seemed to have adopted a wait-and-see attitude, believing that even if gold had actually been discovered, it was uncertain in what quantities.

All this changed on 5 December, 1848, when President Polk informed Congress that the accounts of the abundance of gold in that territory [California] are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service....The

⁷⁴ Bancroft, *History of California*, pp. 116 – 117; Ava Fran Khan, *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849 – 1880* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), p. 36; Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, pp. 302 – 303; Yonaton Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828 – 61* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 94 – 104; Tim Roberts, “The United States and the European Revolutions of 1848,” in *The European Revolutions of 1848 and the Americas*, ed. Guy Thomson (London: Latin America Studies, 2002), pp. 76 – 93; Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, pp. 45 – 50.

⁷⁵ John Charles Frémont, John Torrey, and James Hall, *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, And to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, printers, 1845); Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast and Other Voyages* (New York: Library of America, 2005); Richard T. Stillson, *Spreading the Word: A History of Information in the California Gold Rush* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. 4 – 15.

⁷⁶ Stillson, *Spreading the Word*, pp. 13 – 15.

explorations already made warrant the belief that the supply is very large, and that gold is found at various places in an extensive district of country.⁷⁷

What had previously been unsubstantiated rumor was now endorsed by multiple federal officers, including the military commander of California and the President. There was now virtually no question that gold existed in significant quantities in California. Throughout the Atlantic world men began to prepare to leave home and journey by sea and land to California.⁷⁸ The rush was on.

The desire for wealth was the primary unifying factor of all gold rushers. Simply put, news of the gold discovery in California opened up a world of possibilities for a wide range of individuals. That so many decided to undertake to go to California gives some indication of both the opportunity they believed awaited them there, and, to an extent, the increasing perception of life in the Atlantic world as economically and socially constraining. California gold promised to open a path to economic success based supposedly on an individual's work ethic. The ready availability of California gold meant that large capitalists would not control mining, as they increasingly controlled the economy of the east, while the difficulty and danger of mining would also mean that those with flawed characters would fail. In short, California gold was alluring because it represented a chance for economic advancement that seemed to rest almost entirely on an individual's worth as a white man.⁷⁹ In a period of economic and social change, the gold rush appeared to affirm one of the central morality tales of white manhood (that hard work was the key to success), linked this tale to imperial expansion and ideas of manifest destiny, and

⁷⁷ James Polk, "Message to Congress, 5 December, 1848" in *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America, 1789-1873*, 13th Cong., 2nd sess., 5 December 1848.

⁷⁸ The largest stream of European gold rushers originated from Britain, and also drew heavily on recently arrived Britons in the United States. See Van Vugt, *Britain to America*, pp. 89 – 90.

⁷⁹ Malcolm Rohrbough, "No Boy's Play: Migration and Settlement in Early Gold Rush California," in *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, eds. Kevin Starr and Richard Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 28.

promised wealth far beyond what one could hope to obtain at home. With such a potent combination of economic incentive, manliness, and for Americans, nationalism, it is little surprise so many Victorian men decided to rush to California. Victorian attitudes and economic and demographic transformations, particularly in the urban areas, helped to make gold mining, when understood in racialized and gendered terminology, an important and appealing way to become financially and socially independent. To put it another way, the changes underway in the Atlantic world encouraged many Victorian men to see gold mining as a chance to become rich and to demonstrate their white manliness at the same time. These Victorian men would soon discover that their ideas of white manliness would have to change to new circumstances.

The modification of Victorianism, and therefore of ideas about white manliness, began on the journey to the gold fields. Too often accounts of gold rushes open with the initial discovery of gold and then trace the impact of the arrival of large amounts of humanity at the gold fields. In so doing, they pay scant, if any, attention to the experiences of the gold rushers *en route* to the gold fields. However, as Chapter One demonstrates, the journey to the gold fields was quite significant for the gold rushers. Faced with conditions that differed dramatically from what they were used to, Victorian men experimented with new ideas of what it meant to be a white man on the way to the West. This chapter analyzes the two major migration streams to California, the Overlanders and the Argonauts, reading their experiences against each other to reveal emerging shared assumptions and telling differences, and comparing the California-bound migration to the later migration to British Columbia.

Regardless of what route they took, the migrations to the gold fields cut most migrants off from the social networks of family, church, and community that had regulated their behavior in the East and put them among an overwhelmingly male group of fellow travelers. At the same

time, many migrants decided to go to the gold fields at least in part as a rejection of urbanization, industrialization, and the Victorian values of restrained manhood. Many a migrant therefore went to great lengths to assert an identity as a martial man on his journey westward. In so doing, as Chapter One explains, these migrants felt the need to define their manly identity through the domination of non-whites and through play with each other. As a result, the migration westward served as a training ground for how Victorians should think about ideas of race and gender and how those ideas reflected and informed a colonial order. Before they ever set foot in California or British Columbia, therefore, these Victorian men had already begun to feel the effects of the gold rush and had begun to redefine white manliness to cope with what they believed the conditions would be like in the gold fields.

Arriving in California, Victorian men, along with thousands of migrants from around the world, rapidly overwhelmed the pre-existing forms of colonial authority. Chapter Two explores how Victorian men set about re-establishing colonial authority in California on the basis of “republican virtues,” that is, on the ideal of government being controlled by citizens who were independent of any outside influence and who put the greater good ahead of individual gain. In the process of doing so, Victorians were forced to confront the problem of where to draw the boundaries of who qualified as proper and respectable citizens and why. In the United States during the nineteenth century, citizenship was strongly linked to whiteness. Echoing the consensus in the eastern states, the vast majority of Victorian men never doubted for a moment that white men were the one people truly capable of functioning in a republic, but in California who exactly was a white man, and how that status could be identified, was a matter of debate.

This chapter analyzes the creation of this colonial order at three different sites. It begins by examining how the legislature enacted legislation that had potentially profound implications

for the definition of white manhood in the state, even as it became apparent those laws were largely dependent upon the willingness of the population to enforce them. The chapter then moves to the mines to explore how the various forms of local governance set up by the miners, such as town councils, mass meetings, and miner's meetings, sought to create an understanding of white manliness that was rooted in a colonial hierarchy that explicitly reserved special rights and economic privileges for white men. As the California legislators had already discovered, reaching a consensus on who exactly was a white man, what standards should be used to make that decision, and what the exact nature of the colonial order of the gold fields should look like, proved to be elusive. The final site of consideration is San Francisco, which was the major metropolitan center by a margin, not only for California, but also for the entire Pacific coast of North America. It was in San Francisco that the tension of defining the relationship between citizenship, republican virtues, and white manliness, while simultaneously attempting to establish a colonial order in a tumultuous city with deep political divisions, caused a series of vigilante movements that claimed to act in defense of "the people."

Ten years later, the Victorian gold rushers to British Columbia encountered a very different pre-existing colonial authority. As Chapter Three makes clear, the British colonial elite in the colony, which had developed during the era of the fur trade, maintained and expanded its authority during the gold rush. To this colonial elite, the greatest threat was white Americans. Their perceived republicanism and aggressive expansionism suggested the possibility of insurrection, filibustering, or social disorder. In response, the colonial elite articulated a policy of "colorblindness," claiming that British colonial authority did not recognize race. Not only did this allow the British colonial elite to claim the moral high ground over the white American population, it also resulted in the deliberate recruiting of black Americans into the colony and

into positions of relative power and influence. As it developed, however, the American population cared more about safety and access to gold deposits than about the specific form of government that ruled them. As the threat of the American population receded, in the eyes of the colonial elite, a shared consensus emerged between Britons and Americans that they were “cousins,” that is, white. As national differences became less important, British Columbia took on, in practice, a more overtly racialized colonial order, at the same time that the colonial elite still clung to the now mostly empty rhetoric of colorblindness.

Chapter Four shifts gears to explore how the gold rushes of California and British Columbia reshaped Victorian attitudes toward risk and gambling and how those ideas impacted concepts of white manliness. Victorian men hailed from a society in which hard work and dogged determination were believed to be the sole criteria for success. Financial success or failure (and how one handled each) therefore served as a metric of an individual’s character. But in the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia, risk and chance seemed to characterize both the act of mining and the leisure pursuits of the miners. Mining itself was a “gamble” that seemed to reward men of dubious character as often, if not more often than, men of moral worth. Yet the risks involved in such labor differed from those in games of chance. Whereas the former could be portrayed as at once daring and respectable, the latter could not. Victorian men used the risk of mining to identify as white men, but understood the risks involved in gambling as having the potential to collapse boundaries between themselves and “others.” In order to cope with the role of luck in mining and gambling, Victorian men ascribed racial and gender meanings to both activities. With these attached meanings, mining and gambling became a critical way for Victorian men to understand white manliness and to explain and justify a colonial order that placed white men at the top of society.

In the California and British Columbia gold rushes, Victorian men were confronted with a vast array of people from around the world at the same moment that they were also deprived of the circles of family, friends, church members, business partners, and the like who had served to convey an individual's reputation in the east. Lacking any sort of specific background knowledge, Victorians in the gold rushes came to rely heavily on appearance to judge a person's worth. Chapter Five traces how Victorians in California and British Columbia depended on evaluations of dress and bodies to determine if an individual or group measured up to Victorian ideals and to therefore determine the place of that individual or group in the colonial society of California or British Columbia. The problem was, of course, that those ideals kept shifting over the course of the gold rushes. Standards of dress proved particularly problematic for Victorian gold rushers, and over time, these men increasingly began to emphasize what they believed was the unalterable truth of the body. Focusing on the body, and in particular on its perceived racial and gender characteristics, had the effect of hardening understandings of race and gender, which had, in turn, serious implications for the colonial order, especially in British Columbia, where this trend was the most pronounced.

For Victorians, the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia were places where ideas about white manliness were thrown into question. The conditions of the gold fields encouraged Victorians to reshape some aspects of how they talked about and acted out ideas of race and gender. The ideas about race and gender that emerged out of the colonial societies of California and British Columbia would eventually come to foreshadow the development of ideas of masculinity in the latter part of the nineteenth century. But first, for all that to happen, Victorian men had to go to the gold fields.

Chapter One

Getting to Gold: Migration and the Formation of White Manliness

For most Victorian men, the journey to the gold fields marked the first time they experienced a world in which they were not clearly socially, economically, and politically dominant. The encounters produced by these migrations provided the first opportunity for Victorians to start to come to grips with what being a white man meant away from the more constrained world of the East. These migrations were the first time most of these men left the social networks in which they had grown up. In the absence of these networks, the migrants struggled to create their own social controls, and these efforts reveal many of the underlying assumptions that would inform the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia. In particular, the migrations reveal the diverse and shifting ways that Victorian gold rushers understood the idea of white manliness, and how they related that idea to social and political order.

Gold rushers can be divided into two categories: the Overlanders, those who crossed the continent by land, and the Argonauts, those who sailed and crossed the Isthmus or rounded Cape Horn. Historians have tended to analyze them separately, which has led to several impressive case studies.¹ Those few general works that treat both streams of migration tend to stress the desire for gold as a common motivating factor, ignoring the similarities and differences in the

¹ Some of the better works on the overland voyage are John David Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840 – 1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979); John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979); Michael Tate, *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006). The Argonauts have received less attention, but Oscar Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields; The Migration by Water to California in 1849 – 1852* (New York: AA Knopf, 1949); James Delgado, *To California by Sea: A Maritime History of the California Gold Rush* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990); and Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) are all excellent works.

ways these two different types of migration produced inter-related discourses about white manliness. Despite their very different methods and routes of transportation, the Overlander and Argonaut migrations had marked similarities. Both groups of migrants were overwhelmingly male, both imported cultural baggage from the East while also improvising new responses to conditions they encountered as they moved west, both expected to encounter non-whites, and both usually feared the worst. Whether they traveled by sea or by land, the predominantly male migrants experimented with ways of ordering their society and with how they understood their own gender and racial identities as white men. How Victorians worked, played, and joked on the migrations to California and British Columbia reveals their earliest attempts to formulate new standards of white manliness suitable to the environment they anticipated finding in the gold fields and their attempts to preserve aspects of old standards of white manliness. Of course, when their expectations did not match up to the reality they found in either location, these forms underwent further development, but ideas formed on the journey remain crucial for understanding the transition from ideas of white manliness in the Atlantic world to what emerged in the gold fields.

Key to this process was colonialism. As a way of ordering and understanding society, colonialism fundamentally shaped how Victorians experienced the people they met and the places they visited while *en route* to the gold fields. At its core, colonialism assumed that white people had the right, ability, and sometimes, duty, to rule over non-whites. As the historian Frederick Cooper has pointed out, colonialism “reproduces differentiation and inequality among people it incorporates” and this is exactly what occurred on the journey to the gold fields.² The people that the migrants met and the places they saw encouraged the migrants to begin the

² Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 26.

process of both preserving and adapting older beliefs about the proper nature of society to account for a more racially diverse, socially fluid, and homosocial gold field society.

The route a migrant took to the gold fields exposed them to slightly different understandings of the relationship between themselves and the peoples they encountered. Overlanders encountered native peoples who were firmly in the path of the expanding United States, while Argonauts encountered Latin Americans who, occupying tropical locations of dubious healthfulness, were more peripheral to the concerns of most Victorians. A comparison reveals that while Victorians understood white “civilization” to be *replacing* native “savagery,” they believed that a small number of white men could *rejuvenate* the decayed society of Latin America. As a result, Victorian men had a far harder time imagining a place for natives in the colonial societies of California and British Columbia than they had for other non-white groups. These encounters are also important for the way they shaped different aspects of what it meant to be a white man and, therefore, how Victorians expected white men to appear and act in the gold fields.

Victorian attitudes toward, and experiences of, the migration to the gold fields also changed over time. Changing demographics combined with advances in technology and infrastructure distinguished the rush to British Columbia in 1858 from the rush to California ten years earlier. In the decade since the discovery of gold in California, the population of the state had grown to almost 400,000 from around 135,000, a rate of growth even more astounding when the massive demographic decline of the native population, from around 120,000 to just over

20,000 during the same period, is taken into account.³ In other words, as a percentage of the total population within the present-day boundaries of California, natives had fallen from approximately 88% to 5% in about a decade. With this demographic transformation came the creation of urban centers, communication and transportation networks, a system of mining towns, regional centers, and agricultural settlements, and the organization and admission of California as a state. As importantly, by 1858 companies dominated mining in California and the majority of gold miners now worked for wages, rather than for themselves.⁴

Since 1849, San Francisco had begun to emerge as an “imperial city,” a regional center of capital and political power and a key site in the gold rush system of the mid-nineteenth century.⁵ Building on its early dominance of the California gold rush, San Francisco provided capital and expertise to the Australian gold fields from 1851 onward and then to the numerous smaller rushes that occurred throughout the mountains and streams of the western portion of the North American continent.⁶ With San Francisco acting as the hub, men, material, capital, and ideas moved through the gold field system from one rush to another, both disseminating new ways of doing things and bringing knowledge and experience of older methods. The gold discovery on the Fraser River meant that British Columbia was quickly incorporated as another site within this

³ Population estimates for California are the source of some contention. My numbers are derived from Clifford E. Trafzer and Joel H. Hyer, eds., *Exterminate Them: Written Accounts of the Murder, Rape, and Slavery of Native Americans During the Gold Rush, 1848 – 1868* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), p. xxiii; Rodman Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848 – 1880* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 15. For population counts that differ in specifics but show approximately the same ratios, see Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 1; Sucheng Chan, “A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush,” in *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, eds. Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 50.

⁴ Rodman Paul, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), pp. 117 – 119.

⁵ Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁶ Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, pp. 32 – 39, 64; D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History* vol. 2 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 6 – 55.

gold rush system, resulting in an influx of “old timers” who had access to capital and ideas about how gold rush society should function. The gold rush in British Columbia therefore occurred against the backdrop of other gold rushes, most notably California and Australia, and both the colonial government and the “old timer” miners looked to these experiences for portents and precedents.

This new population center would be the dominant source of gold rush migrants to British Columbia in the first year of the rush, 1858. For example, in a two-week period in June, over six thousand people were believed to have arrived in Victoria, the vast majority of whom were from California.⁷ Steamships, as well as sailing vessels, were quickly reassigned from other routes to the suddenly profitable trip to Victoria on Vancouver Island. The presence of significant numbers of sea-worthy vessels, both sail and steam, in California kept fares affordable, encouraging a wide range of miners to try their luck in British Columbia.⁸

With travel to British Columbia being relatively cheap and easy, the gold discoveries themselves seemed to herald a return to “days of ‘49” for many Californians.⁹ The Fraser River, like Australia before it, offered a place where the abundance of gold would allow miners to work in small companies, with little or no capital, and stand a reasonable chance of success. This was particularly meaningful in California, where wage work dominated mining by 1858, undercutting the dreams of many Victorian men to gain financial independence.¹⁰ In much the same way that the California Gold Rush had been fueled in part by a reaction against the growth of industrialization and wage labor in the Atlantic world, many who rushed to the Fraser reacted to

⁷ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The History of British Columbia* vol. 32 (San Francisco: History Co., 1887), p. 361.

⁸ “Remarks on the Fraser River Gold Mines and Washington Territory,” in *The San Francisco Bulletin*, 1 May, 1858. The most expensive tickets were \$50, but tickets could be had for under \$20 on a sailing vessel.

⁹ “The Rush For Fraser River,” in *The San Francisco Daily Alta California*, 21 April, 1858; “Letter from Victoria,” in *The San Francisco Alta California*, 9 July 1858.

¹⁰ Paul, *California Gold*, pp. 117 – 119.

similar developments in California mining and saw the new gold discoveries as a chance to recapture an increasingly idealized past.

Experiences on board ship and with Latin Americans were still important to migrants, but increasingly California itself helped to shape Victorian expectations of British Columbia gold field society and of what it meant to be a white man in a gold rush. Perceived national differences came to the fore, especially as many British subjects experienced American society for the first time. Ultimately, by land or sea, to California or British Columbia, migration to the gold fields provided the first opportunity for Victorian gold rushers to articulate what being a white man would mean in the gold rush societies of the Pacific coast.

Starting Off

Important regional divisions existed in the motivations and demographics of the two main streams of migrants from the United States to California. The Overlanders came predominantly from the westernmost states, and although the gold rush Overlanders did draw some of their population from urban centers, it remained a migration dominated by rural folk. For most Overlanders, the trek to California was a continuation of a process that had seen whole families migrate westward repeatedly in the previous decades.¹¹ In contrast, the Argonauts came mainly from New England and, to a lesser extent, from ports on the Atlantic. Even those who did not live in an urban center themselves had observed and felt the changing economic and social conditions that resulted from the growth of manufacturing, urbanization, and “clock time.”¹² Families, too, made up approximately one-quarter of the California-bound overland migration,

¹¹ Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, pp. 16, 18, 20.

¹² Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 12 – 15, 25.

far more than went by sea.¹³ Those differences aside, both Overlanders and Argonauts shared similar cultural values and concerns which encouraged a similar discourse among migrants regardless of whether they traveled by land or sea.

Overlanders and Argonauts shared a vision of the West and of westward movement as an integral component of the “American character.”¹⁴ Both eastern and western Americans shared an intellectual heritage that stressed westward expansion and celebrated the pioneers who “opened” the West.¹⁵ The California gold rush, following hard on the heels of the Mexican-American War, occurred when the expansionist ideology of Manifest Destiny still enjoyed the support of a wide segment of American society. Furthermore, Americans shared some basic assumptions as to the place of white men in the westering expansion of the country. As Amy Greenberg has argued, at mid-century two streams of manliness, restrained and martial manhood, competed for dominance among Victorian Americans. While both these forms of manliness had strong correlations to class and occupation, they were, as Greenberg points out, shaped, not determined, by economic and social factors.¹⁶ Instead, westward expansionism, and by extension, martial manhood, had broad appeal to many segments of American society in both the East and the West. Americans could see individuals who moved west as exemplars of

¹³ Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, p. 36; Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 71 – 79, 264.

¹⁴ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

¹⁵ Ray Allen Billington, *Land of Savagery/Land of Promise: The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 1981), pp. 130, 151 – 152; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 83 – 85.

¹⁶ Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 11 – 13. The division between martial and restrained manhood is also evident in Victorian Britain. See, for example Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 123 – 125.

masculinity vested in independence and self-reliance.¹⁷ Memories of the opening of the Mississippi Valley and the more recent celebration of the Oregon settlers as hardy and adventurous pioneers, “America’s finest citizens,” served as symbolic touchstones for this rhetoric.¹⁸ The rhetoric that described western pioneers as exemplars of American ideals was already well in place by the time of the discovery of gold and strongly linked martial white manliness with national expansion and colonialism.

Nor was this celebration of manliness and westward movement limited to the Overlanders. The Argonauts also thought of themselves, and were perceived by their supporters, in much the same manner. This is particularly evident in the attention many Argonauts gave to Juan Fernandez Island, the island off the coast of Chile where Alexander Selkirk, the inspiration for Robinson Crusoe, was ship-wrecked. Frequently visited in 1849 before the Panama and Nicaragua routes became dominant, Juan Fernandez served to link, symbolically and physically, the archetypal solitary, self-reliant, and martial white man to the Argonauts.¹⁹ As George Payson put it, “the idea of a life in the mines was rather agreeable. It had about it a smack of Robinson Crusoe.”²⁰ Even the name, Argonauts, reflected an idealized link between these men

¹⁷ Billington, *Land of Savagery*, pp. 130, 151 – 152; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, pp. 92 – 93; Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 37 – 38; Faragher, *Men and Women on the Overland Trail*, pp. 14, 85 – 90, 178.

¹⁸ Unruh, *The Plains Across*, pp. 14, 30.

¹⁹ Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1946 [1719]); Roberts, *American Alchemy*, p. 53; George Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Company, 1853), pp. 21, 106 – 107, 133; Charles Ellis, “Journal of a Voyage from Boston, Mass. to San Francisco, California in the Brig *North Bend*, Captain Higgins,” in John E. Pomfret, Charles Henry Ellis, and John N. Stone, *California Gold Rush Voyages, 1848 – 1849: Three Original Narratives* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1954), p. 68; John David Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters: A First Hand Picture of Life in California Mining Camps in the Early Fifties*, ed. Horace Kephart (1857; New York: International Fiction Library, 1917), p. 23; J. W. L. Brown to Mrs. A. G. Brown, 24 February 1854, Brown Family Papers, 1830 -1898, box 1524, folder 3, California State Archive, Sacramento, Calif. (hereafter State Archive); Richard Lunt Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner; Journal of a Voyage from Newburyport to San Francisco in the Brig. Genl. Worth, Commanded by Captain Samuel Walton*, ed., Carolyn Ernestine Hale Russ (Boston, Mass.: B. J. Brimmer Co., 1923), p. 49.

²⁰ Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, p. 21.

and the ancient Greek hero, Jason. Clearly, significant support existed among the gold rushers and their spectators to see them as embodiments of a range of manly, martial virtues.

Both streams of migrants shared other traits, the most significant of which was a nearly complete lack of direct experience with non-Europeans other than blacks; even then, black populations were concentrated in certain areas, most obviously the slave-holding South. Importantly for gold rushers, the migration to the gold fields marked the first time most of them encountered natives or Hispanics. By the mid-nineteenth century, with the eradication or removal of the vast majority of so-called Indians from east of the Mississippi River, most Americans only knew about natives through stories, songs, novels, and plays.²¹

Despite their physical absence or near-invisibility, the rhetorical presence of natives loomed large in American culture, where they occupied a curious and contradictory position as both sacred and profane. On the one hand, the stereotypes of the Noble Savage and the Indian Princess held natives up as emblematic of a purity that was being (or had been) destroyed by the encroachment of “civilization.” Their nobility, honor, and innocence contrasted sharply with the social, economic, and political ills of Victorian “civilization.”²² This idea was further reinforced by the belief that contact with white men inevitably brought degradation to the Noble Savage in the form of disease, alcohol, and incomprehensible social, economic, and technological changes.²³ On the other hand, the image of the Indian as savage and of Indian women as degraded “squaws” highlighted supposed propensities to violence, cowardice, theft, abuse, and prostitution. These profane imaginary Indians served to reinforce the justness and inevitability

²¹ Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, pp. 4 – 12, 19; Unruh, *The Plains Across*, pp. 3 – 4.

²² Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978), pp. 6, 28, 7, 86 – 90; Rayna Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture,” *The Massachusetts Review* 16, no. 4 (Autumn, 1975): pp. 698 – 714.

²³ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, p. 30; Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, p. 7; Billington, *Land of Savagery*, pp. 124 – 128.

of the expansion of the white man's "civilization." Whether the perceptions of Victorians emphasized the sacred or the profane, both views shared the assumption that the progression of "civilization" was inevitable and that natives, as antithetical to "civilization," would have to "give way." In short, these imaginary Indians served to buttress, critique, celebrate, and justify Victorian society, culture, and imperial expansion.²⁴ Nevertheless, even if potential Overlanders started off believing that that natives were Noble Savages, as they approached the starting points of the trans-continental trek, they would have heard more and more reports of native attacks and treachery.²⁵ It was rare indeed for an Overlander about to depart to espouse a belief in the Noble Savage.

The ideal of martial manhood, shared throughout the Victorian world, meant that potential Overlanders responded to these stories in an amazingly uniform manner. Almost to a man, they bought prodigious quantities of firearms, ammunition, and knives.²⁶ Whatever their prior concept of native character, the vast majority evidently decided to err of the side of caution, a decision that, not coincidentally, allowed them to act the part of the brave frontiersman. Nor were the Overlanders alone in embracing the costume and accoutrements of martial manhood. Even among the Argonauts, packed away on small ships for weeks or months at a time, "it was pretty well known that every passenger had stowed away his small arms and enough powder for a California campaign and any one of these trucks contained enough power to blow the steamer

²⁴ Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex," pp. 698 – 714; Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2005), pp. 10, 23, 55; Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, pp. 88 – 90, 113 – 165.

²⁵ Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, pp. 13 – 19; Richard T. Stillson, *Spreading the Word: A History of Information in the California Gold Rush* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. 9 – 10, 75, 83; Unruh, *The Plains Across*, pp. 45 – 46.

²⁶ Franklin Langworthy, *Scenery of the Plains, Mountains and Mines* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1932), p. 2; Theodore T. Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region, and Scenes by the Way* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), 3; Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, pp. 18 – 19.

to attoms.”²⁷ Weapons allowed a wide range of men to lay claim to martial manhood and to symbolically link their travels with other displays of martial manhood from the opening of the Mississippi Valley to the recent war with Mexico. The emphasis on weaponry also revealed the widespread sense among Victorian migrants that whatever social order there was to be out West would have to be maintained in the face of possibly violent resistance. As we will see, this, in turn, encouraged Victorian migrants to exaggerate potential threats and to suppress challenges through the threat or application of force. This trend, already evident on the journey westward, continued in California.

Argonauts shared with Overlanders a distinct lack of real experience but a surfeit of beliefs about the people and places they would encounter on their voyage. Most Victorian knowledge of Latin America came from tales about Spanish colonization, travel narratives, and, most immediately, stories of the Mexican-American War. In the English-speaking Atlantic world of the mid-nineteenth century, the “Black Legend” of Spanish colonization still had considerable currency. First articulated by Bartolomé de las Casas in the sixteenth century, in the minds of Protestant Americans by the mid-nineteenth century the Black Legend had become intertwined with the predominant anti-Catholicism of the period. Victorian Protestants were only too willing to believe that the Catholic nations to the south were despotic, corrupt, and backwards, the antithesis of the democratic, progressive, and energetic white Protestant north.²⁸

²⁷ Elisha Oscar Crosby, *Memoirs of Elisha Oscar Crosby; Reminiscences of California and Guatemala from 1849 to 1864*, ed. Charles A. Barker (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1945), pp. 10 – 11. See also Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, p. 51.

²⁸ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, pp. 11 – 13; Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (1835; New York: Arno Press, 1977); Samuel Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States: The Numbers of Brutus* (1835; New York: Arno Press, 1977); David Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 37 – 48; María DeGuzmán, *Spain’s Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo American Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), pp. xxvii – xxix, 5 – 6, 42, 69, 70 – 72.

When Samuel Morse asked, “Is it not clear that the cause of Popery is the cause of despotism?” most of Protestant America found the answer to be very clear indeed.²⁹

Perceptions of environmental and biological difference also predisposed Victorians to see Latin America as different and backwards. As historian Fredrick Pike has noted, in the nineteenth century Victorians on both sides of the Atlantic divided humanity into Orient and Occident as well as along a north to south spectrum. At the bottom of the north-south spectrum lay Africa with its black inhabitants who were “oversexed and not fully human; less far southward resided the Spaniards...worthier than Africans but vitiated by their propensity for unmanly conduct.”³⁰ Environmental factors, specifically the warm climate and abundance said to characterize Central and South America, also suggested that Latin America and its inhabitants would be degraded.³¹ To the Victorians, residents of tropical areas had their wants too easily supplied, resulting in laziness and degradation, while residents of temperate climates, like Europe and much of North America, had to struggle for basic necessities, encouraging an energetic and competitive character.

Prior to the Mexican-American War and the California gold rush, very few Americans traveled to Latin America, so a small group of travel writers disproportionately shaped public perception. John Lloyd Stephens, who would go on to be the President of the Panama Railroad Company and who published *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* in 1841, was one such man. In his book, Stephens described the fall of the Federal Republic of Central America into anarchy and civil war and his (re)discovery of many notable Mayan cities,

²⁹ Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy*, p. 45.

³⁰ Fredrick Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas, 1992), pp. 54 – 55.

³¹ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 98 – 99; Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 13 – 14, 28 – 29; Pike, *The United States and Latin America*, pp. xiv, 22, 51 – 72.

including Copán and Palenque. To Stephens's eye, the soldiers he encountered were "ragged and insolent-looking," and he speculated that the citizens "in any city in Europe or the United States...instead of submitting to be lorded over by such barbarians, would rise *en masse* and pitch them out of the gates."³² Stephens thought the ruins he found must have been built by an older, vanished race.³³ Just as disconcerting for Stephens were the racial mixing and sexual mores of the places he visited, where he found that

practical amalgamation, the subject of so much angry controversy at home, had been going on quietly for generations; that colour was considered mere matter of taste; and that some of the most respectable inhabitants had black wives and mongrel children, whom they educated with as much care, and made money for with as much zeal, as if their skins were perfectly white. I hardly knew whether to be shocked or amused at this condition of society.³⁴

Just about the only unqualified praise Stephens had for members of Central American society was reserved for Latinas, particularly for their religious devotion and beauty, but even this was tempered by criticism of their beliefs and habits.³⁵ Like other Euro-American travelers before and after him, Stephens eroticized the inhabitants of the South, finding them both attractive and repulsive.³⁶

One of the most important travel narratives for shaping expectations of Latin America and California was Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*. Dana's account was so widely read by the gold rushers that when he visited California again in 1859 he discovered that "almost...every American in California had read it," though, as he admitted, this was in a large

³² John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (1841; New York: Dover Publications, 1969), p. 193.

³³ Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, pp. 94 – 99.

³⁴ Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, p. 12.

³⁵ Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, pp. 65, 211, 256.

³⁶ Pike, *The United States and Latin America*, pp. 54 – 55; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, pp. 94 – 113; DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow*, p. xii.

part due to the fact that in 1848 “there was no book upon California but mine.”³⁷ Like Stephens, Dana saw Latinos as “the laziest people upon the face of the earth; and indeed, . . . there are no people to whom the newly-invented Yankee word of ‘loafer’ is more applicable than to the Spanish Americans.”³⁸ To Dana, Latinos were also “excessively” fond of dress and overly concerned with outward appearances.³⁹ “In fact,” noted Dana, “[Latin Americans] sometimes appeared to me to be a people on whom a curse had fallen, and stripped them of everything but their pride, their manners, and their voices.”⁴⁰ Like Stephens and other travel writers, Dana also remarked on the mixing of races and what he saw as a lack of clearly defined social classes.⁴¹ On the one hand, Dana asserted that “their complexions are various, depending – as well as their dress and manner – upon their rank; or, in other words, upon the amount of Spanish blood they can lay claim to.”⁴² On the other hand, Dana claimed that “every rich man looks like a grandee, and every poor scamp like a broken-down gentleman.”⁴³ Far from undercutting Dana’s account, this apparent contradiction actually underscored the confusion and disarray that Victorians saw in Latin America. Argonauts and Overlanders reading Dana were prepared to interpret the unfamiliar as disorder and disorder as inferiority.

Discussed in widely available newspapers, the Mexican-American War from 1846 to 1848 became a demonstration of the link between imperial expansion and the nation’s white,

³⁷ Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, p. 369.

³⁸ Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, p. 45.

³⁹ Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, pp. 76 – 77.

⁴⁰ Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, p. 77.

⁴¹ Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, pp. 73, 75 – 77, 230; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, pp. 103 – 128. DeGuzmán argues that concerns over mixing and mixture were at the forefront of how whites thought about the legacy of Spanish colonialism. See DeGuzmán, *Spain’s Long Shadow*, pp. xxviii, 66 – 69, 74 – 76.

⁴² Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, pp. 75 – 76.

⁴³ Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, p. 73.

Protestant republicanism.⁴⁴ As more people read more news in the burgeoning penny press, it served to confirm and harden pre-existing stereotypes and images of Latin America and Latin Americans.⁴⁵ Americans identified Catholicism as one of the key factors undercutting Mexican morale. Victorian Protestants believed this supposedly despotic religion made the Mexicans meek, cowardly, and apathetic. A series of lopsided U.S. victories confirmed for Americans the superiority of their volunteer citizen army. These victories demonstrated to the Americans that because of their greater virtue, the independent white man, the citizen-soldier, could easily defeat the racially degraded and despotic armies of Mexico.⁴⁶ The Mexican-American War demonstrated that Americans were strongly inclined to imagine imperial expansion through the rubric of the expansion of the white republic.⁴⁷

The rush to British Columbia would be the heir to this “knowledge.” By 1858, ideas about the California gold rush, and to a lesser extent, the other minor gold rushes that immediately followed it, had entered popular Victorian culture on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁸ These latter immigrants went to British Columbia not only with an expectation of the sort of society they would find when they arrived, but also of the sort of people they would encounter along the way. As a result, the migration to British Columbia would share many similarities with

⁴⁴ Robert Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 21 – 23, 30, 45, 116, 167 – 170.

⁴⁵ Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, p. 16.

⁴⁶ Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, pp. 21 – 30, 40 – 45; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 208 – 247.

⁴⁷ Though Horsman attributes undue influence to the Mexican-American war, ignoring or under-emphasizing both continuities in racist thought and other sources of racialist thinking, like slavery, his study is valuable for its attention to the discourse of manifest destiny. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 1 – 6, 59 – 62, 99 – 100, 208 – 249; Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, p. 40, 170.

⁴⁸ British interest in and awareness of the California gold rush can be traced by examining the explosion of newspaper articles and books on California, the surge in British emigration to the United States, and the rapidly developing financial ties. See Ralph J. Roske, “The World Impact of the California Gold Rush, 1849-1857,” *Arizona and the West* 5, no. 3 (Autumn, 1963): pp. 211 – 217. For examples of accounts that were widely distributed in Britain, see Frank Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills; or, Recollections of a Burnt Journal* (1855; Philadelphia, Pa.: Lippincott, 1962) and the *London Times*.

the earlier rush to California but, as we shall see, technological changes and the dynamics of British encounters with Americans would cause this later migration to have subtly different ramifications.

Settling Into the Trip

Starting in 1849 and continuing throughout much of the early 1850s, both Overlanders and Argonauts organized in remarkably similar ways as they prepared to head west. Reflecting the leanings of a post-Jacksonian America, many migrants organized themselves along the lines of a joint-stock company. For the Overlanders, this made sense. Previous overland migrations had been organized around families, but the overwhelmingly male character of the gold rush migrations made this impractical.⁴⁹ Still, with few exceptions, migrants believed that a safe transit across the country required large numbers for mutual aid and defense.⁵⁰ The result was that most started off the migration as members of some form of joint association, often a joint-stock company, with resources pooled to purchase supplies. These associations often appointed a leader, but one with little coercive authority. Much of the decision making was actually far more consensus-driven than the paper organization of these companies suggested.⁵¹ With so many migrants on the trail, individuals could split into smaller trains or join other trains if they became dissatisfied with the leadership of their group.⁵²

⁴⁹ Faragher, *Men and Women on the Overland Trail*, p. 24; William Bowen, *The Willamette Valley: Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), pp. 53 – 57.

⁵⁰ Unruh, *The Plains Across*, pp. 45 – 46, 73 – 80; Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, p. 19; Langworthy, *Scenery of the Plains*, p. 2.

⁵¹ Unruh, *The Plains Across*, pp. 72 – 74, 328 – 329; Langworthy, *Scenery of the Plains*, p. 11; Peter Decker, *The Diaries of Peter Decker: Overland to California in 1849 and Life in the Mines, 1850 – 1851*, ed., Helen S. Giffen (Georgetown, Calif.: Talisman Press, 1966), p. 1.

⁵² Unruh, *The Plains Across*, pp. 328 – 329.

In the early years of the gold rush, before regular fare passage was inaugurated, the Argonauts demonstrated a similar tendency to organize associations or joint-stock companies. With their combined funds, these companies either bought or chartered a vessel and purchased supplies for the trip to California and for mining after they arrived.⁵³ Food and water were usually the responsibility of agents who organized the trip, but the mining companies purchased their own mining supplies, clothes, and weapons.⁵⁴ Mining companies not only organized the resources necessary for departure, their charters included the regulation of behavior on the journey to the gold fields, and provisions for trading and mining as a company once in California.⁵⁵ The prevalence of this type of organization among the Argonauts is even more striking given that, while at sea, these democratic mining companies had to contend with the autocratic authority of the captain. The outcome can be easily predicted: account after account details conflicts between the passengers and the captain. While many of these were fairly mild disagreements, some exploded into near mutiny or resulted in criminal trials or lynch mobs targeting captains when the vessel arrived in California.⁵⁶

The practical and perceived realities that encouraged the formation of such groups can only partially explain this commitment to democratic associations. Mid-nineteenth-century Victorian Americans saw democracy as a key signifier of white manliness. These organizations, by requiring an equal “buy in” and by electing officers and other positions, confirmed the white

⁵³ Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, p. 24.

⁵⁴ Nelson Kingsley, *Diary of Nelson Kingsley, a California Argonaut of 1849*, ed. Frederick Teggart (Berkeley: University of California, 1914), pp. 239 – 242.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, pp. 21 – 29.

⁵⁶ Delgado, *To California by Sea*, pp. 35 – 36, 41; Frank Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco; Containing a Summary of the History of* (New York: Appleton, 1855), p. 352; Charles Thompson to Uncle, 10 September 1851, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:8, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California (hereafter BANC); Eliza W. Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out: or, How we Farm, Mine, and Live Generally in the Golden State* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1856), pp. 4 – 18.

manhood of its membership. While some men indentured themselves for the trip west and others borrowed money, the ideal way of traveling for both Argonauts and Overlanders was as a member of a company.⁵⁷ This trend linked the settlement of California to a particular colonial order, one vested in the idea that free, independent white men should be politically dominant. This idea encouraged Victorians to differentiate between themselves and the peoples they encountered *en route* on the basis of race.⁵⁸ Their experience with recalcitrant compatriots and, in the case of the Argonauts, ship captains, also suggested the various threats to such a society, either from authoritarian outsiders or from corrupt or foolish members. Victorian men would have to act aggressively to preserve their prerogatives as white men against these threats, eventually finding the solution not only in colonial government, but also in the language and practices surrounding ideas of risk and appearance.

The practice of forming joint-stock companies and other associations does not appear to have lasted into the rush for British Columbia. By 1858, regular steamship service and a rail connection across the Isthmus of Panama made the ocean route the far more popular choice for migrants. Regular service, shorter trips, and lower fares all seem to have combined to encourage gold rushers going to British Columbia to travel as individual passengers, not as members of company.⁵⁹ As a result, the migrants to British Columbia who had not been involved in earlier rushes like to California lacked the same direct experience with democratic organizations *en route* to the mines. This may have, in turn, contributed to their willingness to accede to pre-established colonial authority upon their arrival in British Columbia.

⁵⁷ Unruh, *The Plains Across*, p. 73; Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ A. J. McCall, *The Great California Trail in 1849, Wayside Notes of an Argonaut... reprinted from the Steuben Courier* (Bath, N.Y.: Steuben Courier Print, 1882), pp. 12 – 13.

⁵⁹ Of course, it is exceedingly difficult to prove an absence, especially given the dearth of records regarding the Argonaut migration to British Columbia, but those that we do have do not mention companies, only the purchase of tickets. See for example, Cecil Williams Buckley, Journal, 17 April 1862, E/B/B85, BCARS.

But while the lack of joint-stock companies may have mitigated the appeal of democratic organizations, Cecil Buckley's journal provides some of the strongest evidence that some miners, at least, remained deeply concerned about ideas of independence and equality, now understood more explicitly through the lens of class relations. Buckley left Southampton in April 1862 for British Columbia on a 2nd class ticket because he "wished to be well acquainted with the style of people who were leaving England for the same purpose and who I fancied would be chiefly met with in the 2nd class."⁶⁰ Buckley, of middle-class background, fancied himself a miner. By surrounding himself with other laboring men, Buckley sought to assume an identity as a miner before he arrived in the gold fields. Another gold rusher, Byron Johnson, like Buckley, of "a good deal better class," also traveled in steerage to British Columbia. Johnson remembered that the "hard sun-burnt fellows in rough miner's dress...were our heroes" and that the "new chums" would gather around each one to collect "fragments of his advice."⁶¹ But Buckley was never able to let go of his middle class identity and began to have "more than half a mind to change into 1st class and quit them altogether."⁶² While Buckley had evidently begun to tire of his masquerade, and looked to reassert class difference in order to have a peaceful night's rest, the third-class passengers on his vessel continued to articulate an understanding of the leveling effects of the gold rush, threatening the second-class passengers that "we shall be all alike at the diggings, and 'them as tries to make theirselves exclusive now, had better look out'" in British Columbia.⁶³ Clearly, the perceived leveling effects of the gold rush were widely shared by different levels of British society and, for at least some of the migrants, were part of the

⁶⁰ Buckley, Journal, 17 April 1862.

⁶¹ R. Byron Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed. A Few Rough Experiences on the North-West Pacific Coast* (London: S. Low, Martson, Low & Searle, 1872), pp. 2 – 3.

⁶² Buckley, Journal, 4 May 1862.

⁶³ Buckley, Journal, 4 May 1862.

attraction of the gold rush. It need hardly be said that the equality espoused by the third-class passengers was almost certainly predicated on a common racial, gender, and possibly, national identity. In other words, it was equality for (British) white men atop a hierarchical colonial society.

Both the Overland and Argonaut companies first experienced the repercussions of a homosocial world during their migration to the gold fields. For the male Overlanders, one of the biggest changes to which they had to adjust was the necessity of doing what would have been called women's work at home, particularly washing and mending clothes and cooking. While some celebrated their newfound ability to cook (one wonders if their messmates did as well) and perform other domestic chores, more were like Peter Decker who, after his "first washing (except socks) last evening," concluded that "the washerwoman earns all & more than she gets."⁶⁴ Indeed, for many men, the practical realities of homosocial life stimulated a profound nostalgia for women or, at least, women's labor. D. A. Millington probably spoke for many of his fellow travelers when he opined:

My camp fare with the cold ground and a little straw for a bed and food served up by our rude cookery does not well compare with a downy bed softened by the delicate hands of woman and the neat and wholesome fare sweetened by her smiles, neither does the boisterous company of a crowd of men replace the gentle influence of female society But I must get accustomed to these changes whether I like them or not I suppose and so I shall pretend to like it well enough as long as I can stand it.⁶⁵

While men could and did celebrate their manly independence (or at least claimed to, as Millington did), the reality of making do without the labor of women, combined with the other hardships of the trek, encouraged men to think more fondly of what they had left behind.

⁶⁴ Decker, *The Diaries of Peter Decker*, p. 115.

⁶⁵ D. A. Millington, *Journal of a California Miner*, 11 April 1850, State Archive.

Although women were far more common on the Overland trails than on the sea routes in the first years of the rush, the Argonauts' accounts do not tend to have the same note of longing for absent women. To be sure, many men while in the throes of sea sickness or an Atlantic storm were "all for giving up and count their share of stock worth but a verry little and would sell out for almost nothing," and wished, as did Nelson Kingsley, that they were back among the "verdure [green foliage] on my own native hills" and the "many blessings...enjoy[ed] at home," but these sentiments usually lasted only until the storm or sickness subsided.⁶⁶ One of the key reasons for this difference appears to be that the Argonauts, unlike the Overlanders, did not have to engage regularly in women's work. Instead, the daily task of cooking fell to the ship's cook, who was very often black.⁶⁷ Having black cooks meant that white men did not have to fully experience the loss of women's labor while reaffirming the legitimacy of the rhetoric linking non-whites with femininity and subservience. Little wonder, then, that the Argonauts did not express the same sort of longing for women's labor as did their overland counterparts. About the only domestic chore the Argonauts engaged in was washing, and even this they did with far less frequency than the Overlanders. On the rare occasion when they did undertake washing, like the Overlanders, they did not find themselves "particularly handy at the business."⁶⁸ Even this limited amount of domesticity worried Richard Hunt who feared "the girls would think...we

⁶⁶ Kingsley, *Diary of Nelson Kingsley*, pp. 259 – 262.

⁶⁷ William Henry Harrison Hall, *The Private Letters and Diaries of Captain Hall: An Epic of an Argonaut in the California Gold Rush, Oregon Territory, Civil War, and Oil City*, ed. Eric Schneirschon (Glendale, Calif.: London Book Co., 1974), p. 14; Ellis, "Journal of a Voyage," p. 95; Bayard Taylor, *Eldorado; Or, Adventures in the Path of Empire, Comprising a Voyage to California, Via Panama; Life in San Francisco and Monterey; Pictures of the Gold Region, and Experiences of Mexican Travel* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1879), p. 44; Joseph Benton, Journal 1849 Jan. 11 – 1856 Dec. 31, 14 January 1849, State Archive.

⁶⁸ Benton, Journal, 13 February, 1849.

look more like a laundry than a California droger.”⁶⁹ While Overlanders lamented the loss of women’s labor, Argonauts like Hunt worried more about their performance as men.

This is not to say that Overlanders were unconcerned about performing identities as white men; indeed, the performance of white manliness was as central to the Overlanders as it was to the Argonauts. Both Argonauts and Overlanders sought to assert an identity as white men by claiming expertise, but the specific expertise they claimed was related to their mode of travel. Expertise served as a way for the migrants to divide themselves into two groups: seasoned, experienced men and “greenhorns” who were unskilled and unprepared for the realities they would encounter in the gold fields.⁷⁰ Of course, due to their different modes of transportation, the types of expertise Overlanders and Argonauts laid claim to differed. For the Argonauts, expertise was manifested in the use of nautical terminology, recording latitude and longitude in their diaries, and engaging in some of the basic tasks of the crew.⁷¹ Although some Argonauts thought the “effort to play the part of the old salts” was “amusing,” even they conceded that “a lot of the verdant passengers” did so.⁷²

For Overlanders, the context was slightly different. First, the skills that Overlanders expected to master were necessary to their trip. As a result, most Overlanders acquired those skills and usually attempted to do so as soon as possible. The skills were also different. Overlanders had to learn how to make camp, pasture their animals, stand watch, and, most importantly, deal with natives.⁷³ So it was that John Carr, the “kid” of his company, spent his

⁶⁹ Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner*, p. 46. A droger is a heavy, slow cargo vessel.

⁷⁰ For more on greenhorns, see chapter 5.

⁷¹ Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner*, p. 19; Kingsley, *Diary of Nelson Kingsley*, pp. 284, 290; Delgado, *To California by Sea*, pp. 35 – 36.

⁷² Edwin Waite, *Reminiscences*, p. 22, State Archive.

⁷³ Byron McKinstry, *The California Gold Rush Overland Diary of Byron McKinstry, 1850 – 1852* (Glendale, Calif.: A.H. Clark Co., 1975), pp. 92 – 100; Decker, *The Diaries of Peter Decker*, p. 55.

days getting ready in Weston, Missouri by practicing with a “‘Pepper-box,’ or Allen’s revolver...as the Comanches were liable to make a raid on us while passing through their hunting-grounds.”⁷⁴ Argonauts, miles out to sea, practiced with their weapons for amusement and to ensure they would be prepared for what they expected to encounter in California, be it a lawless society or marauding Indians, but few expected to have to use their weapons on the journey to the gold fields.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, both groups of migrants clearly believed that at least appearing to be able to dominate a range of non-white others, criminals, or other dangers was a necessary part of their conception of themselves as white men. That they felt this way speaks to their expectations as to the nature of colonial society that would require individuals, rather than the state, to enforce a racial hierarchy, at the point of a gun, if need be.

These attitudes were reflected in the spirit of play that infused both the overland and oversea migrations. With copious amounts of free time, those aboard California-bound vessels had more opportunities to engage in a wider array of play than did their overland counterparts, but the men on the overland trail also seized virtually any opportunity to engage in play that hearkened back to school-boy games or fantasies. Play, of course, is a fairly subjective and fluid concept, encompassing recreational activities but also describing a mindset about those activities. In the mid-nineteenth century, play, at least for school-age boys, embraced a vision of manliness tied to martial manhood.⁷⁶ Many of the recreational activities of the migrants do not fit this

⁷⁴ John Carr, *Pioneer Days in California: Historical and Personal Sketches* (Eureka, Calif.: Times Publishing Company, 1891), p. 35.

⁷⁵ Alfred Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten, 1849 – 1903*, ed. Walter Van Tilburg Clark (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), p. 4; Benjamin Wingate, *Uncertain Country: The Wingate Letters, San Francisco, California – Meriden, New Hampshire, 1851 – 1854*, ed. Stephen Vincent (Berkeley, Calif.: Friends of the Bancroft Library, 2000), p. 13; Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 103, 111, 117 – 118. This is particularly true for children growing up in the West. See Elliott West, *Growing Up With the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), pp. 101 – 117.

categorization. Reading, metaphysical and political debates, lectures, prayer, and religious services were recreational activities strongly tied to the ideology of restrained manhood and explicitly rejected the loss of self-control implicit in childish behavior.⁷⁷ Argonauts seem to have engaged in both restrained and martial recreational activity with approximately equal enthusiasm, which is partly a reflection of the many hours they had to fill during their voyage, but also reflective of the new synthesis of martial and restrained manhood that would emerge in the gold fields.

This division of recreational activity speaks to the multi-faceted gender implications of engaging in play. Migrants' play was a reaction to eastern standards of restrained manliness and an assertion of martial manhood, hence the frequent use of the term "boys" to denote fellow gold rushers. In the East, the term boy was a diminutive, with connotations of paternalistic superiority.⁷⁸ On the migrations west, however, Victorian men seized on the term "boy" as a self-descriptor at the same time that many embraced play as an expression of identity. Playing with the "boys" was therefore a way to clearly differentiate their identity from the expectations of middle-class manhood on the East Coast, dominated as it was by ideas of restrained manhood.

⁷⁷ Kingsley, *Diary of Nelson Kingsley*, pp. 239, 262 – 264; Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, pp. 6, 9; Alexander Barrington, *A California Gold Rush Miscellany Comprising: the Original Journal of Alexander Barrington, Nine Unpublished Letters from the Gold Mines, Reproductions of Early Maps and Towns from California Lithographs; Broadsides, &C.* (San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1934), p. 4. Of course, as Rotundo shows, some young men's groups could serve as vehicles for wrestling, rough play, and other aspects of martial manhood. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 20 – 21, 62 – 74.

⁷⁸ For a diminutive definition of "boy," see Noah Webster and Chauncey A. Goodrich, *An American Dictionary of the English Language: Containing the Whole Vocabulary of the First Edition in Two Volumes Quarto; the Entire Corrections and Improvements of the Second Edition in Two Volumes Royal Octavo; to Which Is Prefixed an Introductory Dissertation on the Origin, History, and Connection, of the Languages of Western Asia and Europe, with an Explanation of the Principles on Which Languages Are Formed* (Springfield, Mass.: George and Charles Merriam, 1855), p. 145. Also telling is the definition of "manly" as "not boyish or womanish." See Chauncey Allen Goodrich and Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language Cont... To Which is Prefixed an Introd. Diss. on the Origin, History and Connection, of the Language of Western Asia and Europa, With an Explanation of the Princ. on Which Languages are Formed* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam, 1853), p. 692.

Even this is too simple, however. Many men on the western migrations were like Alfred Doten, who would race, dance, play cards, and pretend to hunt whales one day, then practice singing, read, and listen to debates the next.⁷⁹ For most men, their rejection of restrained manhood was not unequivocal. Instead, they took what they liked from each type of manhood. For some, this meant an embrace of alcohol and gambling; for others, those activities remained beyond the pale, even as they engaged in practical jokes and gun-play. In each case, however, the goal was the same, the assertion of an identity as a white man who adhered to traits identified with both restrained and martial forms of manhood. In so doing, the play of migrants set the stage for the articulation of new understandings of white manliness in the gold fields.

The link between migrants' play, boyishness, and westward migration was evident in a wide range of their activities. Many migrants evidently felt liberated, as Overlander A. J. McCall did, on having been "relieved from the conventionalities of social life." For McCall, being under "the broad sky, upon the free earth" caused "the wild shout, the boisterous laugh" to well up "from the pent up bosom like a bursting torrent. Grave men become boys again." Further underscoring the link between westward migration, boyhood, and martial manhood, the experience caused McCall to recollect an incident from his "youthful days" in which some boys had run around howling like "wild, untamed savages" and disturbed a pious old neighbor.⁸⁰ Aboard ship, play was evident in the appropriation of aspects of the sailor's rough culture, in particular the line-crossing ceremony that often involving drenching or being shaved with a "very dull" razor with "tar and slush" used for lather.⁸¹ For Richard Hale, the trip west was a

⁷⁹ Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, pp. 4, 6, 8, 9, 11 – 12; John N. Stone, "Brief Notes of a Cape Horn Voyage in 1849" in John E. Pomfret, Charles Henry Ellis, and John N. Stone, *California Gold Rush Voyages, 1848 – 1849: Three Original Narratives* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1954), p. 133.

⁸⁰ McCall, *The Great California Trail in 1849*, p. 13.

⁸¹ Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten* p. 12; Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, pp. 54 – 57.

chance to visit what he called “the most fascinating spot, to me, on the face of the globe! Robinson Crusoe’s island!” that linked the westering experience with “boyhood’s fancy.”⁸² For Hale, visiting the island was a “great adventure,” and the trip quickly came to resemble boyhood play, complete with jungle explorations, daring each other to climb a mountain peak, “some rough sport – storming each other with cabbage balls made from the spongy pulp of the tree,” and a race downhill.⁸³ For these men, playing like boys indicated not immaturity, but some of the earliest attempts to reconcile the demands and appeals of martial and restrained manhood.⁸⁴

Hunting, target practice, and gun-play were other ways that both Overlanders and Argonauts asserted an identity as martial white men. Argonauts and Overlanders alike outfitted themselves with “pistols and Bowie-knives, dirks, and other offensive weapons” prior to departure.⁸⁵ John Faragher has argued that the Overlanders’ frequent hunting was a way to “measur[e] themselves against the already romanticized images of their heroic pioneer fathers and grandfathers traversing the Wilderness Road and the Cumberland Gap.”⁸⁶ It was that, but in measuring themselves against the pioneer archetype, these men were also embracing a standard of manliness that emphasized toughness and martial ability. Washington Peck described his first buffalo hunt in terms deliberately evocative of a military engagement. Men on horseback

⁸² Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner*, p. 46.

⁸³ Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner*, pp. 50 – 54.

⁸⁴ In many ways, this shift anticipates the shift from manliness to masculinity identified by Gail Bederman later in the nineteenth century. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁸⁵ William S. M’Collum, *California as I Saw it: Correspondence, Manuscript, Prospectuses; Sherwood Anderson, a Bibliography: Manuscript, 1 letter; Western Reaches: Misc. Items; Early Day Letters from Aurora: Correspondence, Manuscript* (Buffalo, N.Y.: George H. Derby & Co., 1850), 6. See also Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region*, p. 3.

⁸⁶ Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland*, p. 178.

accompanied by “five or six foot men started to atact the buffaloes” but while “the herd sho[w]ed fight,...they did not come in close contact enough to have a regular battle.”⁸⁷

Unsurprisingly, given attitudes like this, it turned out to be not a very far distance for some Overlanders to go from hunting game to hunting Indians. Hunting enthusiast Alonzo Rathbun’s determination to get a “scalp or to” was realized just over a week later when seventeen of his party ambushed three natives and “shot down” one of them, with “7 or 8 balls through him.”⁸⁸ Though armed conflict between Argonauts and the peoples they encountered *en route* to California were rarer, Argonauts demonstrated a desire to shoot at targets, birds, and even fish.⁸⁹ In one conflict in Panama, arising out of a dispute between American and Panamanian boatmen over control of the river trade, the Argonauts not only took part in the fighting, but one of them, Stephen Davis, made special mention of the martial prowess of a “Rocky Mountain hunter who...with his long, heavy rifle picked off the black rascals who were working the cannon at the fort and doing so much damage to the town.”⁹⁰ The linking of hunting, pioneering, and the violent suppression of non-white peoples functioned just as powerfully on the overseas migration as it did on the overland route and buttressed emerging ideas about the ideal colonial order for the gold fields.

Practical jokes are particularly revealing because, in order for migrants to get the joke, they needed to share values. While practical jokes were a fairly common occurrence on the overland trails, on some of the ships they were so common that at least one passenger claimed he had to do his sketches in the rigging because “the boys are so rogueish they will not let anyone

⁸⁷ Washington Peck, *On the Western Trails: The Overland Diaries of Washington Peck*, ed. Susan M. Erb (Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clark, 2009), p. 68.

⁸⁸ Alonzo Rathbun, Alonzo W. Rathbun Diary 1849 – 1851, pp. 109, 113, Mss 2006/199, BANC.

⁸⁹ Wingate, *Uncertain Country*, p. 13; Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, p. 4, 12.

⁹⁰ Stephen Chapin Davis, *California Gold Rush Merchant; The Journal of Stephen Chapin Davis* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1956), p. 41. On the conflict see McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, p. 57.

have any peace.”⁹¹ This disparity is probably attributable to the copious free time the Argonauts enjoyed compared to the Overlanders. Nevertheless, practical jokes were common on both routes and share a telling consistency.

While many of the jokes were only “the exploits of...unimaginative jokesters,” others had significant cultural meaning.⁹² In case after case, on land and at sea, jokes were designed to ridicule the victim’s claims to martial manhood. A favorite joke on the overland trail involved simulating an Indian attack with the intent to reveal the victim as cowardly or panicky.⁹³ Likewise, the passengers and crew of the *James W. Paige* went to great lengths to simulate a pirate attack, causing the victim to rush up on deck armed only with a pump handle to defend the ship. On the *Edward Everett*, the captain and crew convinced a group of men they could avoid the discomfort of rounding the Horn by hiking from Patagonia to Valparaiso. To be prepared to deal with “cannibals and ferocious wild beasts,” they were drilled by “a sailor, dressed in an old uniform with a sword at his side.” After about an hour they caught on to the joke.⁹⁴ One man on the *Falcon* turned the tables on his tormentors after they paid the black cook to dress up like him and imitate his “Napoleon-like” demeanor. Turning to the laughing passengers, the man remarked to them, “You have sent me a very fit representative of yourselves.” The laughter quickly stopped.⁹⁵

All of these jokes functioned on the basis of a racial and gender punch line. The punch line in each case was the victim’s claim to an identity as a white man vested in ideas of martial

⁹¹ Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, p. 61.

⁹² Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, p. 61.

⁹³ Of course, posing as Indians attacking a wagon train could end very badly as well. See Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, pp. 149 – 151.

⁹⁴ Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, p. 58 – 59.

⁹⁵ Taylor, *Eldorado*, pp. 44 – 45.

manhood. Over-reacting or panicking effectively exploded the victim's claims to martial manhood. That the threat they reacted to was, in many cases, a racialized Other, only underscored the point that these men were not the stuff of which imperial adventurers were made. This is why the *Falcon* passenger's response was so effective. He quickly and efficiently reversed the racial and gender coding of the joke. No longer was his Napoleon-like demeanor ridiculous because a black man (in the eyes of the jokers, someone who could never have the traits of so noble a personage like Napoleon) was imitating him. Instead, the black man's buffoonery now represented the jokers, throwing their own claims to white manliness into question.

Like their predecessors of a decade before, the British Columbia-bound migrants also engaged in play and practical jokes. Arthur Bushby, for instance, recorded taking "two planks out of one man's berth - & tied another mans legs to a post – Had a regular pitch fight with beans & cards &c" *en route* to New York before proceeding to British Columbia.⁹⁶ The prevalence of such activities is hard to determine due to the comparative dearth of records for the British Columbia rush, but it seems likely that a combination of boredom, freedom from the social restraints of home, and a similar reaction against the dominance of wage labor that so heavily influenced the California gold rush had a comparable influence on these later Argonauts.

Boyish play and jokes remained remarkably consistent between the different routes to the gold fields and over a twenty year period. This is because of the way that these activities underscored key aspects of the experience of the gold rush for some, if not most, Victorian men. Boyish play and jokes encouraged men to embrace a martial form of manhood, and to do so in a way that often encouraged them to think of themselves as dominant over a range of racial and

⁹⁶ Arthur Thomas Bushby, "The Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby, 1858 – 1859," in *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (January, 1957), p. 101.

gender others. Men who failed to assert this form of martial manhood and who revealed themselves as gullible, cowardly, or adverse to rough play ran the risk of being the ultimate punch-line to their fellow migrants: the overcivilized and effeminate Easterner, woefully unprepared for either the rigors of mining or to exercise authority in the gold fields.⁹⁷

Meeting the Locals

One of the most important events on the migration to the gold fields was an encounter with natives or Latin Americans. For many migrants, these encounters marked their first experiences with those peoples and are therefore revealing of ways that Victorians thought about themselves and others when confronted with people who did not cleanly fit into their pre-existing social order. In dealing with these encounters, both streams of migrants shared a common ethnocentric viewpoint, manifested in the particular language and assumptions of colonialism. Migrants on the overseas and overland routes also showed a limited range of reactions to meeting natives or Latin Americans, tending toward feelings of fear, disgust, superiority, and curiosity. Even migrant curiosity, however, was often filtered through colonialist assumptions that characterized native and Latin American differences as deficiencies.

Both Overlanders and Argonauts moved through what Mary Louise Pratt has called “contact zones,” which meant that encounters and interactions bore key similarities.⁹⁸ Most obviously, migration allowed only the most transient of relationships, lasting, on average, from a few hours to a few days. As a result, migrants showed little awareness of native or Latin American motivations, perspectives, or situations beyond the most cursory level. These encounters therefore tended both to conform to and to help confirm expectations generated by

⁹⁷ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 3 – 24.

⁹⁸ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

previously held beliefs. Migrants expected to see certain behaviors and practices, and natives and Latin Americans had little opportunity to break through these stereotypes. Migration also conditioned the types of interactions Victorians would have with natives and Latin Americans. The main concern of the Overlanders and Argonauts was movement, and most relationships on both the overseas and overland routes revolved around permitting, denying, or aiding passage through the contact zone. To Victorian migrants, the worth of natives and Latin Americans was largely dependent upon their conformity to colonial expectations, Victorian standards of “civilization,” and the degree to which they either aided or obstructed migration.

In this way, natives and Latin Americans represented a martial threat, but not a manly martial threat. Overlanders worried that the natives, “the great warriors, arabs, and terror of the plains,” would attack them while *en route* to California.⁹⁹ Though some migrants entertained visions of massive battles between “lots, gaubs, fields, and swarms of [natives]” and isolated wagon trains drawn up in a circle to provide protection, for most migrants the actual threat natives represented was through theft or attacks on “some solitary hunter or isolated band, with an occasional effort at stampeding stock.”¹⁰⁰ Natives, in the eyes of most migrants, were not interested in fighting fairly and instead resorted to surprise, darkness, and overwhelming numbers. To the Overlanders, natives were bullies, all threat and intimidation but with very little courage. The men in Sarah Royce’s overland train evidently reached this conclusion. In 1849 Royce’s party encountered “Indians, by the hundreds” who demanded “the payment of a certain sum per head for every emigrant passing through this part of the country.” Instead of paying, the Overlanders “armed themselves with every weapon to be found in their wagons” and marched

⁹⁹ Joseph Goldsborough Bruff, *Gold Rush: The Journals, Drawings and Other Papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff, Captain, Washington City and California Mining Association, April 2, 1849 – July 20, 1851*, eds. Georgia Willis Read, Ruth Louise Gaines, and Frederick Webb Hodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ John Bidwell, *Journey to California*, p. 3, Mss C-E 65:47, BANC; Bancroft, *History of California*, p. 149.

through the native line, threatening to “open fire with all their rifles and revolvers” if the natives attempted to stop them. Royce’s perception of natives as inherently cowardly was confirmed when she believed she saw “in their faces the expression of sullen disappointment, mingled with a half-defiant scowl, that suggested the thought of future night attacks when darkness and thickets should give them greater advantage.”¹⁰¹ The strength of white men was not only in their weaponry, but also in their character. To the Overlanders, while natives might have the weapons, they lacked the character necessary to be a manly threat.

The lack of native martial manliness had other repercussions for how migrants interacted with natives. As Glenda Riley has argued, “the more dangerous and shifty Indians could be portrayed, the more their defeat assured white males of their own prowess. Any tricks the white man could get away with or damage he could inflict on Indians upped his image in other men’s eyes.”¹⁰² This is why Alonzo Rathbun celebrated when seventeen members of his overland party ambushed and killed a native who visited the previous night’s camp, presumably to scavenge anything left behind.¹⁰³ Surprising, ambushing, or tricking natives did not imperil migrants’ claims to white manliness any more than would out-conning a confidence man or out-betting a gambler. Facing down a group of heavily armed natives and ambushing an unarmed native were two aspects of the same logic. Both actions demonstrated that to Victorian migrants, non-white others lacked the essential virtues of white men and so they did not need to be treated with the same respect as would white adversaries.

¹⁰¹ Sarah Bayliss Royce, *A Frontier Lady: Recollections of the Gold Rush and Early California*, ed. Ralph Henry Gabriel (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1932), pp. 13 – 14.

¹⁰² Glenda Riley, *Confronting Race: Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1815 – 1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), p. 216.

¹⁰³ Rathbun, *Diary, 1849 – 1851*, p. 113.

Though similar colonialist assumptions underlay how migrants perceived Latin Americans, they did not occupy the same place in the American psyche as natives. Since at least the conflict between the Powhatan Confederacy and the Jamestown colonists, native military power had remained an ongoing concern for Americans. In contrast, not only was the Latin American world peripheral to American awareness, but when public awareness of the Latin American world jumped to center stage during the Mexican-American war, the events of that conflict underscored the perception that Latin American martial abilities were markedly inferior to those of white men.¹⁰⁴ The Argonauts therefore had little fear when they encountered Latin Americans. Instead, the Argonauts believed that the most likely threat from Latin Americans was petty theft or isolated muggings.¹⁰⁵ When violence broke out in 1851 in Panama, “the cruel wretches” who “seemed to be thirsting for blood” were easily defeated by the outnumbered Argonauts whose weaponry, discipline, and skill made the critical difference, at least according to one of the participants.¹⁰⁶ The “Incidente de la Tajada de Sandia” or the “Watermelon Incident” of 15 April, 1856, had a slightly different narrative, arising from the uneven nature of a conflict that left approximately fifteen Americans and two Panamanians dead. The incident began when a dispute over payment for a slice of watermelon between a Panamanian merchant and an American migrant escalated into an armed skirmish. The Panamanians were again depicted as a blood-thirsty horde, but this time, riding allegations of attacks on white women and deaths during the episode, the United States used the incident as justification for the first in a

¹⁰⁴ Some scholars, such as DeGuzmán have argued that “figures of Spain” have been central to the construction of “American” identity. While I agree that Spain played a more important role in shaping American identity, the historical record is clear that it was of tertiary importance to the figure of the Indian and the Black slave. See DeGuzmán, *Spain’s Long Shadow*.

¹⁰⁵ Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, p. 33; Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner*, p. 40; Benton, Journal, 29 April 1849.

¹⁰⁶ Davis, *California Gold Rush Merchant*, pp. 37 – 43.

long series of military interventions in Panama.¹⁰⁷ These incidents were aberrations, however, and the vast majority of Argonauts never engaged, or really expected to engage, in armed conflict with Latin Americans.

By 1858, the Panama crossing was the route of choice for the vast majority of gold rushers. The Panama Railroad, completed in 1855, transformed the trip across the Isthmus. Whereas gold rushers had previously been forced to undertake a multi-day, strenuous, and dangerous journey by boat and on foot across the Isthmus, the railroad could take the British Columbia-bound gold rushers to the other side in around three hours.¹⁰⁸ In so doing, the railroad destroyed what had been a flourishing native packing and boat industry transporting gold rushers and their belongings between the Atlantic and Pacific.¹⁰⁹ While this had a devastating effect on the local economy, it also encouraged the migrants to have a more positive experience of the Isthmus and its peoples.

Traveling by railroad removed migrants from direct experience with the environment. What had been a potentially deadly trip now became what Peter O'Reilly called a "most delightful drive."¹¹⁰ William King spoke for many of the migrants when he announced that "I cannot compare [the scenery from the railroad] to anything but a fruit and flower garden."¹¹¹ The shift in Victorian perceptions of the landscape from dangerous to picturesque was

¹⁰⁷ McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, pp. 1 -2, 37, 128 – 135.

¹⁰⁸ W. Champness, *To Cariboo and Back* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1865), p. 203.

¹⁰⁹ McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, pp. 54 – 56.

¹¹⁰ Peter O'Reilly, Diary 1859, 15 March 1859, box 4, file 1, A01913, BCARS.

¹¹¹ King, Diary, p. 5. For other examples, see Samuel Bowles, *Our New West: Records of Travel Between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean; Over the Plains – Over the Mountains – Through the Great Interior Basin – Over the Sierra Nevada – To and Up and Down the Pacific Coast; with Details of the Wonderful Natural Scenery, Agriculture, Mines, Business, Social Life, Progress, and Prospects... Including a Full Description of the Pacific Railroad; and of the Life of the Mormons, Indians, and Chinese; with Map, Portraits, and Twelve Full Page Illustrations* (Hartford, Conn.: Hartford Pub. Co., 1869), p. 519; Francis Poole, *Queen Charlotte Islands; A Narrative of Discovery and Adventure in the North Pacific* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1872), p. 30; Bushby, "The Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby," p. 106.

completely dependent upon the railroad. W. Champness, for example, noted that in 1862 “a delay of a few hours, amid the hot and almost steaming morasses and jungles of the district, often produced long continuing or fatal illness.”¹¹² Without the technology of the railroad to separate migrants from the effects of the landscape, the Isthmus remained as dangerous and unattractive as it had for the earlier generation of gold rushers.

This underlying consistency with earlier migrants is evident in British Columbia-bound migrants’ perceptions of the local population. Like their predecessors, these migrants expressed revulsion from, and attraction to, Latin Americans. William Mark, for one, claimed that “it was with difficulty” that he could distinguish the naked children from “the black pigs that were running about in abundance.”¹¹³ Mark’s detailed descriptions of “sweat teeming off” naked or semi-naked locals suggest that, in some instances at least, the naked bodies he encountered had erotic properties.¹¹⁴ Especially concerning to migrants was the Panamanians’ unconcern with their own nakedness. Not only were the children “unblushing and bold with utter absence of covering,” but “seven or eight Woman who ware washing cloths in the River in their clean black Pelts...stood looking at us as unconcerned as if they ware dressed.”¹¹⁵ To the migrants’ horror and curiosity, Panamanians did not even seem to know enough to be ashamed. Commentators singled out Panamanian women for particular attention. George Blair was rare for openly stating

¹¹² Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, p. 203.

¹¹³ W. M. Mark, *Cariboo: A True and Correct Narrative*, (Stockton, Eng: W. M. Wright, 1863), p. 3. These sentiments were mirrored by many other commentators. See, for example Bushby, “The Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby,” pp. 105 – 106; Blair, *Diary*, pp. 5 – 9; John Emmerson, “British Columbia and Vancouver Island: Voyages, Travels & Adventures,” pp. 13, 16 – 17, B188, State Archive; E., Gold Rush Letter, 22 April 1854, folder 12, box 17, State Archive; Bowles, *Our New West*, pp. 518, 520 – 521; Matthew Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia; Their History, Resources, and Prospects* (1865; New York: Arno Press, 1973), p. 8.

¹¹⁴ Mark, *Cariboo*, p. 10. Eric Lott, in particular, has devoted considerable attention to the “ambivalence” of white perceptions of black bodies. See Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹¹⁵ The first quote is from Bowles, *Our New West*, p. 518. Though Bowles was not bound for the gold fields, he did cross the Isthmus with gold miners. The second quote is from Blair, *Diary*, p. 8.

that “some of the Negresses are very Pretty they have not the thick lips or flat nose of the African” and were “Gorgously dressed in fine white Mussling.”¹¹⁶ Far more common were descriptions of women smoking, dressing in “sleazy white gowns,” and prostituting themselves.¹¹⁷ By emphasizing the women’s “naked” bodies, commentators like Mark and Blair positioned Panamanians as an eroticized and inferior other.

British Columbia-bound Argonauts also emphasized the familiar tropes of Latin American laziness and degradation. In account after account, migrants described locals as lazy, idle, and indolent.¹¹⁸ Despite the greater attention paid to notions of biological difference, migrants still put considerable emphasis on environmental and cultural factors in determining the nature of Panamanians. As Samuel Bowles summarized, “The climate and their rude wants invite a lazy, sensual life, and such is theirs.”¹¹⁹ Latin American laziness was explicitly contrasted with the energy of whites, especially as manifested by the railroad and domination of what Samuel Bowles called the “innovations and elevations of commerce” on the Isthmus.¹²⁰ In spite of accounts that “the streets were filled with women selling fruit, cake and bread, cigars, wine and all sorts of stuff,” Panamanian economic activity was dismissed as “pestering” or of less importance than the industries dominated by foreign white men.¹²¹

Ultimately, natives and Latin Americans occupied consistent, but distinct, positions in the Victorian colonialist framework throughout both gold rushes. By the mid-nineteenth century

¹¹⁶ Blair, *Diary*, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ The quote is from Bowles, *Our New West*, p. 518. See also Emerson, “British Columbia and Vancouver Island,” pp. 13 – 14.

¹¹⁸ Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, p. 203; Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, p. 8; Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed*, pp. 11 – 12.

¹¹⁹ Bowles, *Our New West*, p. 520.

¹²⁰ Bowles, *Our New West*, p. 518. See also Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, p. 204.

¹²¹ King, *Diary*, p. 4. The “pestering” comment comes from John Cowley, *Diary* 1862, 30 April, 1862, E/B/C832, BCARS.

encounters with natives were framed in a progressive paradigm, with natives representing very little threat to the ultimate triumph of the white man's civilization. As Anne McClintock notes, however, "the idea of progress that illuminated the nineteenth-century was shadowed by its somber side...the idea of degeneration."¹²² In place of natives, by the mid-nineteenth century, Victorians had turned to an array of degenerate others, including the peoples of Latin America, to demonstrate the perils of a variety of corrupting influences.¹²³ While the Victorian encounter with natives took place within the framework of the progress and ultimate triumph of white civilization, the encounter with Latin Americans took place within the framework of degeneration and threats to white civilization. These significantly different perspectives conditioned how Victorians saw, acted, and thought about the peoples and places they encountered.

Scholars have concluded that nineteenth-century Victorians, either positively or negatively, viewed natives through the lens of a savagery/civilization dichotomy that placed natives as properly outside, and opposed to, the "white man's civilization."¹²⁴ For the Overlanders, the Missouri River and the entry onto the Great Plains marked the boundary between the white man's civilization with its developed landscape and the natives' savagery and untamed wilderness. The Overlander Washington Peck, for example, when crossing the "Missouria...stopped and looked back to take a last fare well of sivilization, and all the trace that

¹²² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 46.

¹²³ Ivan Jaksic, *The Hispanic World and American Intellectual Life, 1820 – 1880* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1 – 3, 6, 10, 16, 134; DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow*, pp. xxviii, 23 – 25, 43, 66, 70 – 72.

¹²⁴ Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex," 698 – 714; Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, pp. 14 – 16, 88 – 90; James Rawls, *Indians of California: The Changing Image* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), p. 28. Paige Raibmon describes some associated binaries in her *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 7.

we could discover of it with all the advantages that cluster around.”¹²⁵ In the mid-nineteenth century, the idea that native contact with civilization degraded them from “Noble” to “Ignoble Savages” had widespread currency. In other words, the concern about degradation in native/white encounters was a concern for natives, not for white men. Overlanders consistently saw the natives they encountered close to the starting points in Missouri (and whom had more contact with “civilization”) as degraded while the more remote Sioux and other Plains natives were held up as ideal representations of the Noble Savage.¹²⁶

Victorians did not see Latin Americans, on the other hand, as savages susceptible to corruption by civilization. Instead they were the degraded remnants of a fallen civilization. To some Victorians, the fallen civilization was that of the Mayans, Aztecs, Inca, or other indigenous culture.¹²⁷ More common was the view that Spanish civilization, especially in the Americas, had stagnated and slowly declined.¹²⁸ Regardless of whether it was a declining indigenous or Spanish civilization, or a combination of the two, the crucial point was that Latin Americans had once had civilization and retained some traces of it. A desire to justify attempted colonial domination shaped Victorian perspectives of both natives and Latin Americans, but in slightly different ways. The migrants’ experiences on the way to gold encouraged them to think of natives as antithetical to the colonial project and Latin Americans, if present, as potentially suitable as colonial subjects. This difference may help to explain the very different trajectories of those two groups in California.

¹²⁵ Peck, *On the Western Trails*, p. 61.

¹²⁶ Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, pp. 19, 25, 34 – 35, 38; Billington, *Land of Savagery*, pp. 124 – 128; McCall, *The Great California Trail in 1849*, p. 31.

¹²⁷ Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America*; Stone, “Brief Notes,” p. 140 – 146; Jaksic, *The Hispanic World*, pp. 4, 134.

¹²⁸ Jaksic, *The Hispanic World*, pp. 1 – 3, 6, 10, 16, 134; McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, pp. 38 – 42.

Local Environments

Contrasting views of the natural and built environments of natives and Latin Americans shaped Victorian attitudes. The role of the environment in molding Victorian perceptions of natives was more indirect than in the case of Latin Americans. For Victorians, natives were strongly associated with wilderness. Regardless of whether these environments were seen as welcoming landscapes waiting to be harnessed by white men or as wilds filled with dangerous beasts and men, the landscapes, like their inhabitants, were positioned as the opposite of civilized farmland.¹²⁹ But while the primary environmental factor influencing Victorian perceptions of natives was distance from a “civilized” landscape, the unique character of the environment in which the natives lived also had meaning for Victorians.

The Plains natives encountered by the Overlanders, for instance, had adopted a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle heavily dependent upon the horse and buffalo. Americans did not realize that this was a relatively recent adaptation and instead linked this lifestyle to essential characteristics. Overlanders particularly admired the hunting prowess of Plains natives, seeing in the buffalo a suitably challenging and impressive prey.¹³⁰ Nomadism therefore seemed to represent both the antithesis of civilization and the potential for military prowess. In stark contrast, Victorian gold rushers saw the mainly pedestrian natives of California and the Great Basin, whom they pejoratively labeled “Diggers,” as cowardly and poor hunters who ate, among

¹²⁹ Billington, *Land of Savagery*, pp. 1 – 20; Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 54 – 55; Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, p. 97.

¹³⁰ Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, p. 85; McKimstry, *The California Gold Rush Overland Diary of Byron McKimstry*, p. 107; Peck, *On the Western Trails*, p. 68; Herman Reinhart, *The Golden Frontier: The Recollections of Herman Francis Reinhart, 1851 – 1869* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), p. 11; Lorenzo Sawyer, *Way Sketches; Containing Incidents of Travel Across the Plains from St. Joseph to California in 1850, with Letters Describing Life and Conditions in the Gold Region* (New York: E. Eberstadt, 1926), pp. 35 – 36.

other things, insects.¹³¹ The link between natives, savagery, and the wilderness remained consistent, but the contrast Victorians perceived between Plains natives and Diggers would help to justify their low opinions of the latter in California, which would, in turn, help to justify confining California natives to the bottom tier of the colonial hierarchy.

The relationship between the character of Latin Americans and the environment, particularly in Central America, was more straight-forward: a lush environment was allegedly a direct cause of Latin Americans' perceived decadence. The linking of tropical environments to moral, social, and physical decay had a long lineage in European thought.¹³² In 1849, while crossing the Isthmus, William M'Collum summed up this prevailing thought when he observed that "idleness and sloth meet you at every turn; you feel that you are in the midst of an inferior race of men, enervated by the climate, whom bountiful nature has made stolid and indolent, by exempting them from the necessity of enterprise and industry."¹³³

It was in built environments that Victorians saw clear indicators of the different positions of natives and Latin Americans *vis-à-vis* standards of white civilization. For the migrants, absence characterized the built environment of natives. When Overlanders did mention native buildings, they used words such as "camp," "wigwam," "lodge," and most frequently "hut" to describe native buildings in a way that underscored their perceived impermanence, shoddy construction, and, most importantly, their opposition to Victorian "houses." Near the start of his

¹³¹ Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, p. 172; Rawls, *Indians of California*, pp. 28 – 30, 49, 69, 186 – 200.

¹³² Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies*, pp. 13 – 14, 28 – 29, 40 – 41.

¹³³ M'Collum, *California as I Saw it*, p. 8. See also Elisha Smith Capron, *History Of California, From its Discovery to the Present Time: Comprising also a Full Description of its Climate, Surface, Soil, Rivers, Towns ... Agriculture, Commerce, Mines, Mining, &C., With a Journal of the Voyage from New York, via Nicaragua, to San Francisco, and Back, via Panama...* (Cleveland, Ohio: Jewett, Proctor and Worthington, 1854), p. 259; James Morison, *By Sea to San Francisco: 1849 – 1850: The Journal of Dr. James Morison* (Memphis, Tenn.: Memphis State University Press, 1977), p. 9; Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 24; G. B. Worden to Ira Brown, 23 April 1849, Mss C-B 547:138, BANC; John Marsh Smith, Manuscript 308, John Marsh Smith Collection, State Archive.

1849 journey, Peter Decker made the comparison explicit when he contrasted the “4 or 5 miserable rush thatched huts” and their “few filthy looking ‘natives’” to the homes and church nearby, calling the latter the “prettiest place I have seen.” Similarly, when migrants described the world they had left, they used either “home” or “house” to designate the buildings, terms that connoted both the physical building and the idea of the domestic hearth, the feminine refuge for men from the harsh realities outside the home.¹³⁴ In so doing they linked a particular vision of domesticity, which itself was considered an integral part of civilization, to a particular architectural style. The built environment of the natives therefore confirmed for many Victorians the savagery/civilization dichotomy that lay at the heart of their vision of westward expansion as progress. That natives lacked suitable architecture marked them, in the eyes of Victorians, as savage, and therefore as non-white and inferior.

Architecture was also a frequent component of Argonaut accounts of Latin America but, unlike descriptions of the built environment of natives, the descriptions of the built environment of Latin America did not suggest a savagery/civilization dichotomy. This is evident in Argonaut descriptions of Latin American towns and streets, churches, and fortifications. In each case, the description of the built environment suggests that while Latin America once had “civilization,” it had long since fallen into disrepair by the time that the Argonauts arrived. Argonauts frequently

¹³⁴ Decker, *The Diaries of Peter Decker*, p. 61; Millington, *Journal of a California Miner*, 26 May 1850; Bruff, *Gold Rush*, pp. 75 – 77; William B. Lorton, *Diaries and Newspaper Clippings*, Mss- C-F 190, BANC, p. 85; Charles Ross Parke, *Dreams to Dust: A Diary of the California Gold Rush, 1859 – 1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 57; Prentice Mulford, *Prentice Mulford's Story*, Frederic Remington, ed. (1889; Oakland, Calif: Biobooks, 1953), p. 2; Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp. 6, 28, 31 – 37; Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 244 – 246.

referred to Latin American homes as aesthetically unappealing “huts” of shoddy construction.¹³⁵ Even when they labeled Latin American homes as houses, Argonauts described them as “miserable & going to decay.”¹³⁶ To the Argonauts, the seemingly poor construction of the homes and the “very narrow, very filthy and very gloomy” streets of Latin American cities were a far cry from their own ideal for urban spaces.¹³⁷ The difference is apparent in one traveler’s account of finding a “house” on the way to Panama that was the “first evidence of civilization we have seen.” The house, “clapboarded, shingled and painted white [and]...conveniently furnished,” turned out to be owned by Americans.¹³⁸ Argonauts judged Latin American living spaces against their own standards and found them wanting, and used the perceived character of the inhabitants to explain this deficiency. A white man, it was presumed, would either leave or improve the place, a sentiment echoed by Abner Spencer when he described Chagres as “a dirty hole of a place not for an Ohioan to live in.”¹³⁹

As with other aspects of the built environment, the Argonauts did not see the churches as separate from the people who inhabited them. Instead, to Victorian Protestants, a Roman Catholic church was the concrete manifestation of the corruption of the priests and their

¹³⁵ D. B. Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water* (1857; New York: Arno Press, 1974), pp. 73 – 74; Mary Jane Megquier, *Apron Full of Gold; The Letters of Mary Jane Megquier from San Francisco, 1849 – 1856*, ed. Robert Glass Cleland (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1949), p. 14; Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 24; Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, p. 34; Howard C. Gardiner, *In Pursuit of the Golden Dream; Reminiscences of San Francisco and the Northern and Southern Mines, 1849 – 1857*, ed. Dale Lowell Morgan (Stoughton, Mass: Western Hemisphere, 1970), p. 34; Jonathan Frost Locke, Diary, 9 April, 1849, Jonathan Frost Locke Papers, Film 3085, BANC; Joseph Lamson, *Round Cape Horn. Voyage of the Passenger-Ship James W. Paige, from Maine to California in the Year 1852* (Bangor, Maine: Press of O.F. & W.H. Knowles, 1878), p. 77; Waite, *Reminiscences*, p. 27.

¹³⁶ John E. Pomfret, “Journal of a Voyage from New York to Panama via Rio Valparaiso Callao & Peyta, Onboard the US Mail Steam Ship *California* Commanded by [Cleveland] Forbes – A.D. 1848,” in John E. Pomfret, Charles Henry Ellis, and John N. Stone, *California Gold Rush Voyages, 1848 – 1849: Three Original Narratives* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1954), p. 223.

¹³⁷ Stone, “Brief Notes,” p. 142.

¹³⁸ Capron, *History Of California*, p. 259; Morison, *By Sea to San Francisco*, p. 281.

¹³⁹ Abner Spencer to Lyman Turrell and Joseph C. Snow, 8 September 1850, Mss C-B 547:97, BANC.

deception of the people. To the Argonauts it seemed as though only Victorians, blessed to be coming from a society “where God is worshiped by his people in sincerity and truth,” could see the obvious signs of false worship.¹⁴⁰ This corruption was manifested in the “crumbling”¹⁴¹ churches and in cathedrals “tumbling to decay.”¹⁴² The “ornament” and “tinsel” of the churches and their dilapidated appearance suggested that Latin American religious belief was about form, not substance.¹⁴³ Reflecting this trope, almost all discussions of Latin American priests mentioned their supposed predilections for worldly, indeed, immoral, delights. In multiple accounts, priests are described as dancing, courting women, cockfighting, and gambling, a

¹⁴⁰ Moses Gage Leonard, *Moses Gage Leonard Diary, 1849 – 1850*, p. 30, Mss 2006/170, BANC.

¹⁴¹ Pomfret, “Journal of a Voyage from New York to Panama,” p. 223.

¹⁴² Megquier, *Apron Full of Gold*, p. 16.

¹⁴³ Martha Morgan, *A Trip Across the Plains in the Year 1849; with Notes of a Voyage to California, by Way of Panama; also, Some Spiritual Songs, &c.* (San Francisco: Pioneer Press, 1864), p. 24; Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water*, p. 77; Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 39.

reflection of the larger population's degradation.¹⁴⁴ To the Argonauts, without "proper" religious beliefs and practices the peoples of Latin America were deeply immoral.¹⁴⁵

In the eyes of Argonauts, the racial characteristics of many of the inhabitants, their Catholic religious faith, and the environment itself threatened Latin American "civilization." Latin American military fortifications held particular fascination for Argonauts who saw them as a "true index to the state of the country" and their "present condition a lamentable commentary on the ruthless spirit that has pervaded the countries of South America."¹⁴⁶ Argonauts described Latin American fortifications as "castles" and stressed the decay of the "old" fortifications in the

¹⁴⁴ Morison, *By Sea to San Francisco*, p. 47; Waite, *Reminiscences*, 36 – 37; John M. Letts, *A Pictorial View of California: Including a Description of the Panama and Nicaragua Routes, with Information and Advice Interesting to All, Particularly Those Who Intend to Visit the Golden Region, by a Returned Californian* (New York: H. Bill, 1853), pp. 33 – 35; Megquier, *Apron Full of Gold*, pp. 16 – 17; Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, p. 41; Leonard, *Diary*, pp. 25 – 31; James S. Barnes, *Life Adventures & Experiences in California, Being the Letters of James S. Barnes (Argonaut of '49) in Detail of the Voyage to the New El Dorado, Life at the Diggings, at San Francisco and Elsewhere in the Land of Gold, 1849 – 1857*, State Archive, p. 11.

¹⁴⁵ The idea of Latin American degeneration had a parallel on the overland journey in Salt Lake City. In the eyes of Protestant Americans, religious extremism and sexual deviancy characterized the Mormon faith, and this corruption of Christianity was manifested in the built environment of Salt Lake City, despite its otherwise "American" character. On nineteenth-century Protestant images of Mormonism, see David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Countersubversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature" in *Conspiracy: The Fear of Subversion in American History*, eds. Richard Orr Curry and Thomas M. Brown (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), pp. 64 – 65, 72 – 74, 76; Brigham D. Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners in Great Salt Lake City, 1849 and 1850* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), pp. 51, 67, 105 – 106, 112, 123 – 124; Norman Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850 – 1859* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 10 – 12. On the link between religious extremism and degeneration, see Jaksic, *The Hispanic World*, pp. 16, 134 – 136; David Anderson, *Mansex Fine: Manliness and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 10 – 13, 36 – 38; Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, p. 167; Riley, *Confronting Race*, p. 228; Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners*, pp. 67, 105 – 106, 123 – 124; McCall, *The Great California Trail in 1849*, pp. 56, 58 – 59. Langworthy, a minister who stopped for a week in Salt Lake City, gave a 12-point list of "migrant complaints" against the Mormons. Langworthy, *Scenery of the Plains*, pp. 81 – 84. On the "home-like appearance" of the city, see Carr, *Pioneer Days*, p. 45; McCall, *The Great California Trail in 1849*, p. 56; Madsen, *Gold Rush Sojourners*, pp. 34, 42. On the underlying differences in the built environment of Salt Lake City, see Carr, *Pioneer Days*, p. 45. Mark Manlove, *Gold Rush Reminiscences*, p. 4, State Archive; Finely McDiarmid, *Letters to My Wife* (Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 1997), pp. 46 – 49.

¹⁴⁶ Letts, *A Pictorial View of California*, p. 33.

face of an untamed nature.¹⁴⁷ The decay and rottenness of “Old Spain” was reflected in “these walls and towers that once helped to mark its greatness even in this far off Colony [that now] is too feeble for foreign conquest.”¹⁴⁸ Argonauts found even less to admire in the inhabitants of the fortifications, describing them as in “their habits & appearance... similar to our Indians,”¹⁴⁹ “coal black negroes,”¹⁵⁰ or “as if they were the descendants of Falstaff’s company.”¹⁵¹ In each case, the soldiers were described so that their physical appearance mirrored their assumed internal weaknesses and the evident weakness of the fortifications.

As they had for the California-bound migrants, the dominant factors shaping British Columbia-bound migrants’ perceptions of the built environment were the natural environment and the legacy of Spanish rule. As Samuel Bowles observed, “there was a flavor of Spanish about everything, however; the food, the churches, the stores, the town generally; decayed, effete, luxuriant, tropical Spanish.”¹⁵² Like their predecessors, British Columbia-bound migrants found Latin America streets “narrow,”¹⁵³ the homes “mere log-huts of one or two rooms, and roofed with shingles or palm-leaves,”¹⁵⁴ and the churches, “ancient, cheap and moss-grown, won no veneration except for their antiquity.”¹⁵⁵ However, while there was still considerable interest in ruined buildings and other evidence of the decayed Spanish and Mesoamerican civilizations,

¹⁴⁷ Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 24; Megquier, *Apron Full of Gold*, p. 10 – 12; Wingate, *Uncertain Country*, p. 14; William R. Olden from Panama, 13 May, 1849, William R. Olden Gold Rush Letters; Pioneer Letters, 1849 – 1877, State Archive; Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region*, pp. 12 – 13; Taylor, *Eldorado*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁸ M’Collum, *California as I Saw it*, p. 22. See also Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, p. 31.

¹⁴⁹ Ellis, “Journal of a Voyage,” p. 48.

¹⁵⁰ Stone, “Brief Notes,” p. 109 – 110.

¹⁵¹ M’Collum, *California as I Saw it*, p. 19.

¹⁵² Bowles, *Our New West*, p. 518.

¹⁵³ Kinahan Cornwallis, *The New El Dorado, or, British Columbia* (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1858), p. 178.

¹⁵⁴ Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, p. 203.

¹⁵⁵ Bowles, *Our New West*, p. 518.

very little attention was paid to the old Spanish forts and other military installations.¹⁵⁶ Overall, the continued emphasis on living spaces and religious spaces mirrored the continuing emphasis on the cultural beliefs and social practices of the Latin Americans. At the same time, in the aftermath of armed American intervention following the Watermelon Incident of 1856, the weakness of the Panamanian state and of its military defenses was obvious. Whereas many of the earlier accounts of defensive fortifications in Panama had often underscored their vulnerability, Argonauts now had little need to make the same point. By 1858, Panama's sovereignty was clearly compromised. The corresponding growth in the economic, political, and military power of the region's white inhabitants, most obviously manifested by the Panama Railroad Company, further underscored the growing irrelevance of the Panamanian state, and therefore the need for migrants to comment on its weakness.¹⁵⁷

That the Overlanders did not have a similar reaction to the confluence of the landscape and the native built environment indicates that two very different narratives of colonialism were at work in the two contexts. The narrative in the American West was of civilization *replacing* savagery. This assumption underlay an American Indian policy that sought to remove natives from contact with civilization either through removal to Indian Territory, isolation on reservations, or complete eradication, as was the case in California.¹⁵⁸ As a strategy, assimilation

¹⁵⁶ William King is one of the few to note the decaying walls of Panama City. See King, *Diary*, p. 5. On continued interest in ruined buildings generally, see Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed*, p. 9; Arthur Farwell, "Diary of Arthur Stanhope Farwell, Jan. 10 1864 – Jan. 25, 1867," vol. 3, 10 February, 1864, Mss 1187, BCARS; Emerson, "British Columbia and Vancouver Island," p. 18; E., Gold Rush Letter, 22 April, 1854.

¹⁵⁷ By far the best discussion of the impact of colonialism in Panama during this period is McGuinness, *Path of Empire*.

¹⁵⁸ For a summary of American Indian policy see: Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 183 – 392, *passim*. For California, see Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, pp. 86, 122 – 123, 126 – 145.

did not achieve prominence until after the Civil War and even then the idea that the natives were a doomed race continued to have widespread influence into the twentieth century.¹⁵⁹

The narrative in Latin America was not of replacement but of *regeneration*. By having some degree of civilization, Latin America emerged as a place where both the physical and social landscape could be transformed by the right sort of colonial presence. As John Forster stated in regard to Panama, “a new spirit has awakened the dormant energy of her people: and her grass-grown streets, so long the abode of silence are crowded with a busy populace. She is indebted to the conquest of California, the discovery of gold and the great Exodus of our people for her regeneration.”¹⁶⁰ Regeneration would not require massive white immigration, either. Instead, Victorians believed that a small cadre of enterprising white men could seize control and remake Latin America.¹⁶¹ Anecdotal evidence seemed to confirm this. Argonauts recorded meeting with a variety of Americans and Europeans who had arrived previously in Latin America and risen to positions of economic and social dominance, such as “Capt Cithcart,” an American living in Rio de Janeiro who had “amassed considerable of a Fortune” and owned “a large plantation and Several negro Slaves.”¹⁶² At the same time, while many accounts noted the growing economic dominance of foreigners, particularly in cities like Panama, other accounts also noted that many of these men were not exactly of the requisite character to regenerate Panama. They were, as the Englishman Frank Marryat put it, “as drunken and as reckless a set of

¹⁵⁹ Prucha, *The Great Father*, pp. 485 – 500, 609 – 761, passim.

¹⁶⁰ John Forster quoted in McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, p. 42. McGuinness also identifies the theme of regeneration.

¹⁶¹ In reality, the situation in Panama was partially the result of collaboration between Panamanian authorities and U.S. citizens. However, the average visitor seems to have been unaware of this. See McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, pp. 10, 11, 73 – 77. For a discussion of American filibustering campaigns, see Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*.

¹⁶² Errol Wayne Stevens, *Incidents of a Voyage to California, 1849: A Diary Aboard the Bark Hersilia, and in Sacramento, 1850* (Los Angeles: Western History Association, 1987), p. 24.

villains as one could see anywhere.”¹⁶³ Successful colonial dominance in Latin America therefore would rely on the presence of a small body of energetic and properly manly white men, but it was unclear when or if they would arrive.

Of course, Argonauts bound for British Columbia were not going to a location with a significant history of Spanish colonization or Latin American presence.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, while their experiences in Latin America did help reinforce an abstract racial and gender hierarchy that would inform their attitudes toward a range of non-whites in British Columbia, the Isthmus crossing is also significant as an early and sustained encounter between British migrants and their American “cousins.” The British were of two minds about the Americans they encountered in Latin America. On the one hand, Americans, especially the Yankees, seemed to embody everything the Panamanians were not, particularly in the realm of economic activity. Bowles, an American himself, noted that not only was trade carried on under “English and American superintendence,” but the “well-built stations with handsome yards” were also the product of “American occupants.” Bowles explicitly contrasted these residences with the “crowded negro hamlets and villages.”¹⁶⁵ Reginald Pidcock, a British subject, agreed, claiming that “nearly all the Hotels and Restaurants are kept by Americans and are generally very clean and comfortable.”¹⁶⁶ When compared to the Latin American population, some British subjects perceived Americans in a relatively positive manner.

¹⁶³ Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Spain had maintained a short-lived outpost on the West Coast of Vancouver Island on Nootka Sound, but this outpost was evacuated in 1795 and left little impact. Of more significance was the population of Latin Americans, particularly Mexican mule packers, who went North to take part in the gold rush. However, their numbers remained small and Victorians rarely commented on them. One of the few studies to devote attention to this population is Roderick J. Barman, “Packing in British Columbia: Transport on a Resource Frontier,” *The Journal of Transport History* 21, no. 2 (September, 2000): pp. 140 – 167, especially pp. 147 – 151.

¹⁶⁵ Bowles, *Our New West*, pp. 517 – 520.

¹⁶⁶ Reginald Pidcock, *Adventures in Vancouver 1862 – 1868*, p. 3, vol. 4b, box 2, Mss 0728, BCARS.

On the other hand, some British subjects found these early encounters with Americans profoundly disturbing. British migrants who voiced displeasure with Americans tended to focus on their behavior and attitude. Cecil Buckley quickly concluded that “the Americans certainly are an ugly race of people, and no mistake,” an opinion that he “d[id] not think they would attempt to deny,...it is too evident.”¹⁶⁷ In Panama, Buckley found the Americans he encountered rude, brutal, uncivil, and often drunk.¹⁶⁸ On-board ship, John Emmerson recorded that “the Canadians looked upon us Englishmen as their own people, and treated us with the greatest kindness and consideration; while the Americans looked down upon us with supreme contempt, and sought for an opportunity to insult us, both nationally and individually.”¹⁶⁹ Particularly aggravating for Emmerson was that “the Americans generally manifest a bullying, domineering, overbearing manner, arising from the idea they entertain of their superiority over all the world,” and consequently failed to properly acknowledge Britain’s dominant position.¹⁷⁰

Americans challenged how British subjects like Emmerson and Buckley believed respectable white men should act. That they did so while simultaneously asserting the superiority of American society to British society was just as, if not more, aggravating. Much of what men like Emmerson and Buckley were actually upset about was the more democratic nature of American society, manifested through such activities as drinking rituals which enforced egalitarianism at the bar.¹⁷¹ Of course this egalitarianism was racially coded, as Byron Johnson discovered when he witnessed an American bartender denying a black man a drink.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Buckley, Journal, 10 May, 1862.

¹⁶⁸ Buckley, Journal, 10, 14 May 1862.

¹⁶⁹ Emmerson, “British Columbia and Vancouver Island,” p. 26.

¹⁷⁰ Emmerson, “British Columbia and Vancouver Island,” p. 26.

¹⁷¹ Buckley, Journal, 10 May, 14 May 1862.

¹⁷² Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed*, p. 8.

Thus, even before arriving at San Francisco, the British Columbia-bound Argonauts had experienced Latin America, which reinforced pre-existing ideas of white superiority. Many of the British subjects among the Argonauts also had the first opportunity to experience Americans, their attitudes and social customs. While some had found this experience agreeable, a considerable portion arrived in San Francisco skeptical about the worth of their “cousins.”

Arriving in California

When the migrants arrived in California, they soon discovered that the ideas they had formed before departure and along their journey would only partially serve them. The reality of gold rush society seems to have continually overwhelmed each new group of arrivals. Initially however, migrants could only understand the differences of gold rush society by contrasting their perceptions of California with the places they had left and the places they had traveled through. In so doing, new arrivals emphasized the difference between themselves and the natives and Latin Americans they had encountered.

The Argonauts, passing through the Golden Gates to San Francisco, arrived in what Gunther Barth has evocatively described as an “instant city [that] came into existence Athena-like, full-blown and self-reliant.”¹⁷³ In San Francisco “everything bore evidence of newness, and the greater part of the city presented a make shift and temporary appearance.”¹⁷⁴ For commentator after commentator, the speed at which San Francisco was being built or, in their language, “progressing,” set it apart from any other city they had encountered.¹⁷⁵ For many like

¹⁷³ Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. xxii.

¹⁷⁴ Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 54.

¹⁷⁵ *San Francisco As It Is: Manuscript*, p. 1, folder 1, box 2140, State Archive.

John Letts, the city was, like built environments on the journey to the gold fields, indicative of the character of its inhabitants. As Letts described San Francisco

the scene around me was animated. Everything appeared to be propelled by the most indomitable perseverance. The frame of a house would be taken from the ship in the morning, and at night it was fully tenanted. The clatter of the innumerable hammers, each answered by a thousand echoes, seemed the music by which the city was being marshaled into existence.¹⁷⁶

The “exuberant life, energy and enterprise of the place” marked San Francisco as different from the Atlantic world the migrants had left and the Latin American world through which they had passed.¹⁷⁷ As one account put it, “in no city in the world, perhaps, has more been accomplished in the same space of time, by the enterprising spirit of its inhabitants, than in the city of San Francisco.”¹⁷⁸ Descriptions of San Francisco stood in stark contrast to descriptions of Latin American settlements with their crumbling fortifications, their decaying churches, and “very narrow, very filthy, and very gloomy” streets occupied by “an inert race.”¹⁷⁹

To the newly arrived Argonauts, the population of San Francisco seemed to be the key to difference between California, which had a long history of Spanish colonization and a significant Latin American population, and Latin America. In California, and especially San Francisco, Argonauts saw the proof of their assertion that a small population of energetic white men could rejuvenate and reshape a degraded Latin American society.

The key to this process was the Yankee population from the northeast who dominated California demographically and symbolically. In San Francisco, the stereotypical Yankee was “easily detected by his bustling habits, nasal intonation, and eccentric speculations.” It seemed

¹⁷⁶ Letts, *A Pictorial View of California*, p. 47.

¹⁷⁷ Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, p. 216.

¹⁷⁸ *San Francisco As It Is: Manuscript*, p. 1.

¹⁷⁹ Stone, “Brief Notes,” p. 142; Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, p. 9.

to some observers (many of whom were from New England themselves) that the Yankees' "indomitable assiduity" would eventually lead them to "manufacture the means of a livelihood, and lay even the foundation of a fortune." As a result of this energy and enterprise, Yankees were "in most cases the instigators of every thing permanent and good" in the city.¹⁸⁰ But San Francisco was not simply New York on the Pacific. Instead, the "California Yankee" was the "New England Yankee" but "with all his peculiar power centupled. All his sharpness is sharpened; all his 'cuteness is more 'cute.'"¹⁸¹ Richard Hale attributed the difference to the fact that "in the east the Yankee was walled about by forms, creeds and conventions....But here there were no questions asked about pedigree. 'Can he fill the position? If he can, well and good, if not – let us have one who can fill it.'"¹⁸² Victorian men in California believed that the lack of "forms, creeds and conventions," that is, of the social supports that buttressed ideas of restrained manhood, allowed them to reach their full potential, to become wealthy, to succeed or fail on their own merits. In other words, gold rush society seemed to offer the opportunity for Victorian men to lay claim to an identity as martial white men in a way they could not in the supposedly more restrictive east.

At the same time that some accounts celebrated the rapidity with which San Francisco was being built, the nature of the built environment also raised concerns for other observers. From a practical standpoint, the built environment of San Francisco was hardly preferably to the oft-criticized built environment of Panama City and other Latin American settlements.

¹⁸⁰ Pringle Shaw, *Ramblings in California: Containing a Description of the Country, Life at the Mines, State of Society, &c. Interspersed with Characteristic Anecdotes, and Sketches from Life* (Toronto: J. Bain, [1856?]), p. 26. See also Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, p. 25 – 30, 258; William Redmond Ryan, *Personal Adventures in Upper and Lower California, in 1848-9* vol. II, (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 173 – 175, 250; Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out*, pp. 257 – 252; Alonzo Delano, *Pen Knife Sketches; or, Chips of the Old Block, a Series of Original Illustrated Letters, Written by one of California's Pioneer Miners* (Sacramento, Calif.: Published at The Union office, 1853), p. 43.

¹⁸¹ Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out*, p. 257.

¹⁸² Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner*, p. 120.

Especially in the early years of the rush, newly arrived Argonauts found instead of “substantial brick buildings,”¹⁸³ San Francisco was “a mass of wooden hovels and cloth tents.”¹⁸⁴ The streets were hardly ideal either, being crowded, dirty, prone to mud and flooding, and, in the case of the wooden streets built on pilings over the bay, filled with dangerous holes.¹⁸⁵ Yet commentators who recognized that the “go ahead” attitude of San Francisco’s inhabitants resulted in buildings that “exhibit[ed] evidence that they were put up in a hurry” did not attach the same negative traits to San Francisco’s inhabitants as they had to Latin Americans.¹⁸⁶ Instead, this disorder could be tolerated, even celebrated, as evidence of the “go ahead” spirit of San Francisco because Victorians saw it as transitory stage. The very haste that made the built environment of San Francisco so problematic also ensured that it could not be mistaken for the built environment of Latin America. Where Latin American buildings were dilapidated due to lack of energy and care, San Francisco’s shoddy buildings and streets were the product of energy and ambition. While they might lament the current condition of the city, Victorian residents of San Francisco were confident that the city would eventually become a counterpart of the major cities along the Atlantic.

¹⁸³ Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 54. On the desirability of brick construction see Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, p. 13. For a discussion of the development of “fireproof” buildings, mainly focused on the east coast, see Sara E. Wermiel, *The Fireproof Building: Technology and Public Safety in the Nineteenth-Century American City* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), particularly chapters 1 and 2. It should be noted that in California, when commentators referred to brick buildings, they were talking about buildings with brick exteriors, not the wholly brick buildings that Wermiel describes as fireproof. In other words, buildings that were “fire resistant” on the east coast would be “fire proof” in San Francisco.

¹⁸⁴ Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner*, p. 64. Borthwick describes “the great majority [of the buildings as] nondescript, shapeless, patchwork concerns.” See Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 54.

¹⁸⁵ Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 160 – 161, 245; Thomas Allsop, *California and Its Gold Mines: Being a Series of Recent Communications from the Mining Districts, Upon the Present Condition and Future Prospects of Quartz Mining; With an Account of the Richer Deposits, and Incidental Notices of the Climate, Scenery, and Mode of Life in California* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1853), pp. 18 – 19; “Have We a Grumbler Among Us?,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 1 June, 1853.

¹⁸⁶ M’Collum, *California as I Saw it*, p. 33.

If British subjects bound for British Columbia were divided in their opinions of Americans before they reached San Francisco in 1858 and after, the city itself did little to heal those divisions. Matthew Macfie, a British Congregationalist minister with American sympathies, found the city's buildings "magnificent," "tasteful," "monster" in size, while "an air of activity, comfort, and grandeur pervades the well-dressed multitudes that incessantly cross one's path."¹⁸⁷ George Styles also linked the built environment with its "wide and noble" streets and "handsome" buildings to the population, made up of "the strongest built and tallest men I ever saw."¹⁸⁸ And it was in San Francisco that Byron Johnson came to the conclusion that it was not "impertinent curiosity" but friendliness he was experiencing among the American population.¹⁸⁹ Arthur Birch, a senior colonial official *en route* to British Columbia, found in San Francisco "a charming cosmopolitan feeling and an intelligent and delightful social society," which compared especially well to Civil War-era New York.¹⁹⁰ These positive accounts tended to identify San Francisco as an emerging metropolis on par with New York, Paris, and London, and Americans as energetic, productive, and polite. In other words, to some British Argonauts, San Francisco and its inhabitants were the embodiment of mid-nineteenth-century Victorian ideals.

But for each account that praised San Francisco and its inhabitants, others saw a decidedly different San Francisco. Negative depictions of San Francisco tended to link its built space to the perceived corruption and vice of the city's inhabitants. In his description of San Francisco's waterfront, W. Champness noted that "there are frequent deaths, from unwary

¹⁸⁷ Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, p. 21.

¹⁸⁸ Styles, *Diary*, 22 June, 1862. John Cowley, for instance, echoes these sentiments. See Cowley, *Diary* 1862, 20 May, 1862.

¹⁸⁹ Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁰ Arthur Birch, *Victorian Odyssey*, p. 85, A00272, BCARS.

persons falling, or being thrust, at night, into the water, through some of the large openings occurring at intervals in the super-marine streets.”¹⁹¹ Where Champness found a link between obviously shoddy construction and immoral behavior, Francis Poole drew the opposite conclusion, linking the American Theater in particular, and by extension all such grand buildings, with the “coarse and undisguised immorality” of the activities that went on inside. Furthermore, given the manipulation of “passions” inside these buildings, it was “no wonder” to Poole that “they should often take the direction of murder, that the most hideous crimes should be easily condoned, and that the general tone of morality should have descended to the very depths, as I was given to understand is the sad case at San Francisco.”¹⁹²

Negative depictions also focused on the “go-ahead” attitude of the city, though they never identified it as such. Instead, commentators like James Nelles proclaimed “San Francisco...about the worst place I ever was in” because the Sabbath was so flagrantly disregarded in favor of leisure and work activities.¹⁹³ In short, faced with the same built environment and population, these observers saw disorder and corruption. Poole articulated the logical conclusion of these observers’ comments when he noted that San Francisco’s society, and particularly its standards of justice, demonstrated that it could only “pretend to civilization.”¹⁹⁴ British society and British governance were the clearly preferable alternative. For these men, national differences were everywhere evident in San Francisco and Americans simply did not live up to Victorian ideals. As a result, to some British observers, Americans only pretended to

¹⁹¹ Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, p. 206.

¹⁹² Poole, *Queen Charlotte Islands*, p. 50.

¹⁹³ James Nelles, Diary 1862, 20 February 1862, Barkerville Archive.

¹⁹⁴ Poole, *Queen Charlotte Islands*, p. 44.

the white man's "civilization," foreshadowing the impact that the intersection of ideas of race and national identity would have in shaping the colonial order in British Columbia.

On one topic, however, British Argonauts shared a remarkable concurrence of opinion. Visitors frequently commented upon the Chinese population of San Francisco on their way to British Columbia. Indeed, whereas newly arrived Argonauts in 1849 and the early 1850s had stressed California's diversity with laundry lists of national and racial groups, most accounts produced by Argonauts heading to British Columbia mentioned only the Chinese, or, if they mentioned any other group, spent far less time on them. Accounts tended to stress the number of Chinese and their distinct Chinatown.¹⁹⁵

By 1858, the Chinese population had emerged as the racial touchstone for San Francisco. Their presence was almost always described as an impediment to San Francisco. One of the most positive accounts noted that "the only benefit derived from them... is from a tax of four dollars per month each."¹⁹⁶ John Emmerson, though surprised at Chinese "thrift and activity," noted that Chinatown was "wallowing in almost iniquitous state of filth" and that Chinese faces "betrayed an ingrained demoralization shocking to behold."¹⁹⁷ These attitudes closely paralleled an increasingly entrenched fear of the social, economic, and political threat of the Chinese among the American residents of California.¹⁹⁸ The Chinese population, for their part, contested these interpretations and, aided by prominent American allies, they tried to portray themselves as

¹⁹⁵ Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, p. 207; Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed*, pp. 28 – 29; Poole, *Queen Charlotte Islands*, pp. 50 – 51; Mark, *Cariboo*, pp. 16 – 17; Blair, *Diary*, p. 3; King, *Diary*, pp. 13 – 15; Styles, *Diary*, 22 June 1863; Cowley, *Diary* 1862, 19, 22 May 1862; Emmerson, "British Columbia and Vancouver Island," p. 31.

¹⁹⁶ Mark, *Cariboo*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁷ Emmerson, "British Columbia and Vancouver Island," pp. 50 – 51.

¹⁹⁸ Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785 – 1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 168 – 169. For a detailed account of Chinese experiences of San Francisco during this period, see Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850 – 1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 55 – 75.

idea American citizens.¹⁹⁹ By 1858, even when the Chinese were recognized as having some positive traits, ultimately their perceived unassimability to Victorian standards of behavior and their perceived biological difference marked them as degraded in the eyes of many Europeans. Regardless of their opinion of United States society, Argonauts bound for British Columbia learned in San Francisco that the Chinese were different from other non-white immigrants. These attitudes would inform their own reactions to the Chinese population in British Columbia, particularly in the Cariboo gold mines, and speak to the existence of widely shared racial conceptions that bridged national divisions. In other words, racial understandings provided a key, if at this point largely unacknowledged, bond between British subjects and American citizens on the western coast of North America.

For the Overlanders, arrival in California was a re-entry into “civilization.” The Overlanders saw the mining communities they encountered in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada as frontier settlements “on the borders of civilization.”²⁰⁰ When Benard Reid found “the ‘town’” of Weberville to be little more than “tents and rough log huts,” he was neither surprised nor disappointed. If anything, he was simply happy at being able to eat “very heartily...under an awning supported by trees and poles” before sleeping on a “parcel of pine chips beside some hewed timber.”²⁰¹ Likewise, upon arriving at nearby Placerville after crossing the Sierra Nevada, John Carr found it “to be two rows of houses with a street between them.” The simple buildings and the large population of rough-looking miners and refined-looking gamblers located

¹⁹⁹ See, for example Noman Asing, “To His Excellency Governor Bigler,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 5 May, 1852; Reverend William Speer, “China and California, Their Relations Past and Present: A Lecture in Conclusion of a Series in Relation to the Chinese People, Delivered in the Stockton Street Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, June 28, 1853,” State Archive.

²⁰⁰ Langworthy, *Scenery of the Plains*, p. 151.

²⁰¹ Benard J. Reid, *Overland to California with the Pioneer Line: The Gold Rush Diary of Bernard J. Reid*, ed. Mary McDougall Gordon (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 145. Both italics and quotes are original.

Placerville firmly within the trope of the frontier town.²⁰² For the Overlanders, then, their arrival in California was both an entry into a new sort of society and a re-entry into the world of frontier settlements they had left months before. These migrants came with fairly solid understandings of what was required of “frontier life.” By linking the mining camps of the Sierra Nevada to stereotypes of frontier towns, Overlanders affirmed California as a place where “civilization” was just beginning to assert itself over “savagery.” This understanding, combined with their experiences of the previous several months, encouraged them to see their own identity as white men as vested in the securing of land and resources at the direct expense of natives, and by extension, other non-whites. In a telling example, at least one Overlander claimed that the “watch word” among the emigrants shortly before arriving in California was “to shoot every Indian they see.”²⁰³

Arriving in British Columbia

In 1858, nine years after the first wave of gold rushers began to arrive in California, another wave of gold rushers arrived in British Columbia. In the first year of the rush to British Columbia, the vast majority of the migrants came from California, but starting in 1859, migrants increasingly came from Britain. Migrants from the Atlantic had formative experiences akin to those experienced by the Argonauts of a decade earlier but with considerable differences. Technological change was a key factor, but British Columbia’s status as the part of the British Empire and a changing economic and political situation in the eastern states also affected the nature of the migration from the Atlantic world. As Adele Perry has demonstrated, elites in both British Columbia and England attempted to encourage immigration to the colony, particularly of

²⁰² Carr, *Pioneer Days*, p. 60 – 61. The quote is from page 60.

²⁰³ McDiarmid, *Letters to my Wife*, 61.

white women from England, but with middling success.²⁰⁴ However, even without these official efforts, the letters of Donald Frazer and other enthusiastic reports in the British press, particularly the *London Times*, fueled interest in Fraser River gold in Britain, while, on the whole, British emigration to North America was high from 1840 to 1880.²⁰⁵ The news of gold in British Columbia followed hard on the heels of the Panic of 1857, which, though it depressed overall British migration to the United States, may have encouraged more potential migrants to look for destinations and occupations that were relatively unaffected by the recession.²⁰⁶ The British Columbia gold rush also pulled heavily on British residents of the United States, much as the California gold rush had done a decade earlier.²⁰⁷

The status of British Columbia as an imperial colony seems to have added to its appeal among some migrants, placing it within a larger discourse of imperial expansion and migration. In much the same way that men who went to India and elsewhere in the empire had their status as white men confirmed by their movement to the imperial periphery, so too did migration to British Columbia represent a chance for British men to take part in the imperial project.²⁰⁸ At the same time that these factors worked to encourage British emigration to British Columbia, other factors worked to dissuade Americans from the eastern states. In 1858, news of the discovery of

²⁰⁴ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849 – 1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 124 – 166.

²⁰⁵ See, for example “The Gold Diggings on Frazer River,” in *The London Times*, 30 June, 1858; Donald Frazer, “Our Correspondent,” in *The London Times*, 4 August, 1858; Donald Frazer, “British Columbia,” in *The London Times*, 5 August, 1858. On overall migration numbers, see William E. Van Vugt, *Britain to America: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Immigrants to the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 7.

²⁰⁶ Van Vugt is interested in immigration to the United States, but in terms of push and pull factors affecting British emigrants, and especially given the lack of any comparable work, is applicable to British Columbia. Van Vugt, *Britain to America*, pp. 3, 7, 11 – 13, 155.

²⁰⁷ Van Vugt, *Britain to America*, pp. 89 – 90. Indeed, the migration to British Columbia of these former residents of the United States worried some colonial officials. See Matthew Begbie to Governor Douglas, 18 May 1859, Colonial Correspondence, file 142b1, B0137, BCARS.

²⁰⁸ For an example of how the manhood of British colonial officials could be constructed in opposition to particular colonized subjects (and vice versa), see Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘manly Englishman’ and The ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

gold in British Columbia had to compete with rapidly escalating political tension over slavery. The tense months leading up to the outbreak of the Civil War and the period of conflict that followed dramatically curtailed American migration to British Columbia. Additionally, in 1859, coinciding with conflicting reports about the richness of the gold deposits in British Columbia, the discovery of silver in Colorado provided a far more accessible alternative destination for those inclined to go mining. By the end of the Civil War, the peak years of gold production in British Columbia had passed, and the colony had experienced a considerable outflow of Americans back to the United States.²⁰⁹ For all of these reasons, British subjects would make up a greater portion of the population in British Columbia than they had in California, despite the short distance between the two locations.

Because Governor James Douglas of British Columbia had closed navigation of the Fraser River to any but approved vessels, the vast majority of the gold rushers entered the gold fields by way of Victoria on Vancouver Island.²¹⁰ The first to arrive were those from California. Perhaps because they were old hands at gold mining and saw British Columbia as just the latest in a series of gold rushes, Americans left few accounts of their impressions of Victoria. Even letters to California newspapers tended to have little or no detail about the city. Those that did, however, were telling. Unlike the earlier accounts produced by new arrivals to California, there was little direct mention of the built or natural environment. One of the few detailed accounts of the built environment of Victoria noted that it was “very ‘forty-nineish’ in its character,” by which the correspondent seemed to mean that it was still largely undeveloped, but growing

²⁰⁹ This is particularly evident among the black population of British Columbia, who, at the end of the Civil War, opted in considerable numbers to return to the United States to reunite with family and to take part in the hopeful atmosphere of Reconstruction. See James Pilton, “Negro Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1871” (master’s thesis, University of British Columbia, 1951), pp. 196 – 200.

²¹⁰ For obvious reasons, I will avoid referring to residents of the city of Victoria as “Victorians.” Bancroft, *History of British Columbia*, pp. 388 – 390.

rapidly.²¹¹ William Nixon, freshly arrived from San Francisco, found it “the greatest city I ever saw, composed of about 70 or 80 wooden buildings, one brick house, and about 550 tents.”²¹²

Nixon’s enthusiasm was unusual, however. Many of the American commentators, who stopped at Whatcom or other American ports before proceeding to Victoria, tended to contrast Victoria unfavorably with those places.²¹³

Instead of focusing on the built environment, most early American commentators focused on the characteristics of the population and the established authorities, namely the colonial government and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). Given that the vast majority of these early American arrivals were veterans of California, the boom-town appearance of Victoria was far less remarkable than it would be to later arrivals. What concerned them, and what they believed would interest their readers in California, were the social, political, and economic conditions of the colony. The HBC, for instance, was derided for maintaining an unfair monopoly on trade on the mainland but praised for keeping prices low on Vancouver Island.²¹⁴ Governor Douglas, and

²¹¹ “San Francisco Rivals in the North – Victoria and its Denizens,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 20 July, 1858. For other comparisons of Victoria in 1858 to San Francisco in 1849, see “A Sanctum Talk with a Passenger by the *Sierra Nevada*,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 8 July, 1858; “Letter from Victoria,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 July, 1858.

²¹² William Nixon, “Letter to Robert Nixon,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 20 July, 1858.

²¹³ A Returned Miner, “The Difficulty of Access to the Fraz Mines [sic],” in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 June, 1858; George Wilbur, “Further Information from a Frazer River Miner – Difficulties of Travel There,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 9 June, 1858; W. V. W., “Letter from our Special Fraser River Correspondent,” 5 October, 1858.

²¹⁴ For criticism of the HBC, see Independent, “Letter from Victoria, V.I.,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 6 June, 1858; “The Fraser River News,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 June, 1858; “The Rights of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 June, 1858; “The Exactions of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 July, 1858; W. T. Ballou, “Letter from Fort Hope,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 8 July, 1858. For positive accounts, see “Letters from Victoria, V.I.,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 8 July, 1858; C. Aubrey Angelo, “Letter from C. Aubrey Angelo,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 8 July, 1858; “Letter from Victoria,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 July, 1858.

by extension the colonial authority, was usually condemned, particularly for the obstacles he placed in the way of competition with the HBC and direct immigration to the mines.²¹⁵

A frequent topic of commentary was the presence and disposition of native peoples in and around Victoria. The native population was an important symbol of national difference for Americans from California. American F. F. Davis, asked, “*Why are the Indians hostile to Americans, and friendly to the British?*” Davis found the answer in British adherence to their treaty obligations, their judicious use of force, and the moral influence of professional and disciplined British regulars compared to the volunteer forces of the United States.²¹⁶ Henry Fitch found the natives “docile” upon arrival, an opinion that other correspondents confirmed.²¹⁷ If the natives posed little physical danger, however, white Americans believed they possessed the same tendency to steal, beg, and drink as natives elsewhere.²¹⁸ For Americans coming from California, the apparently peaceful native population signaled that British Columbia had a different history of colonialism, but one that was fundamentally compatible with their own interests. At times, however, this alternate form of colonialism seemed to go too far in its tolerance of the native population. One joke making the rounds in Victoria targeted the HBC for “their old fogy way of doing business,” part of which was giving preference to “the negro or

²¹⁵ Independent, “Letter from Victoria, V.I.,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 31 May, 1858; “The Rights of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 June, 1858; W. V. W., “Our Special Victoria Correspondence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 July, 1858.

²¹⁶ F. F. Davis, “The ‘Bostons’ and the Indians in the North,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 8 May, 1858. Italics in the original.

²¹⁷ Henry Fitch, “Other Letters From Victoria,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 15 July, 1858; “Favorable Reports From the Mines” and “Further From the New Gold Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 May, 1858; Independent, “Letter From Victoria, Vancouver Island,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 7 May, 1858; “Later from the North,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 May, 1858.

²¹⁸ Independent, “Letter From Victoria, Vancouver Island,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 7 May, 1858; “Matters at Victoria, V.I.,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 9 July, 1858; “San Francisco Rivals in the North – Victoria and its Denizens,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 20 July, 1858.

Indian.”²¹⁹ Pacifying the native population through fair treatment was one thing; appearing to prefer them to white men was another matter entirely. For the newly arrived American population, British colonialism could be admirable or dangerous, depending on the context.

As British subjects began to arrive in the months following the first influx of Americans into the colony, they expressed different sentiments. Francis Poole looked forward to soon being “again under the good Union Jack of Old England” while Sophia Cracroft finally felt “*at home*... once more among our own people only, after many months residence with Americans.”²²⁰ For at least some of the British migrants, their experience with American society and governance *en route* to British Columbia had reinforced their sense of national difference and superiority to their “cousins.”

But while the migration to British Columbia underscored the sense of national difference that would be critical to initial conceptions of white manliness in British Columbia, the spatial organization of Victoria and the mainland gold rush towns suggested common, or at least related, conceptions of race between the two groups. During the gold rush period, a native village across the harbor from Victoria located natives as intertwined with, yet distinct from, the white settlement.²²¹ Adjacent to the Songhee village, across a bridge, was Victoria’s Chinatown.²²² The working classes tended to occupy “small wooden shanties” in the “suburbs” around the town. These “suburbs” were a racially mixed space where “Indians and Chinamen” lived

²¹⁹ “Letter from Victoria, V.I.,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 15 July, 1858.

²²⁰ Poole, *Queen Charlotte Islands*, p. 55; Sophia Cracroft, *Extracts from the Letters of Miss Sophia Cracroft, Sir John Franklin’s Niece, February to April 1861 and April to July 1870* (Victoria, B.C.: [Provincial Archives of British Columbia], 1974), p. 2, emphasis original.

²²¹ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 110, 112 – 123; Cracroft, *Letters of Miss Sophia Cracroft*, pp. 19 – 21.

²²² David Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), pp. 10 – 11, 184 – 187.

alongside and, in some cases with, people of European descent.²²³ It was the native village, and the native population, however, that attracted the most attention from newly arrived immigrants.

The British immigrants shared with white Americans an understanding of natives as part of the wilderness landscape. When the American Henry Fitch described Esquimalt as “a fine bay – plenty of clams, fish, Indians, granite and blackberries,” he was locating natives as a passive part of the scenery in same manner as Byron Johnson did in his description of Victoria harbor where “a number of Indian canoes crept stealthily about under the paddles of their picturesque-looking occupants” while singing “mournful ditties.”²²⁴ For the immigrants, Victoria and the gold rush towns on the mainland appeared small, isolated settlements in an otherwise vast wilderness.²²⁵ Descriptions of the native presence served to underscore that the white settlements’ status as centers of civilization was tenuous and contested. In particular, the immigrants depicted the natives in and around Victoria and the mainland gold field towns as degraded. George Blair was disgusted with what he called a “host of D[amned] Indians the most degraded set of Martals thers is in existence.”²²⁶ Particularly upsetting to Blair and other Victorian immigrants were mixed-race relationships between white men and native women.²²⁷

British and American arrivals therefore shared some perceptions of British Columbia. Both groups emphasized the racial difference between themselves and natives, tending to identify the native population as the antithesis of white civilization. In particular, both groups were profoundly disturbed by the prospect of mixed-race relationships between white men and

²²³ Mark, *Cariboo*, pp. 18 – 19.

²²⁴ Henry Fitch, “Other Letters From Victoria,” in *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 15 July, 1858; Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed*, pp. 37 – 38.

²²⁵ Pidcock, *Adventures in Victoria*, p. 16; Poole, *Queen Charlotte Islands*, p. 62; Nelles, *Diary*, 1862, 15 – 18 March, 1862.

²²⁶ Blair, *Diary*, p. 17.

²²⁷ Blair, *Diary*, 18; Mark, *Cariboo*, p. 18; Reinhart, *The Golden Frontier*, pp. 142 – 143; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 98 – 109.

native women. But while there were some shared attitudes, particularly around the formation of a racialized hierarchy, there were also profound national divisions. Both British and American immigrants arrived with profound reservations about the other, signaling an attention to national difference that would characterize much of the British Columbia gold rush.

Conclusion

The impact of the migratory experience has been an overlooked factor in the creation of colonial societies in the California and British Columbia gold rushes. Migratory experiences did not determine the social order Victorians would attempt to make in California and British Columbia, but they did, unconsciously or not, give meaning to the world they found there and the world they attempted to create. Between 1848 and 1871, on both the overland and oceanic routes, Victorians began to articulate an understanding of white manliness that emphasized martial manliness while still retaining aspects of restrained manliness.

Encounters with natives and Latin Americans while *en route* to the gold fields deeply shaped this emergent form of white manliness and revealed that the migrants were already coming to ascribe key traits to these two groups, and in the process, to themselves as well. In so doing, these migrants not only began to define white manliness against a range of racial and gender others, they did so within a context that was explicitly colonial. As a result, whether they were arriving in California after 1849 or British Columbia after 1858, these Victorian migrants were already prepared to understand gold rush society as a colonial society organized along a racial and gender hierarchy with themselves, as white men, at the top.

Chapter Two

A White Man's Republic: Colonial California

“Race making,” Paul Spickard has noted, “is done in the context of colony making.”¹

Colonialism is the social, political, and economic domination of one group of people over another, usually justified through ideas of racial, gender, and class differences, often in a newly-acquired or distant territory. What scholars have been reluctant to acknowledge is that gold rush California, as much as the Philippines, Hawai'i, or Cuba, was a colony.² The cost of transportation meant that the majority of Victorians who migrated to California were of middle-class origins, so that they retained these values even as many of them resorted to the type of manual labor reserved in the East for workers. As a result, one group in particular, Victorian men, quickly came to dominate the region.³ How they did so, and the logic they used to justify their doing so, is the subject of this chapter. Simply put, Victorian men used the ideal of the republican citizen to define and rank participation in California's colonial society. These ideals were used to justify different standards of treatment in a wide variety of contexts for the different racial and national groups in California. Drawing on a pre-existing racial and gender attitudes, these men claimed a place for themselves at the top of a colonial hierarchy and then attempted to

¹ Paul Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 27.

² Native studies and the New Western History have proven more willing to pay attention to the impact of colonial forces on the West, yet they tend to focus on the material aspects of colonialism and minimize colonialism as a social and cultural force. See, for example Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987) and Richard White, *'It's your misfortune and none of my own': A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

³ See John David Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 340 – 343; Malcolm Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 41; Oscar Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields; The Migration by Water to California in 1849 – 1852* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1949), p. 10.

define the place of a range of Others, both in the gold mines and in the towns. However, this project was complicated by three factors. First, the isolation and remoteness of California, which required traveling considerable distances, changed matters. Victorians would try to impose the social order they brought with them from the east, but California was not the Atlantic world, and the migrants had been changed by their journeys. Second, the disordered nature of the state of the California encouraged local governance. Third, the diversity of California's population, which included groups whose position as white, off-white, or non-white, was unclear.⁴

Commentators have noted the weakness of the state in creating and maintaining order during the California gold rush. Before the gold rush, California had been ruled first by a weak Spanish regime, then a Mexican colonial regime, and then, for a brief period, by a “thinly staffed, badly financed [American] military government.”⁵ The discovery of gold dislocated the newly-conquered territory's residents and brought about a massive influx of population from around the world that overwhelmed both the military government and the Mexican colonial system onto which it was grafted. Walter Colton, the *alcalde* of Monterey when gold was discovered, was well-placed to observe this process first-hand.⁶ Colton remarked that “the excitement produced was intense...All were off for the mines.” Left with “only a community of women..., and a gang of prisoners, with here and there a soldier, who will give his captain the slip at the first chance,” Colton felt that the exodus had “upset all the domestic arrangements of

⁴ Maria DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo American Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. xxvii. See also David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey From Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), p. 4.

⁵ Rodman Paul, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), pp. 22 – 23.

⁶ An *alcalde* was a government position that combined the offices of mayor and justice. Americans came to see it largely as synonymous with the position of “Justice of the Peace.” A holdover from the Mexican colonial period, in many locations the position of *alcalde* was quickly eliminated and replaced with that of mayor, or, where it was retained, Americans often came to hold the position. See David Alan Johnson, *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 28 – 29.

society, turning the head to the tail, and the tail to the head.”⁷ The gold rush severely undercut the formal apparatus of the pre-rush colonial state. As Bayard Taylor observed, “The results of the gold discovery produced a complete revolution in society, upturning all branches of trade, industry or office, and for a time completely annulling the Government.”⁸

But the new immigrants, and particularly the immigrants from the United States, did not want a disordered and lawless territory. Instead, they sought to create a social, political, and cultural order where they saw none, and to replace, modify, or co-opt the existing order where they recognized it. The process of (re)creating this colonial order was necessarily also a process of (re)creating and (re)defining racial and gender roles. Furthermore, the particular context of California, its heterogeneous population, the nature of gold mining, and the weak presence of a federal colonial state, meant that attitudes toward race, gender, and the state developed in the East could not be transported to, and implemented in, California intact.⁹ Instead, these attitudes were adapted to the particular context of gold rush California through a series of conflicts and negotiations that reveal the contingent nature of each. These conflicts and negotiations took place in three main venues: in the political process, in the mines, and in San Francisco.

The disruption of the formal state apparatus (such as it was) and the attendant social disorder of the gold fields elicited contradictory responses from many Victorians. The gold rush coincided with the end of years of Mexican rule (contemporary Victorians would say “misrule”),

⁷ Walter Colton, *Three Years in California, [1846-1849]* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co, 1850), pp. 247 – 248.

⁸ Bayard Taylor, *Eldorado; Or, Adventures in the Path of Empire, Comprising a Voyage to California, Via Panama; Life in San Francisco and Monterey; Pictures of the Gold Region, and Experiences of Mexican Travel.* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1879), p. 146.

⁹ By the time of the California gold rush, the United States and its citizens had experience subduing and incorporating similar former Spanish and Mexican territories and peoples, as well as those territories’ indigenous populations in both Louisiana and Texas. For the literature on these experiences see Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation’s Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004); William D. Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836-1916* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

and seemed to herald not only a new beginning for California, but a new beginning for the thousands of Americans who arrived there.¹⁰ Victorians believed they were not only freeing California from the oppressive rule of Catholic priests and Mexicans but also freeing themselves from the new social and economic constraints that were coming to dominate life in the East.¹¹ In particular, Victorians saw in the West a chance to embrace a more martial form of manhood than the restrained manhood that so dominated middle-class life in the East. For many Victorians, the California gold rush became a by-word for social change as well as economic gain.

At the same time, however, the lack of state control raised deep concerns for many commentators. For men like Joseph Benton, working on the Sabbath and swearing spoke both to the lack of the influence of churches and to the rough character of many of the participants, “the natives & foreigners,” as well as the Yankees.¹² Also telling was the multitude of criminal conspiracies Victorian Americans detected in California. The belief that criminal organizations operated in California without fear of the law, indeed, often with the support of corrupt officials, spoke to a deeper fear that a republic needed the support of a strong and active state apparatus to

¹⁰ Timothy Coffin Osborn, Timothy Coffin Osborn Journal: ms., 1850 June 14 – 1855 Jan. 1, p. 39, Mss C-F 81, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, Calif. (hereafter BANC); Eliza W. Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out: or, How we Farm, Mine, and Live Generally in the Golden State* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1856), p. 181.

¹¹ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 1995 ed.), pp. xi – xxvi; Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 25, 183. For the controversy surrounding wage work and the identity of white men, see David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 65 – 80.

¹² Joseph Benton, Journal 1849 Jan. 11 – 1856 Dec. 31, 5 August, 1849, vol. 1, California State Archive, Sacramento, Calif. (hereafter State Archive); William Taylor, *California Life Illustrated* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1860), p. 286.

survive.¹³ The weakening of social controls was therefore, as Walter Colton warned, “an ill wind that blows nobody any good: the nabobs have had their time, and now comes that of the ‘niggers.’”¹⁴ This was the crux of Victorian concerns about social order in California – not that there would be anarchy, but that an alternative way of ordering society, perhaps that of the “niggers” or of “natives & foreigners,” might come to dominate.

These fears were compounded by the diversity of the population of California. The pluralistic nature of Californian society was unprecedented in American history. Only in California could sizable populations of Europeans, Euro-Americans, blacks, natives, Latin Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders be found in proximity to each other. While Victorian gold rushers had various degrees of familiarity with each of these groups, they had never encountered so many, and from so many different places, at once. The diversity of the population underscored for Victorians the strangeness of society on the West Coast and the precariousness of their own position in it.

Victorian Americans came to talk about these fears, as well as their hopes for an ideal society, through the language of republicanism. Republicanism, as a political ideology, had deep roots in American psyches by the time of the gold rush and was connected to ideas of work, race,

¹³ Charles White, *St. Joseph Gazette*, 28 July, 1848, folder 1, box 2168, State Archive; “The Execution of Jenkins,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851; “Mssrs. Editors,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 June, 1851; “Incendiarism in San Francisco,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 January, 1850; Robert M. Senkewicz, *Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 75 – 78; Albert Benard de Russailh, *Last Adventure: San Francisco in 1851; translated from the Original Journal of Albert Benard de Russailh by Clarkson Crane*, ed. Clarkson Crane (San Francisco: Westgate Press, 1931), p. 33. For an example of nineteenth century America’s fascination with secret societies, as well as the problematic relationship of these groups to the Republic, see Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).

¹⁴ Colton, *Three Years in California*, pp. 247 – 248.

and citizenship.¹⁵ Californian republicanism was not, as David Alan Johnson has demonstrated, classical republicanism. Indeed, California's "liberal individualist ethos" was in fundamental conflict with some of the basic assumptions of classical republicanism, especially in its celebration of self-interest and non-agricultural economic activity.¹⁶ However, much of the language used to discuss and think about the characteristics of white men and of the colonial state drew heavily on republican tropes. Most notably, Victorian Americans in California drew on republican ideas when they asserted that a group's racial, gender, national, or religious attributes affected its members' ability to form independent political thought and action and that it was this independence (or lack thereof) that was key to an individual's or group's suitability to California and therefore to their place in the colonial hierarchy that Victorian Americans were attempting to create.

New Yorker Elisha Capron bluntly highlighted the confluence of race, gender, and republicanism in California when he argued that, relative to "the Chinese, South and Central American, and Mexican," "all classes of Europeans are superior...in those qualities which are essential to the security of a republican form of government."¹⁷ In so doing, Capron also claimed that while Europeans of various nationalities might be considered inferior to white Americans, they were fundamentally superior to non-whites. Europeans, in other words, were either white or

¹⁵ Foner, *Free Soil*, pp. xi – xxvi; For further examples of the pervasiveness of republican ideology, see Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 27 – 36, 43 – 44, 50 – 51, 66 – 74; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & The Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 61 – 63, 92 – 94. For an example of the importance of republicanism in the South, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp. 40 – 42. For a discussion of the link between race and citizenship, see Dana Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. x, 9.

¹⁷ Elisha Smith Capron, *History Of California, From its Discovery to the Present Time: Comprising also a Full Description of its Climate, Surface, Soil, Rivers, Towns ... Agriculture, Commerce, Mines, Mining, &C., With a Journal of the Voyage from New York, via Nicaragua, to San Francisco, and Back, via Panama...* (Cleveland, Ohio: Jewett, Proctor and Worthington, 1854), p. 171.

off-white depending upon their degree of conformity to standards of “Anglo-normativity,” while people of non-European descent were, in the eyes of Victorian Americans, usually excluded even from off-white status.¹⁸ This is not to say that the Chinese, South and Central Americans, and Mexicans (among others) never stood a chance of gaining admission to California’s colonial society as full citizens, just that, given broad assumptions about the existence and importance of racial divisions, their admission was less likely than that of a European. Indeed, though the broad contours of Californian colonial society were set (its status as an American territory guaranteed that Victorian Americans, self-professed white men, would dominate the society), the specific meanings attached to different groups were dynamic and flexible, responding to the actions and arguments of a wide range of actors and events. This chapter traces the discourse associated with those actors, conflicts, and events to demonstrate how ascribed racial and gender identities gradually hardened as the colonial system developed.

State Politics: Constitution and Legislation

In September, 1849, forty-eight delegates from around California met in Monterey to draft the legal framework for what they hoped would soon be the thirty-first state to join the Union.¹⁹ Working at a time when questions of race and citizenship were at the fore of public debate, each delegate sought a constitution that would both reflect his own view of the ideal form of Californian society and would facilitate speedy admission into the Union. It was this latter concern that largely informed the decision by the majority of delegates to make California a free state.²⁰ Prohibition of slavery did not mean, of course, a majority of the convention delegates

¹⁸ For a discussion of Anglo-normativity, see Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, pp. 5 – 6.

¹⁹ William Ellison, *A Self-Governing Dominion: California, 1849-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), pp. 25 – 27.

²⁰ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, p. 125; Ellison, *A Self-Governing Dominion*, p. 30.

endorsed equality between blacks and whites. Indeed, a lengthy debate over whether free blacks should be excluded from entering the state was eventually resolved against exclusion only because the same pragmatic concerns over a speedy ratification won out again.²¹

Although ultimately unsuccessful, the arguments of the pro-exclusion delegates are revealing of widely shared assumptions among Victorian Americans as to the danger that non-whites generally, and blacks specifically, posed to the social, political, and economic order of California. Although blacks had already been excluded from voting and testifying in court in California, the pro-exclusion delegates argued that the degraded nature of blacks, both slave and free, made them both a social and an economic threat.²² The fear that pro-exclusion delegates articulated about the presence of blacks stemmed from ideas of republican virtue. Blacks were unpleasant and undesirable because they were supposedly degraded: they were, in the eyes of many Victorians, lazy, brutish, and prone to the irrational vicissitudes of emotion.²³ But the real danger blacks posed was that these traits made them susceptible to the will of others. When delegate James McHall Jones voiced his concerns that black labor could be used by slaveholders to “degrade the white labor of the miners,” his warning sounded particularly ominous because it resonated with widely-shared ideas of republican virtue that celebrated individual independence and warned that dependent and servile people were the tools of tyrants and despots.²⁴ Even the opponents of exclusion tended to agree with these basic principles, arguing only that exclusion would reflect badly on California and could impede the ratification of its constitution.²⁵ Within

²¹ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, p. 129; Ellison, *A Self-Governing Dominion*, p. 30.

²² Ellison, *A Self-Governing Dominion*, p. 75.

²³ Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, esp. pp. 35 – 36; Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. viii.

²⁴ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 126, quote is from 128. The best treatment of Northern whites’ fears of slave labor remains Foner, *Free Soil*, esp. pp. xi – xxxi.

²⁵ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 128 – 129.

the confines of external pressures surrounding the conditions under which California would be admitted as a state, the delegates to the state constitutional convention clearly sought to create a legal order that would buttress a racial hierarchy with white men at the top and blacks at the bottom, as existed in the eastern United States.

But California was not the East, and the delegates were forced to confront the presence of two groups that complicated their attempts to reproduce a racial hierarchy modeled on the eastern states. The first of these was the state's large native population. As David Alan Johnson has shown, delegates feared that natives, like blacks, were an "objectionable race" because their supposed natural servility left them open to manipulation at the hands of white men.²⁶ Yet the delegates ultimately decided to insert a provision allowing the legislature to provide for the future suffrage of natives, particularly men of mixed descent.²⁷ On the one hand, this reflected sensitivity to the mixed-race status of some of the delegates to the constitutional convention, while on the other hand it was also reflective of a significant trend in American thought that held that the ultimate assimilation of natives to citizenship was possible.²⁸

Yet, while the constitutional convention outlawed slavery and opened the door to future citizenship for natives, the first legislature, meeting in 1850, passed "An Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians." More than any other piece of legislation, this act defined natives as colonized subjects. Among its many provisions it allowed for the "indentiture" of native children and natives indebted to the court, prohibited native testimony against whites, extended state laws over the natives, and ruled that "any Indian able to work..., who shall be found

²⁶ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, p. 126.

²⁷ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 126 – 127.

²⁸ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 126 – 127. For the authoritative account of Indian policy, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* vols. I and II (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 35 – 381, passim.

loitering or strolling about, or frequenting public places where liquors are sold, begging, or leading an immoral or profligate course of life,” should be “hire[d] out...to the best bidder.”²⁹ In short, the first legislature moved to seal off the possibility of native assimilation and instead defined them as a permanent, quasi-enslaved, colonized underclass.

The second problematic non-white population provided the constitutional convention with more of a dilemma. The terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo complicated attempts to address the presence of a large population of Latinos, and particularly of Mexican citizens. This treaty provided, “Those [Mexican citizens] who shall prefer to remain in the [ceded] territories may...acquire those [rights] of citizens of the United States.”³⁰ The issue, as became clear in the debate, was that Mexico did not have the same racial classification scheme for defining citizenship as did the United States, opening the door for the franchise to be extended to blacks and natives who had held Mexican citizenship.³¹ In its broadest interpretation, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo would, in the eyes of most delegates, fatally undermine the integrity of the republican system of government in California.

The delegates’ response to this eventuality was wholly predictable. In order to maintain the racial basis of citizenship, but still appear to abide by the terms of the treaty, the convention limited the vote to “every white male citizen of the United States, and every white male citizen of Mexico.”³² But as they left the convention hall, congratulating themselves on a job well done,

²⁹ California Secretary of State, “An Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians,” Chapter 133, 1850, in *Statutes of California, First Session of the Legislature, 1849 -1850*, location E6553, box 1, sections 3, 6, 9, 14, 20. See also Albert Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 5.

³⁰ Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo [Exchange copy], February 2, 1848 [Electronic Records]; Perfected Treaties, 1778-1945; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government, 1778-1992; National Archives.

³¹ J. Ross Browne, *Report of the Debates in the Convention of California on the Formation of the State Constitution in September and October, 1849* (Washington, D.C.: Jon T. Towers, 1850), pp. 62 – 74; Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 125 – 126.

³² California Constitution (1849), art. 2, sec. 1.

all but forgotten was Edward Gilbert's comment that "the meaning of the word 'white'... was not generally understood in this country, though well understood in the United States."³³ In other words, the convention had not clearly defined who was white. As Gilbert's caution hinted, and as the debates over suffrage made clear, blacks were decidedly non-white.³⁴ The delegates were less sure what to do with native, Mexican, European, and mixed-race residents of California.³⁵ Though the legislature would continue to try and define white privilege, it was left to the mass of miners to define white manliness through the way they sought to create order in California, and in particular, through the understandings of that order as manifested in the popular tribunals in the mines, towns, and cities that so characterized the first decade of the gold rush. Sometimes these popular tribunals would confirm the laws passed by the legislature, and at other times they would challenge these laws by positing alternative definitions of white privilege.

The Mines

The reach and influence of the legislature (as well as its limitations) in affecting the social order on the ground is apparent in the debate and actions surrounding the Foreign Miner's Tax of 1850. Officially titled "An Act for the Better Regulation of the Mines and the Government of Foreign Miners," and passed in the first Legislature on 13 April 1850, the act claimed to alleviate "the strife and bloodshed which have taken place between the citizen and foreigner," by making the foreigner, who had "neither legal nor moral right to come into our country and take away the gold," pay "a small bonus for the privilege of taking from our country the vast treasures to which he has no right." According to the bill's framers, foreigners would

³³ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, p. 62.

³⁴ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, p. 125; Ellison, *A Self-Governing Dominion*, p. 30.

³⁵ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, p. 62 – 73.

“cheerfully” pay this as it would protect their right to mine, while Americans would “be content in knowing the fact that [foreigners] are paying some tribute towards the heavy expenses of our new State.” While the bill supposedly applied to all non-citizens, the framers specifically mentioned “the worst population of the Mexican and South American States, New South Wales and the southern islands,” as the target of the legislation before adding, almost as an afterthought, “to say nothing of the vast numbers from Europe.”³⁶ In a time and place where citizenship could largely be conflated with the attributes of white manliness, the language of the Foreign Miner’s Tax reveals that the relationship between white manliness, citizenship, and particular bodies was neither simple nor straightforward. Most notably, the deliberate targeting of Australians, who were overwhelmingly of Irish descent, as dangerous foreigners signaled the importance of factors other than visible physical traits in determining identity, especially in the early years. Instead, the primary logic defining citizen and foreigner was the degree to which individuals or groups were believed to be suited to the institutions and society of a republican country.

The framers of the bill made it clear that the tax was primarily intended as a means of social control. This is evident in their concern with controlling foreign labor to protect the integrity of (white) American labor. Part of the intended target of the tax was “the foreign proprietor [employer] of Chilian, Peon, Chinean, Canacker or convict gold digger” or “gold diggers from any other nations” who would now have to pay “some little tribute.” Even more importantly for Americans in the mines, “this bill will afford our own citizen gold diggers means of controlling this foreign labor upon equal terms with the foreign proprietor.”³⁷ American employers, it was envisioned, would buy the licenses for their foreign employees, limiting their

³⁶ Thomas J. Green, “Report,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 5 April, 1850.

³⁷ Thomas J. Green, “Report,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 5 April, 1850.

ability to break their contract, strike for higher wages, or otherwise interfere with the interests of their American employers. Of course, whereas foreign labor would be tied to a specific employer by the tax, white laborers would be free to move, strike for better wages, and otherwise exercise their rights.

However, just because the law was understood to mean one thing by the legislators who passed it, did not mean that the miners on the ground would necessarily implement it in that manner. In Calaveras County, shortly after the Chilean War in 1849-50, James Ayers's partner, an Irishman, disagreed that the tax applied to him and drew a gun on the tax collector, who promptly left to collect the tax from some Frenchmen in the area.³⁸ In the same area, Ramón Navarro remembered that one group of Chileans scared off a tax collector before another Chilean man killed him. Navarro claimed that the Americans in the area knew of the incident, but public feeling was high against the tax collector and they allowed the Chilean to quietly escape.³⁹ Yet, in a similar incident a Mexican attempted to stab a tax collector, and the local Americans mobilized en masse to drive the Mexicans from the area.⁴⁰ Even Victorian miners who felt "universal dissatisfaction" with the tax, could, as happened in Sonora, decide to drive out "the Mexicans and foreigners generally" unless they could "give security for their good behavior, deliver up their arms, [and] pay 20 dollars per month."⁴¹ The ability of tax collectors to do their job was almost entirely dependent upon the support of local, white American communities. It is therefore telling that, despite isolated incidents such as in Calaveras County, Americans either

³⁸ James J. Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine, Reminiscences of Early California* (Boston, Mass.: R.G. Badger, 1922), pp. 81 – 83. The Chilean War was an armed conflict that resulted from an attempt by American miners to expel Chileans from the mines near the Calaveras River. For a good account, see Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), pp. 196 – 207.

³⁹ Ramón Gil Navarro, *The Gold Rush Diary of Ramón Gil Navarro*, eds. Maria del Carmen Ferreyra and David Sven Reher (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 119.

⁴⁰ J. M. Blain to Morris W. Blain, 26 May 1850, Mss C-B 547:155, BANC.

⁴¹ Josiah Griswold to Benj[amin] S. Hill, 1 August 1850, Mss C-B 655:4, BANC.

permitted or encouraged tax collectors to target Mexicans and Chileans more than other groups, resulting in an exodus of these groups to nearby towns.⁴² On the ground, American miners had little patience for the legal stipulations of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the state constitution. Instead, language, along with dress, skin color, religion, and customs served as the key definition of foreignness. The Foreign Miner's Tax functioned to tie the legitimacy of gold mining to ideas of race, citizenship, and gender as defined by the miners and to shore up Victorian American domination of the gold districts.

This domination was not uncontested, however. While many miners simply avoided or faced down the tax collector, occasionally more organized resistance to the tax formed.⁴³ The foremost example of this is the so-called "French Revolution" that occurred in May 1850 in Sonora, which was neither exclusively French nor a revolution. Though the area around Sonora had seen some expulsions of foreign miners, they were evidently not common enough for Americans in the area to think that the relationship between the American minority and the Mexican, Chilean, and French majority was strained.⁴⁴ However, the imminent arrival of the tax collector galvanized much of the non-American population to protest the tax. This protest must be understood, at least in part, as a rejection of ideas of racial and national difference as the basis for ordering colonial society by those considered to be "foreigners." At the protest one or two isolated fights broke out between Americans and Mexicans, leaving one Mexican dead and causing the Americans to send for armed reinforcements. In the meantime, the Mexicans

⁴² Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, vol. VI 1848-1859 (San Francisco: History Co., 1886), pp. 404 – 406; "Latest From Stockton," in *The Daily Alta California*, 4 June, 1850; ***, "Foreign Miners Tax," in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 March, 1851.

⁴³ Alfred Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten, 1849-1903* ed. Walter Van Tilburg Clark (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), p. 76; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 240 – 254.

⁴⁴ Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, pp. 92, 97; Leo, "Sonora – Disturbances in the Mines," in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 May, 1850; Robert Wilson, "San Joaquin and Placer Intelligence," in *The Daily Alta California*, 3 June, 1850.

scattered and, by most accounts, the French withdrew to a fortified camp. Eventually, the whole affair blew over, with one Frenchman standing trial for treason but receiving only a \$100 fine.⁴⁵

While the French Revolution is interesting as the largest instance of organized resistance to the Foreign Miner's Tax, it is even more compelling for what it reveals about how the tax fit into American miners' concerns about the colonial order.

The American population in the area was not particularly sympathetic to the Foreign Miner's Tax and appears to have been relatively unconcerned even when the French and Mexicans began arming themselves.⁴⁶ The flashpoint in this confrontation was not the Foreign Miner's Tax, but the challenge to the authority of Victorian Americans to dictate the nature of the social order to non-Americans. As one witness noted, "Our own citizens, who although generally sympathizing with the discontent occasioned by the unjust tax, are incensed that the foreigners should presume to take the law into their own hands."⁴⁷ Accordingly, when, on the morning of 20 May 1850, the Americans heard that a camp composed of foreigners nearby "had mounted Mexican, Chilean, and French flags," they "started out...to avenge the insult, and chastise the temerity of the greasers and outsiders."⁴⁸ By one account, they then shot the flags full of holes before hoisting the Stars and Stripes.⁴⁹ The contrast between the reaction of

⁴⁵ Benjamin Butler Harris, *Journal of B.B. Harris: 'Crumbs of '49'*, pp. 11 – 12, Film 10, State Archive; J. M. Blain to Morris W. Blain, 26 May 1850, Mss C-B 547:155, BANC; Friedrich Gerstäcker, *Scenes of Life in California*, eds. George Cosgrave and Gustave Revilliod (1856; San Francisco: J. Howell, 1942), pp. 37 – 66; Leo, "Sonora – Disturbances in the Mines," in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 May, 1850; Robert Wilson, "San Joaquin and Placer Intelligence," in *The Daily Alta California*, 3 June, 1850. The inappropriateness of charging the Frenchman with treason was remarked upon at the time.

⁴⁶ Gerstäcker, *Scenes of Life*, pp. 51 – 52; Leo, "Sonora – Disturbances in the Mines," in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 May, 1850.

⁴⁷ Leo, "Sonora – Disturbances in the Mines," in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 May, 1850. At least one Chilean had a similar view of the matter, stating that the conflict was over "who is the master and who is the slave." See Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, p. 119.

⁴⁸ Leo, "Sonora – Disturbances in the Mines," in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 May, 1850.

⁴⁹ Harris, *Journal of B.B. Harris*, pp. 11 – 12.

Victorians to challenges to the Foreign Miner's Tax and their reaction to challenges to their right to control and order colonial society is striking. While Victorians could be divided on specific issues, threats to the legitimacy of their rule brought a nearly uniform response.

Key to the creation of a colonial hierarchy in the gold fields that protected the rule of Victorians were the various forms of local governance the miners created.⁵⁰ As in San Francisco, attempts in the mines to create a new social order were vested in the ideals of republicanism. However, while San Francisco and some of the other early settlements had pre-gold rush civic governments in place, the new communities in the mining areas that sprang up almost overnight had to develop their own systems of governance. While some opted to elect *alcaldes*, justices, or mayors, in most effective control was held by, or shared with, mining councils.⁵¹ Later in the gold rush, as mining regions became more settled, settlements became permanent towns, and the economy began to diversify, mining councils gave way to elected city councils and to evolving forms of courts and municipal government.⁵²

These local governments, especially the mining councils, were once widely celebrated for their egalitarianism and democratic form. Indeed many commentators followed historian Charles Shinn in claiming that:

The mines put all men for once upon a level. Clothes, money, manners, family connections, letters of introduction, never before counted for so little. The whole community was substantially given an even start in the race. Gold was so

⁵⁰ I use the term local governance instead of popular tribunals to emphasize their role regulating day-to-day life. I consider the term, as will be seen, to encompass lynch mobs, mining councils, camp meetings, local militia organization, vigilance committees, and the like...any time when a group of people take on the role of government and claim to act for "the people" in keeping with republican values and ideology.

⁵¹ Charles Edward Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner, The Adventures of Charles Edward Pancoast on the American Frontier*, ed. Anna Paschall Hannum (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), pp. 289 – 290; William Downie, *Hunting for Gold: Reminiscences [sic] of Personal Experience and Research in the Early Days of the Pacific Coast from Alaska to Panama* (San Francisco: California Pub. Co, 1893), p. 81; Rodman Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), pp. 23 – 27.

⁵² Charles Howard Shinn, *Mining Camps: A Study in American Frontier Government* (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1885), pp. 206 – 207.

abundant, and its sources seemed for a time so inexhaustible, that the aggrandizing power of wealth was momentarily annihilated.⁵³

Unfortunately, the mines did not put all men upon a level. Clothes, money, manners, and the rest still counted for something. The potential for anybody to make a fortune in the mines, combined with a lack of institutionalized social networks and restraints, did challenge received notions of how to order society, but instead of “destroy[ing] all fictitious social standards,” the conditions in the gold mines selected for some social standards over others.⁵⁴ While Victorians de-emphasized wealth and family status, a person’s race, gender, and manner of behavior became even more important to determining a person’s position in society. Victorians viewed and evaluated these traits through the lens of republican values.

The mining councils reflect this, as they were overwhelmingly controlled by, and acted in the interests of, American men.⁵⁵ Europeans could have a supplementary role, acting to support the decisions of the council, or even taking part in making decisions, but it was clear that their involvement was conditional upon their acquiescence to the will of Americans.⁵⁶ Non-Europeans, such as the natives and Chinese, were rarely, if ever, recorded as taking part in the mining councils. As in San Francisco, participation in local government mirrored the national debate over citizenship: Europeans were divided and ranked by nationality, but still evaluated

⁵³ Shinn, *Mining Camps*, p. 110. There has long been a dissenting view of the same phenomena that saw the same forms of government as tools of oppression. Until recently, this was a minority view. Josiah Royce, a contemporary of Charles Shinn, is one of the earliest and most important members of this school. Josiah Royce, *California, from the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco; A Study of American Character*, ed. Robert Glass Cleland (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1948), esp. pp. 214 – 249.

⁵⁴ Shinn, *Mining Camps*, p. 111.

⁵⁵ Alfred T. Jackson, *The Diary of a Forty-Niner* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), pp. 222, 232.

⁵⁶ Downie, *Hunting for Gold*, pp. 21 – 23; Shinn, *Mining Camps*, p. 243.

separately from the rest of the world.⁵⁷ Americans dominated both the membership of the mining councils and mining meetings, and even more critically, set the agenda of these groups. It was these mining councils, and similar organizations of “the people,” that were responsible for most of the approximately 150 lynchings that occurred in California between 1849 and 1852, the majority of which victimized Latin Americans.⁵⁸ The targeting of Latin Americans, particularly Mexicans and Californios, demonstrates that on the ground, many, if not most, Americans saw these people not as potential good citizens, but as bad men marked by their racial and gender degradation as an inherently criminal threat.

The influence of republican ideology was evident in how mining councils regulated who could work, and under what conditions, in a mining district. The councils were influenced by the myth that small, independent gold producers characterized the early California gold rush, a myth that largely arose as a reaction to the increasing industrialization of the east.⁵⁹ In California, Victorians believed that every man could be his own boss, and get rich doing it too. Many Victorians believed that excluding non-white labor, and especially slave labor, was fundamental to the preservation of opportunities for Victorians to be independent and successful, the necessary prerequisites for a republican society. For instance, the mining code for the Upper Yuba district held that “that none but native and naturalized citizens of the United States shall be

⁵⁷ The debate over race and citizenship, particularly during the nineteenth century, was incredibly fluid and contradictory. Nevertheless, even as Americans debated the racial attributes of various Europeans, they set them apart from foreigners from outside Europe. See, for example Ian Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Mae M. Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (June, 1999): pp. 67 – 92; Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, esp. pp. 5 – 11, 89 – 130, 169.

⁵⁸ Fernando Purcell, “‘Too Many Foreigners for My Taste’: Law, Race and Ethnicity in California 1848-1852,” in *Evil, Law and the State: Perspectives on State Power and Violence*, ed. John T. Parry (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), p. 18; Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West, 1850-1935* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 9.

⁵⁹ Earl Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), pp. 43 – 46; Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 76, 122.

allowed to hold claims” and “that the word ‘native’ shall not include the Indians of this country.”⁶⁰

Such attitudes were not uniform, as an incident involving a Yankee, Charles Thompson, demonstrated. Thompson, a product of the rapidly industrializing Northeastern states, believed “that men never make a fortune out of their own individual manual labor, but that it is head work & talent that must in the end succeed.” Thompson therefore hired twenty-four Mexicans to work in his and his partners’ mines. However, Thompson’s mining claims were adjacent to “Western Hoosiers, Oregonians & Missourians” who refused to have a “damned greaser on the bar,” and indeed threatened to drive off “N. Yorkers Bostonians &c” if they persisted in hiring Mexican labor. In conflict were two ways of being white men, both predicated on the assumption of white supremacy. One view saw non-white labor as an exploitable resource for the superior intellects of white men; the other view, the “western” perspective, saw non-white labor as degrading for white labor and compromising the ability of Victorians to be white men in a republic of autonomous citizens. Ironically, despite Thompson’s ability to face down the other Americans, his supposedly docile labor force decided it was not going to work under the threat of violence, and left.⁶¹

If non-white labor was problematic in the mines, then ownership of mining claims by non-whites was even more controversial. One of the most widespread trends in the mining districts was the expulsion or prohibition of non-whites mining either independently or for wages. Some mining districts like the Columbia mining district, incorporated in 1854, explicitly barred “Asiatics [and] South Sea Islanders” from mining, “either for themselves or others.” The Columbia mining district’s laws not only restricted mining to “Americans, or Europeans who

⁶⁰ Downie, *Hunting for Gold*, p. 81.

⁶¹ Charles Thompson to Uncle, Sept. 10, 1850, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:8, BANC.

intend to become citizens,” but punished anyone who sold a claim to an “Asiatic or South-Sea Islander [by not allowing them] to hold another claim in this district for the space of six months.”⁶² Other mining districts expelled or prohibited Mexicans, Chinese, Hawaiians, French, Chileans, or blacks.⁶³ William Ryan remembered a miner’s meeting encompassing the North and South Forks of the American River where “the strongest arguments were used on the occasion in favour of their [the foreigners’] immediate expulsion; the Chilians, Sonoreans, Peruvians, and Mexicans, being more particularly designated as having no right to work in the mines.”⁶⁴ Interestingly, the French were allowed to remain, and “during all the subsequent disturbances, in various parts of the mining districts, there was a wide distinction made between the Europeans generally, and persons tinctured with Spanish blood.” Those “tinctured with Spanish blood” were singled out, claimed Ryan, because Americans perceived them as “interfer[ing] more particularly with the interests of American citizens.”⁶⁵ Ernest de Massey, a Frenchman, limned the contours of who was to be defined as an alien and enemy when he noted that 200 Americans, “as is custom among them, shamefully threw out all the Chileans, Peruvians, Mexicans, and anybody else who speaks Spanish” from newly discovered rich

⁶² Shinn, *Mining Camps*, p. 246.

⁶³ Downie, *Hunting for Gold*, pp. 21 – 23; J. M. E., “A Letter from the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 31 August, 1849; Ben Bowen, *Ben Bowen Diary and Notebook: Mss, 1854 – 1859*, pp. 50 – 51, Mss C-F 192, BANC; Jackson, *The Diary of a Forty-Niner*, p. 232; “Murder and Lynching,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 5 May, 1852.

⁶⁴ William Redmond Ryan, *Personal Adventures in Upper and Lower California, in 1848-9* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 296 – 298.

⁶⁵ Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, pp. 298 – 299.

diggings on the Mokelumne.⁶⁶ Over the remainder of the gold rush, similar language was used to justify the exclusion of various other groups from the mining districts.⁶⁷

In the gold mines, exclusion was based on a combination of complexion, language, and nationality. By physically removing competitors from the mines, Victorians increased their own chances of success. But the decision to expel groups was not strictly a rational economic choice. Instead, these decisions were shot through with racial, gender, and class concerns that shaped which groups were considered a threat, what type of threat they posed, and the best course of action for dealing with them.

In some cases, the economic threat was explicitly racial. In the mid-nineteenth century, white Americans were extremely concerned with being made into slaves by the extension of slavery or industrialization. Both forms of labor seemed to challenge the ability of the laboring white man to maintain the manly independence required by republican virtues.⁶⁸ In the early years of the California gold rush, most mining was carried on by small groups of men who often lived together and required little capital. Non-whites, either working in American claims or in their own mines, raised the specter of the “enslavement” of white men through the degradation of white labor. This was the objection the “Western Hoosiers, Oregonians & Missourians” had to Charles Thompson’s use of Mexican labor and the same concern that J.M.E., a miner writing from near the San Joaquin River, raised when he claimed that “the country is overrun by Mexicans and Chileans, so that Americans and kindred races have no chance with them. They

⁶⁶ Ernest de Massey, *A Frenchman in the Gold Rush; The Journal of Ernest de Massey, Argonaut of 1849*, ed. Marguerite Eyer Wilber (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1927), p. 36.

⁶⁷ See, for example, William Stacy, “The Difficulties in Tuolumne County,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 22 July, 1852; Peregrine Pilgrim, “Sonora Correspondent,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 February, 1853.

⁶⁸ Foner, *Free Soil*, pp. xi – xxvi; Marcus Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery: The Anglo American Context, 1830-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), pp. xv, 3-6, 20, 29; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*.

have the advantage of cheap and combined labor in their menials who are little better than slaves.” Some Victorians alleged that non-whites were working as “wage slaves” rather than in partnerships of independent miners and they feared that this practice would inevitably become the sole way of mining gold. J.M.E.’s solution for preserving white labor was to become increasingly familiar during the gold rush and echoed the exclusionary principles of the “free soil doctrine”; he argued that the United States government should take steps to preserve “exclusive possession” of California for Americans and to therefore “prevent the wholesale spoilation of the national property by aliens and enemies.”⁶⁹

At other times, the move to exclusion was justified on the grounds of racialized social threats. In May, 1852 Alfred Jackson recorded that “the miners on Deer Creek...turned out last week and drove all of the Chinamen off that stream” for being “impudent and aggressive.” Economic motivations remained just below the surface, however. The Chinese were perceived as impudent because they were “taking up claims the same as white men and appropriating water without asking leave.” When these Chinese attempted to compete directly with the white American miners on Deer Creek, the conflict escalated until the Chinese destroyed a dam, at which point

fifty miners gathered together, ran the Chinamen out of the district, broke up their pumps and boxes, tore out their dams, destroyed their ditches, burned up their cabins and warned them not to come back under penalty of being shot if they made a reappearance...there is a disposition to bar the Chinks out of the district.⁷⁰

In March, 1855 Ben Bowen recorded an attempt to drive out the blacks from his mining camp by some miners who claimed that the “niggers had got to be too saucy and therefore must leave the place.” Though Bowen and other white miners called a miners’ meeting that determined that the

⁶⁹ J. M. E., “A Letter from the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 31 August, 1849; For the seminal discussion of the free soil doctrine, see Foner, *Free Soil*.

⁷⁰ Jackson, *The Diary of a Forty-Niner*, p. 232.

blacks could stay if they would “behave themselves,” at least one decided to leave anyway. Bowen learned after the incident that “the intention was to drive them all off and divide the plunder.”⁷¹ While economic motives lurked just below the surface, it is telling that economic concerns were only directly expressed in terms of “degraded” labor lowering the status of white labor. Otherwise, the economic threat was discussed as a social threat to the integrity of colonial hierarchy that was itself based in the language and logic of republicanism.

When non-whites chose to resist American attempts to exclude them from a mining district, events could rapidly escalate, as occurred during the winter of 1849-50 in and around Chilean Gulch in Calaveras County. Sometime late in 1849, rumors of the Chileans’ expulsion of American miners, reports that many of the Chileans were “*peons* or slaves,” and a desire to limit economic competition from foreigners in general fueled the move to expel the Chileans.⁷² Up to this point, the events in Chilean Gulch were interchangeable with any number of other expulsions in the gold fields. However, instead of quietly acquiescing, the Chileans next vigorously defended their right to mine in the area.

The Chileans, “to the surprise and admiration of the Americans,” not only refused to leave, but expelled five Americans they claimed were working on their ground.⁷³ Faced with escalating harassment from the American miners, the Chileans appealed to a judge in nearby Stockton. Judge Reynolds issued a writ for the arrest of the American miners, but when two judges in Chilean Gulch refused to enforce the order because “American citizens can never be arrested by foreigners,” the Chileans took matters into their own hands and attacked the

⁷¹ Bowen, *Diary and Notebook*, pp. 50 – 51.

⁷² John Hovey, quoted in Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, p. 199; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, p. 46. For a detailed analysis of the events of the “Chilean War” and a close reading of the biases of the source texts, see Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 196 – 207.

⁷³ Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, pp. 68 – 69.

American camp.⁷⁴ The conflict left dead on both sides and the Americans the prisoners of the Chileans.⁷⁵ The Chileans eventually attempted to march their captives to Stockton to present them to Judge Reynolds. By this point, however, the American population had begun to organize and as the day wore on, more and more Chileans deserted the march as it became evident the Americans were mobilizing in force to stop them.⁷⁶ Eventually, the prisoners either freed themselves or were rescued, and the Chileans marched back to Calaveras.⁷⁷

By this time, the American population was incensed. Americans criticized Judge Reynolds for issuing the writ, especially because he issued it to “the lowest order of Chileans – none of whom could speak English.”⁷⁸ Unsurprisingly, most of the blame was placed squarely on the Chileans who, it was believed, falsely swore in order to obtain the writ in the first place.⁷⁹ With Stockton “red-hot” with rumors of Chilean atrocities and of a possible Chilean-native alliance against whites, harassment of Chileans increased, partly fueled by the alcohol of the holiday season.⁸⁰ Back in Chilean Gulch, three of the Chileans were hung, while others had their heads shaved, ears cropped, or were whipped.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, p. 74.

⁷⁵ Robert Wilson, “The Disturbance at the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 January, 1850; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, pp. 48 – 49; Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, 75 – 76.

⁷⁶ Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, pp. 48 – 55; Robert Wilson, “The Disturbance at the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 January, 1850.

⁷⁷ Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, pp. 54 – 56; Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, 78 – 79; Robert Wilson, “The Disturbance at the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 January, 1850.

⁷⁸ Robert Wilson, “The Chilean Disturbance,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 January, 1850. The inability of the Chileans to speak English is a reoccurring theme in Victorian accounts. See also Robert Wilson, “The Disturbance at the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 January, 1850; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, pp. 48 – 49.

⁷⁹ Robert Wilson, “The Chilean Disturbance,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 January, 1850; Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, p. 79.

⁸⁰ Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, p. 79; Robert Wilson, “The Disturbance at the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 January, 1850; Robert Wilson, “The Chilean Disturbance,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 January, 1850.

⁸¹ Navarro notes that one of the men hung was actually Mexican. Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, 82 – 84; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, p. 58.

The Chilean War laid bare the harsh logic of California colonial order. While individual American officials like Judge Reynolds might sympathize with the Chileans or other non-whites, the logic of republican ideology meant that to work against the interests of Victorian Americans was to work against “the people” and to be, therefore, weak or corrupt. By reacting so harshly to the supposed threat posed by the Chileans, Victorian miners violently asserted that only they had the right to determine who had rights in the mines, and served notice that if those deemed foreigners attempted to assert their own rights, they would be met by escalating resistance, culminating, if need be, in direct support by the State.

The regulation of foreigners underwent a significant shift in 1851 and 1852. On 14 March 1851, the Foreign Miner’s Tax was repealed, largely at the behest of white merchants who saw foreigners as another market for their goods. As miner and painter William Ryan put it, the merchants “regard[ed] it as a matter of indifference whether they dealt with Yankees or Californians, provided they could sell their goods.”⁸² The opposition of white merchants to the Foreign Miner’s Tax reflected a vision of colonialism that emphasized the utilization of non-whites as labor and customers by a white business or professional class. However, the original drive behind the Foreign Miner’s Tax would outlive the legislation itself. In May 1852, the State introduced a system of mining licenses. Like the Foreign Miners’ Tax, the licenses were targeted at non-citizens. They were far more affordable, however, initially starting at \$3.00 per month.⁸³ The implementation of mining licenses, though officially aimed at all foreigners, coincided with the first great influx of Chinese into California, and came to be applied almost

⁸² Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, p. 296.

⁸³ “The Tax on Foreign Miners and the Policy of Expulsion,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 May, 1852.

exclusively to them.⁸⁴ To understand the success of the new mining licenses, it is necessary to examine the changing attitudes of Victorians toward the Chinese and their place within colonial society.

As Stuart Miller argued years ago, negative stereotypes of the Chinese preceded their actual arrival in California.⁸⁵ However, despite this, Victorian attitudes toward the Chinese remained remarkably fluid until the massive influx of population in 1852 catalyzed widespread Victorian concerns. From the start of the rush until 1852, Victorian popular opinion was fairly evenly divided, even slightly favorable to the Chinese. Described as “happy and clannish,” and “very useful, quiet, good citizens and ... deserving the respect of all,” many Victorians saw the Chinese as more curious than threatening.⁸⁶ And yet, even these early, fairly positive impressions hinted at the central question that would persistently follow the Chinese in California: could the Chinese fit within a republican society? Were they actually useful and quiet, and, most importantly, could they be “good citizens” in the fullest sense of that term?

Race and economics were always two of the most significant factors affecting the Victorian image and treatment of the Chinese during the gold rush. Before 1852, Chinese immigration received strong support from Victorian leaders generally who saw them as “peaceable [and] industrious,” and merchants in particular, who saw in them a domestic market,

⁸⁴ “The Tax on Foreign Miners and the Policy of Expulsion,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 May, 1852. On the shift from self-employed miners working in small groups or companies to capital-intensive mining and wage work, see Paul, *California Gold*, pp. 101, 117 – 119; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 246 – 248.

⁸⁵ Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant; The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

⁸⁶ “Our Population,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 8 March, 1850; See also “Celestial,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 May, 1850; “Latest From the Celestials,” in *The Daily Alta California*, August 11, 1850; “More Murder and Robbery,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 October, 1850.

as well as the potential for overseas trade.⁸⁷ In the mines, the number of Chinese remained small and concentrated in quieter mining districts.⁸⁸ In the eyes of some Victorians, the Chinese compared well to other migrants, like the Chileans or Australians, during this period.⁸⁹ At the same time, however, Victorians widely believed the Chinese in California to be mostly “coolies,” that is, uneducated Chinese laborers under the control of the “better class” of Chinese.⁹⁰ The supposedly coercive aspects of Chinese labor, combined with Chinese “clannishness” (not to mention their physical appearance), made the Chinese appear particularly problematic as potential republicans. Nevertheless, so long as the economic benefits of the relatively small numbers of Chinese in California outweighed any potential problems, Victorian society seems to have conditionally approved of them.

The massive influx of Chinese in 1852 changed this. The influx coincided with an accelerated shift to large mining companies and wage work that threatened the ability of Victorian men to stake a claim to an independent white manliness and dampened their dreams of striking it rich.⁹¹ As a result, the years after 1852 saw an increasing concern over Chinese labor,

⁸⁷ “More Murder and Robbery,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 October, 1850; “Celestials,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 May, 1850; “The China Boys,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 May, 1851; “Asiatic Immigration,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 May, 1851; Reverend William Speer, “China and California, Their Relations Past and Present: A Lecture in Conclusion of a Series in Relation to the Chinese People, Delivered in the Stockton Street Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, June 28, 1853,” State Archive.

⁸⁸ See, for example Osborn, Journal, p. 191.

⁸⁹ “Foreign Immigration,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 20 February, 1850.

⁹⁰ John David Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters: A First-Hand Picture of Life in California Mining Camps in the Early Fifties*, ed. Horace Kephart (1857; New York: International Fiction Library, 1917), p. 253; Capron, *History Of California*, p. 146.

⁹¹ Paul, *California Gold*, pp. 101, 117 – 119. Moon-ho Jung points out that “coolies were never a people or a legal category. Rather, coolies were a conglomeration of racial imaginings that emerged worldwide in the era of slave emancipation, a product of the imaginers rather than the imagined.” Moon-ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 5.

now being identified with greater frequency as “coolie” labor.⁹² Concurrently, Victorians became intensely concerned about the place of the Chinese within the republic. Increasingly, Victorians worried that the Chinese posed not only an economic and social threat, but also a direct threat to the structure of republican government and the right of Victorians to regulate and control society.⁹³ In particular, commentators began to worry that the Chinese were enforcing their own criminal and contract laws on each other.⁹⁴ The shift to wage work, combined with the apparent desirability of the Chinese as wage workers and rumors of their flouting of American sovereignty, fed Victorian hostility to the Chinese.

Politicians and other concerned Victorian citizens began to call for a halt to Chinese immigration, citing the danger they posed to American labor as well as the threat of “an *amalgamation* of the different RACES of men, and the consequent destruction of the great distinctive features of the Anglo-Saxon race.”⁹⁵ By 1856, it was evident that legislator Wilson Flint spoke for the majority of Victorians when he argued that the “God endowed white man” could “never share with him [the Chinese] the duties and burdens of self-government, the

⁹² “Legislative Intelligence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 April, 1852; “The Chinese Immigration,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 26 April, 1852; “Legislative Intelligence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 30 April, 1852; “The Cooley Trade,” in *The Daily Alta California*; Peregrim Pilgrim, “The Chinese in California,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 July, 1853. Jung traces the development of the idea of coolieism and its gradual attachment to Chinese workers in his book, *Coolies and Cane*.

⁹³ “The Chinese and Their Assumption of Jurisdiction in San Francisco,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 8 June, 1853; Mountaineer, “Letter From the Mountains,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 15 June, 1853; “Chinese Vigilant Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 26 August, 1853.

⁹⁴ “Difficulties Among the Chinese,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 13 August, 1852; “The Chinese and Their Assumption of Jurisdiction in San Francisco,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 8 June, 1853; Mountaineer, “Letter From the Mountains,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 15 June, 1853; “Chinese Vigilant Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 26 August, 1853; “The Chinese Case,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 5 January, 1854; “Chinese Villainy,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 March, 1854.

⁹⁵ J. E. Clayton, “Remarks of the Hon. J.E. Clayton, on the Chinese Question: Delivered in the Assembly Chamber, on the 18th of April, 1855,” p. 3, State Archive.

responsibility and glory of a free citizen!”⁹⁶ On the back of increased Chinese migration and fundamental changes to the systems of mining, by the late 1850s most Victorians in California had moved from seeing the potential for the Chinese to fill a role in Californian society as quiet workers in menial or low-paying jobs to identifying them as one of the greatest threats in California to republicanism and to the ability of Victorians to claim an identity as white men through labor. Mining licenses were one way for Victorians to try to control the threat they saw in Chinese migrants. In much the same way that regulation of Chinese labor in Louisiana in the 1850s, ‘60s, and ‘70s would mark Chinese workers as coolies, a category antithetical to citizens, so too did mining licenses in California mark the Chinese population as different and threatening.⁹⁷

Though the Chinese came to discursively represent the greatest economic and social threat to the Victorian social order, it was the native population that most suffered from the full weight of the colonial regime. Natives had occupied an ambivalent position in the Spanish, and then Mexican, colonial states. Sometimes enemies, they were also a source of labor and a subject of missionization. As in other Spanish colonies, natives had the potential to occupy a subordinate position within colonial society as converts, laborers, and servants.⁹⁸ With the arrival of large numbers of Victorians, some parts of this colonial relationship were preserved,

⁹⁶ Wilson Flint, “Speech of Hon. Wilson Flint, in the Senate of California, March 21, 1856: on the Bill to Reduce the Chinese Mining License Tax,” p. 3, State Archive. Pro-Chinese voices were increasingly limited to the missionary and merchant classes. See, for example Californian, “The Chinese,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 July, 1857; “The Chinese Population,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 December, 1857.

⁹⁷ Jung, *Coolies and Cane*.

⁹⁸ Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, pp. 23 – 26, 32 – 35; James J. Rawls, *Indians of California: The Changing Image* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), pp. 3 – 6, 13 – 21.

most notably with the passage of “An Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians” in 1850.⁹⁹

As unappealing and disastrous as this policy and attendant line of reasoning were for natives, it at least created space for natives in the colonial hierarchy, even if it was as a permanent underclass. The other major line of thought, and the one that had the greatest effect on natives during the gold rush period, held that natives and civilization were antithetical. Under the Protection of the Indians Act, responsibility for managing natives fell upon local Justices of the Peace, who were, in turn, elected by, and reflected the views of, the mining councils and camp meetings of the gold fields.¹⁰⁰ Even this legal formality was often dispensed with when Victorians interacted with natives, and when these encounters turned violent – and they did with astonishing frequency in the early years of the rush – Victorians showed a marked proclivity toward attempting to exterminate the native population.¹⁰¹ Newspapers and officials occasionally predicted and even urged Indians’ extermination. Miners in the field acted to make this rhetoric a reality.¹⁰²

While a wide variety of Victorian men took part in attacks on natives, there is suggestive anecdotal evidence that Overlanders bore a disproportionate burden of responsibility for these attacks. Theodore Johnson summed up this perception when he claimed that “the late emigrants across the mountains, and especially from Oregon, had commenced a war of extermination upon

⁹⁹ California Secretary of State, “An Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians,” Chapter 133, 1850, in *Statutes of California, First Session of the Legislature, 1849 -1850*, location E6553, box 1, sections 3, 6, 9, 14, 20. See also Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ California Secretary of State, “An Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians.”

¹⁰¹ For a collection of accounts stressing the proclivity of settlers to exterminate natives, see Clifford Trafzer and Joel Hyer, eds., *Exterminate Them: Written Accounts of the Murder, Rape, and Slavery of Native Americans During the California Gold Rush, 1848 – 1868* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999). Hurtado stresses the continuation of natives in California and attributes the demographic decline not only to fighting, but also to labor policies. See Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, pp. 107 – 123.

¹⁰² Trafzer and Hyer, *Exterminate Them*.

[the natives], shooting them down like wolves, men, women and children, wherever they could find them.”¹⁰³ Johnson identified Overlanders (the “late emigrants from across the mountains”) and Oregonians, who were themselves usually products of the overland migration, as the instigators. The prevalence of these two groups in accounts of attacks on natives suggests the role that frontier experiences and the overland migration played in conditioning certain groups of Victorians to see natives as antithetical to Victorian civilization and to encourage the use of force as a solution. This is, of course, not to make Overlanders, and especially Oregonians, wholly responsible for the violence, for Argonauts clearly also took part. Nor is it to reduce their motivation to a monocausal explanation. A multitude of other factors also influenced Victorian reactions to natives in California. But it is suggestive of the formative role the journey to the gold fields played in shaping the attitudes and actions of Victorians in California.

The tension between a subordinate place for natives within the colonial hierarchy and a place for natives outside the colonial hierarchy continued throughout the gold rush period. On one side were the advocates for natives who favored a “soft” approach: slavery or, barring a slow natural extinction, isolation of natives on reservations followed by eventual assimilation. On the other side were those who favored a “hard” approach: in their view, the natives were going to die out and, frankly, the sooner the better. The debate between the “two lines of policy

¹⁰³ Theodore Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region, and Scenes by the Way* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), pp. 152, 201, 204; Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, pp. 135 – 136; William S. M’Collum, *California as I saw it* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Published by George H. Derby & Co., 1850), pp. 51 – 52; George Holbrook Baker, Personal Papers, Diaries May 1849 – Aug 1850, 28 June, 1849, George Holbrook Baker Collection, folder 6, box 1844, State Archive; “From the Sacramento – Difficulties at the Mines between the Americans and Chilians,” *New York Tribune*, 2 August, 1849, in Material for Proposed Publication of Gold Rush Letters, Carbons of Letters from Newspapers, folder 1, box 2170, State Archive; “The Indian Massacre in California,” *New York Tribune*, 15 August, 1849, in Material for Proposed Publication of Gold Rush Letters, Carbons of Letters from Newspapers, folder 1, box 2169, State Archive; “Description of Sutter’s Fort – Washing – A Model Gold-Washer – Prices of Provisions at the Mills – The Oregonians and the Indians – Forty Indian Girls Killed, to Save Them From the Whites – Mining Association Formed – Expedition Four Months Too Early,” in *N.Y. Tribune*, 1 September, 1849, in Material for Proposed Publication of Gold Rush Letters, Carbons of Letters from Newspapers, folder 1, box 2169, State Archive; Bancroft, *History of California*, pp. 72 – 73. Both Rawls and Trafzer make similar arguments as to the influence of Oregonians. See Rawls, *Indians of California*, pp. 127 – 130, 177 – 180 and Trafzer and Hyer, *Exterminate Them*, pp. 2, 17.

which are directly opposed to each other – the one, the policy of protection; the other, that of extermination” – was therefore a debate over what sort of control should be exercised over the native population of California.¹⁰⁴ The factions ascribed different actions and attitudes to proper white men. While the “hard” faction saw Indian-fighting as necessary and heroic, and Indian-fighters therefore as heroic embodiments of martial manliness, proponents of a “soft” native policy saw these same men as degraded whites, little better than savages themselves.¹⁰⁵ While neither side was ever able to completely dominate the public discourse about the nature of natives and the white men who fought with them, the outcome of Indian-fighting, combined with the dispossession of natives from their land, the Protection of the Indians Act, and other causes, is clear. The native population of California plummeted from approximately 120,000 in 1846 to between 20,000 and 40,000 by the 1860s.¹⁰⁶ Though the soft and hard factions articulated different visions of white manliness *vis-à-vis* how they dealt with natives, both were complicit in causing the massive demographic collapse of California’s native population.

The subordination of natives was just one part of a larger project by Victorians to create and enforce a colonial hierarchy with themselves at the top. Key to this project was Victorian control of local government in the mines. Though off-white Europeans such as the French, Irish, and Germans could be targeted for challenging the dominance of Victorians in the mines, for the most part Victorian energy was directed toward regulating off-whites and non-whites from Asia,

¹⁰⁴ “Indian Affairs on the Pacific,” in *San Francisco Bulletin*, 1 September, 1856, quoted in Trafzer and Hyer, *Exterminate Them*, pp. 49 – 52.

¹⁰⁵ For the hard perspective, see “Indian Difficulties,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 May, 1850; “Indian Affairs on the Pacific,” in *San Francisco Bulletin*, 1 September, 1856, quoted in Trafzer and Hyer, *Exterminate Them*, pp. 49 – 52; Herman Francis Reinhart, *The Golden Frontier: The Recollections of Herman Francis Reinhart, 1851-1869* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), p. 32; For the ‘soft’ perspective, see Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, pp. 298 – 299; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, pp. 127 – 128; Rawls, *Indians of California*, pp. 144 – 146, 183. The concept of “martial manhood” is derived from Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 12 – 13.

¹⁰⁶ Trafzer and Hyer, *Exterminate Them*, p. xxiii; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, p. 100; Rawls, *Indians of California*, p. 171.

Africa, and South and Central America. It was not, of course, that the Europeans were acquiescent while the non-Europeans posed real political and economic threats, but that the racial and gendered values inherent in Californian republicanism meant that these latter off-white and non-white groups emerged as threatening in the gold mines. Shared republican values not only tied disparate mining camps together, they also linked the mining region to the towns and cities. However, in the urban centers the same language and logic of republicanism, with its attendant racial and gender components, resulted in Victorians focusing on regulating and, if need be, suppressing, the actions of off-whites.

San Francisco

San Francisco had no serious challenger as the dominant city of the gold rush. On the back of a massive population explosion that would see it transformed from a sleepy hamlet to a burgeoning metropolis, San Francisco rose to become the West's largest population concentration, the center of its banking, merchandising, and industries, and the single most politically important location in California.¹⁰⁷ Unsurprisingly, San Francisco also dominated the production of media, with San Francisco newspapers such as the *Alta California* enjoying a readership throughout the state that smaller presses located closer to the gold fields could only dream of matching. Finally, San Francisco was a close second to the mines as the symbol of gold rush society. Events in San Francisco therefore had repercussions beyond the city limits.

Unlike much of the mining area, San Francisco had pre-existing forms of local government when gold was discovered. Under Mexico, civil control had rested with an *alcalde*,

¹⁰⁷ For an indication of San Francisco's demographic growth, see Frank Soulé, *Annals of San Francisco; containing a Summary of the History of* (New York: Appleton, 1855), pp. 188, 301, 413. Soulé charts the growth of San Francisco from 375 inhabitants "without reckoning the Indians," in 1847, to between 25,000 and 30,000 in 1850 and 36,000 and 42,000 in 1852. Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 16 – 64.

an official who combined administrative and judicial roles in one person. To many Americans, this concentration of legal and civic powers in one person was characteristic of the inherent tendency to despotism of Mexican government and to be subject to it, even with an American filling the office, was an affront to their republican sensibilities.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, in San Francisco, backed by support from the military governors of California following the conquest, the office of the *alcalde* uneasily co-existed with a series of elected town councils, until it was replaced by the office of the mayor and a separate judiciary in April 1850.¹⁰⁹ Thereafter, formal authority in San Francisco was vested in the mayor and city council, and supported by a judiciary and police force, with federal authority nearby in the form of the army and navy. As in other locations where Victorian American immigrants were dominant, in San Francisco elected Americans soon filled these positions. As we shall see, however, in the turbulent world that was gold-rush San Francisco, assertions of extra-legal authority vested in the logic and rhetoric of natural law that underlay republicanism in California challenged these official structures.

The colonial order that emerged in San Francisco shared strong structural similarities with the colonial order that emerged in the mines. These similarities were products of the Victorians' shared heritage and values in the face of a seemingly diverse and disordered society that was, in turn, reinforced by the high degree of movement between the mines and San Francisco. As in the mines, a group's perceived degree of Anglo-normativity, as viewed through the lens of its suitability for participation in republican government, was the crucial factor in determining its place in the colonial hierarchy. These rankings were neither static nor predetermined, though pre-existing cultural notions did make it far harder for people of non-

¹⁰⁸ Ellison, *A Self-Governing Dominion*, pp. 11 – 12; Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 24 – 25, 28 – 30.

¹⁰⁹ Ellison, *A Self-Governing Dominion*, pp. 11 – 14, 16 – 21, 66; Neal Harlow, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846 – 1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 265 – 285; Soulé, *Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 205, 208, 218 – 219.

European origin to rise in the colonial hierarchy. Indeed, in San Francisco much energy would be spent in determining which peoples of European descent were suitable for the republic, to what extent, and under what conditions. For while being of European descent made it possible to rise in colonial society, it was only of marginal effectiveness in stopping downward movement in the colonial hierarchy.

But while being an English-speaker of European descent was an important factor in being recognized as a good citizen, the language of republicanism as articulated in California also placed heavy emphasis on behavior and actions. The key criterion for admission to the ranks of the good citizenry was respectability. And Americans in California tended to perceive respectability through the prism of Victorian values, which were themselves, in turn, heavily imbued with gender, class, and racial biases, such that good citizenship was strongly correlated to white manliness. Good citizens in California therefore feared the influence of both non- and off-whites, but with the important note that behavior as much as origin could move an individual or group between whiteness and off-whiteness. This was particularly important in San Francisco, where, as we shall see, the prevalence of gambling, drinking, and other morally problematic activities helped create the impression, among middle-class Victorian merchants in particular, of a society under threat from non- and off-whites unsuited to a republican government.

For Victorians, the danger of non- and off-whites was that they either explicitly challenged the authority of “proper” white men to dictate public behavior, or they asserted alternative sources of authority, arguing that while American laws and codes were applicable to white men, others were capable of self-regulation to their own standards. The challenge, then, was to make other groups “appreciat[e]...the principle of submission to the majority.” To carry

out this “almost impossible task,” one of the first things Victorians did upon their arrival in California was attempt to establish their dominance over other groups, often through real or threatened violence and the assertion of moral, cultural, technological, and religious superiority.¹¹⁰

In San Francisco, Victorians came to perceive crime as one of the most significant threats to social order and, in suppressing it, they sought to create themselves as the embodiments of republican order. While some commentators tried to insist that crime was no more common in California than elsewhere, most thought of California as rife with criminal activity.¹¹¹ Victorians believed that criminals were predisposed to form combinations, to act in concert or under the control of a master, making them a particular threat to the manly independence needed for a functioning republic.¹¹² Criminals violated Victorian codes of public behavior and undercut the relationship between work and reward. Because of this, “proper” Victorians did not consider criminals as being fully white, regardless of their origin; instead, they were either non- or off-white. Their presence and actions represented an alternative social order in which proper white men were not dominant, a danger all the more keenly felt because of the tenuous nature of Victorian colonial order in California. To meet these perceived challenges, middle-class Victorians in San Francisco increasingly took the power of the state into their own hands through extra-legal forms of government, actions that were justified using the language and logic of republicanism.

¹¹⁰ Capron, *History Of California*, p. 171.

¹¹¹ George Holbrook Baker to Mother, 20 June 1849, box 1844, file 5, State Archive; James Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines: And a Description of the Great Tulare Valley* (Stockton, Calif.: Published to Accompany the Steamer Edition of the “San Joaquin Republican”, 1852), p. 19.

¹¹² Senkewicz, *Vigilantes*, pp. 75, 78.

Middle-class Victorians did not move immediately to seize control of local government. Instead, the slow evolution of the vigilance movements in San Francisco demonstrated the ways in which the colonial hierarchy was being defined. In particular, they demonstrate the debates over whether certain groups were white or off-white and why. The earliest major example of this debate was the Hounds crisis of 1849. The Hounds were a group of decommissioned New York Volunteers who banded together in San Francisco to form a mutual benevolent society.¹¹³ The Hounds soon expanded beyond that limited role, as became evident when they named their headquarters “Tammany Hall,” a reference to the headquarters of the powerful Democratic machine in New York City. The Hounds evidently sought to position themselves as the muscle of the Democratic Party in San Francisco, a tactic which met with moderate success in the early months of 1849, as they were involved in several political disputes.¹¹⁴ However, lacking the discipline of New York’s Tammany Hall and the ability to dispense political patronage, the Hounds instead took to harassing and extorting foreigners to secure power and for amusement.¹¹⁵

The Hounds soon came to focus on the Chilean population in particular, arguing they were defending American citizens from “acts of violence committed by Chilenos and foreigners.”¹¹⁶ At the same time, the Hounds changed their name to the Regulators, a deliberate

¹¹³ Joshua Paddison, *A World Transformed: Firsthand Accounts of California Before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1998), p. 311; “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition; Bancroft, *History of California*, pp. 211 – 212.

¹¹⁴ “More News from California – Illegal Assembly – Governor’s Proclamation – Politics and the Gold Digging – Prospects for Emigrants – Goods for a Song, &c., &c.” in *New York Herald*, 17 September, 1849.

¹¹⁵ “More News from California – Illegal Assembly – Governor’s Proclamation – Politics and the Gold Digging – Prospects for Emigrants – Goods for a Song, &c., &c.” in *New York Herald*, 17 September, 1849.

¹¹⁶ “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition; “More News from California – Illegal Assembly – Governor’s Proclamation – Politics and the Gold Digging – Prospects for Emigrants – Goods for a Song, &c., &c.” in *New York Herald*, 17 September, 1849.

reference to a pre-revolution popular movement in the Carolinas, a movement that had, by the 1840s, become celebrated in American culture as an example of white men rising up against oppression, in the best tradition of republicanism.¹¹⁷ A general lack of knowledge about the Hounds in the burgeoning metropolis, combined with widely-held assumptions that foreigners, especially non-European foreigners, posed a threat to colonial society, meant that most Victorians paid little attention to the Hound-Chilean conflict before the middle of July.

Those Victorians who noticed the Hounds found them to be a source of amusement, known for “displaying a want of sense, in parading the public streets in fantastic or ridiculous dresses, and by the commission of pranks of a character calculated to amuse the community at the expense of themselves.”¹¹⁸ Other commentators, not so generous, noted the Hounds could “be seen, attired in the most gaudy clothing, with rich-colored *serapas* thrown over their shoulders, their hats ornamented with feathers and artificial flowers.”¹¹⁹ In both cases the Hounds hardly met the standards of behavior and dress expected of white men. They behaved as lower-class rowdies were expected to behave, dressed in flamboyant clothes, and, even more damning, were often seen with “the most abandoned Spanish women or Indian squaws.”¹²⁰ Despite these questionable actions, before July, few middle-class Victorians paid any attention to the Hounds. The attacks on the night of 15 July 1849 changed that.

¹¹⁷ David T. Courtwright, *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 121; Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 255.

¹¹⁸ “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition.

¹¹⁹ Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, p. 260; Palmer described the Hounds as dressing in “carnival attire, mixed of Mexican, Chinese, and Indian garments, snatched with impunity from the nearest shop.” John Williamson Palmer, *The New and the Old; or, California and India in Romantic Aspects* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1859), p. 79.

¹²⁰ Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, p. 260.

Emboldened by the perceived popular acquiescence to their previous attacks and fueled by alcohol, the Hounds planned, as Joseph T. Downey testified later, “to run the Chilenos out that night.”¹²¹ In keeping with their asserted identity as defenders of American citizens in San Francisco, the Hounds assembled near “Tammany Hall,” formed into “military order,” and, led by men in quasi-military uniforms, playing “fife and drum” and singing the “Star-spangled Banner,” proceeded to Telegraph Hill, where the Chilean population was concentrated.¹²² Once there, they apparently broke into several groups, destroying and seizing property, killing four Chileans and wounding another thirteen.¹²³ Throughout it all, the Hounds explicitly targeted non-Euro-Americans. They spared at least two Englishmen because of their nationality, underscoring the assumption that the British were white men, even when they were sleeping and living in a part of town that was predominantly foreign in character.¹²⁴ Though out for a rowdy good time, republican values clearly shaped who was a legitimate target for the Hounds.

The response of the larger Victorian community caught the Hounds off-guard, however. Instead of praise the Hounds were confronted with a citizens’ meeting organized by the *alcalde* of San Francisco, Thaddeus Leavenworth, the day after the attack. Under Leavenworth’s direction, but assisted by Samuel Brannan, a local figure who would go on to play a crucial role

¹²¹ “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition.

¹²² “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition; “More News from California – Illegal Assembly – Governor’s Proclamation – Politics and the Gold Digging – Prospects for Emigrants – Goods for a Song, &c., &c.” in *New York Herald*, 17 September, 1849; Bancroft, *History of California*, pp. 211 – 212.

¹²³ “More News from California – Illegal Assembly – Governor’s Proclamation – Politics and the Gold Digging – Prospects for Emigrants – Goods for a Song, &c., &c.” in *New York Herald*, 17 September, 1849.

¹²⁴ “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition.

in the 1851 Vigilance Committee, the meeting appointed two special judges, a District Attorney, and 230 “good citizens” to arrest and try the Hounds. Most of the Hounds left San Francisco before the citizenry could mobilize, but seventeen were arrested and imprisoned on the U.S.S. *Warren* in San Francisco Bay. Within two weeks, these Hounds had been tried and sentenced to a variety of punishments, ranging from imprisonment and banishment to fines of various amounts.¹²⁵

Why did the Hounds so dramatically misjudge the reaction of the majority of Victorian men to their actions? While later accounts claimed that the Hounds’ behavior had gradually grown more obnoxious to the population of San Francisco, court testimony and other contemporary sources suggest that the Hounds were virtually ignored prior to the attack.¹²⁶ Instead, public opinion rapidly shifted against the Hounds for several reasons. Despite their emulation of New York’s Tammany Hall, the Hounds did not control patronage, nor did they seem to have much more than a weak affiliation with political power structures of any kind by the time of the 15 July attacks.¹²⁷ Also, while nativism had strong and deep roots in California (indeed, at their trial the Hounds used General Persifor Smith’s defunct prohibition of foreign labor in the mines as a defense),¹²⁸ the Victorian merchant elite, wishing to preserve and expand

¹²⁵ “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition.

¹²⁶ Bancroft, *History of California*, pp. 211 – 212; Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, pp. 257 – 263; “The Riots in California – Arrest and Trial of the Rioters – Their Punishment – The Election – The Mines – Sickness – Deaths &c., &c.” in *The New York Herald*, 14 September, 1849.

¹²⁷ “More News from California – Illegal Assembly – Governor’s Proclamation – Politics and the Gold Digging – Prospects for Emigrants – Goods for a Song, &c., &c.” in *New York Herald*, 17 September, 1849.

¹²⁸ “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition. Brigadier General Persifor Smith was a short-lived military governor of California. For more information on Smith’s proclamation, see Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 34.

its market, remained a vocal and influential voice for the rights of foreigners.¹²⁹ Politically, then, the Hounds were operating in an exposed position. This exposure was exacerbated by their own conduct. Their behavior and dress marked them as “brawlers, gamblers, and drunkards,” in other words, as off-white.¹³⁰

And, as off-whites, the Hounds’ actions, instead of buttressing a colonial order that served the interests of white men, seemed to threaten it. Indeed, immediately following the attacks a consistent narrative of the Chileans as helpless, effeminate, and in need of the protection of white men emerged. The description in the *Alta* which opened its coverage of the attack set the mood:

The scene, as heard by those residing in the vicinity, is described as heart-rending. In every direction were heard the cries and shrieks of women and children, mingled with the oaths and demonic laughter of reckless and impious men, whilst the report of fire-arms, and the sound of blows falling thick and fast upon the defenseless, gave to the act its finishing touch of cowardly outrage and attempted assassination.

The gendered language coding the attack as degraded-male on defenseless-female was continued in the charge that the Hounds conspired to “riot, rape and murder.”¹³¹ Within a few years this narrative had been strengthened so that the response was remembered as being a reaction to “the most brutal outrages [committed] upon [a Chilean] mother and daughter.”¹³² The Chilean

¹²⁹ “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition. The trend to see foreign markets as important, already evident during the gold rush, gained momentum by the turn of the century. See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

¹³⁰ Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, pp. 257 – 258.

¹³¹ “The Chilenos and other Foreigners in the City of San Francisco attacked by an Armed Party of Americans – Great Excitement – Meeting of the Citizens – Formation of a citizen armed Police – Arrest of the rioters – Their Trial and Sentence,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 August, 1849, Steamer Edition.

¹³² John M. Letts, *A Pictorial View of California: Including a Description of Panama and Nicaragua Routes, With Information and Advice Interesting to All, Particularly Those who Intend to Visit the Golden Region, by a Returned Californian* (New York: H. Bill, 1853), p. 52.

population stood in for innocent feminine victims which, in turn, cast the Hounds as unmanly aggressors and the middle-class Victorian population as manly protectors. Incidentally, this logic reduced both the Hounds and the Chileans to being unfit for full participation in the republic, as neither embodied the proper attributes of respectable white manliness.¹³³

The experience with the Hounds highlights the way that middle-class Victorians came to perceive crime as one of the most significant threats to social order in California. In suppressing it, middle-class Victorians sought to create themselves as the embodiments of republican order. In San Francisco, criminal activity became the premier threat to good citizens and the republic. After the dispersal of the Hounds in August 1849, attention focused on the supposed criminal propensities of the Australian immigrants or “Sydney Ducks.”¹³⁴ The history of Australia as a penal colony led most Americans to conflate Australian origins and criminality.¹³⁵ The liminal status of the Australians, as European-descended English-speakers, yet also tainted by criminality *as a people*, meant that Victorians focused greater attention on them than on other English-speaking immigrants of European descent. Their alleged criminality was crucial in their status as off-white. Even the Irish, whom Victorians understood to have a criminal element

¹³³ Susan Lee Johnson has identified a similar phenomenon in the gold mines with the Chinese as effeminate victims and Joaquin Murrieta as the unmanly aggressor. See Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, p. 35.

¹³⁴ The term Sydney Duck referred to their supposed point of origin (Sydney, Australia) as well as their nautical voyage to California.

¹³⁵ Peter Decker, *Diaries of Peter Decker: Manuscripts, Galleys, Ill.*, 2 February 1851; 29 April 1851, Talisman Press Collection, Box 2127, State Archive; John Carr, *Pioneer Days in California: Historical and Personal Sketches* (Eureka, Calif.: Times Publishing Company, 1891), p. 82.

among them, were not characterized as an inherently criminal people to the extent of the Australians.¹³⁶

In the eyes of Victorians the perceived cowardliness of Australians underscored their status as off-white. When a group of Australians attempted to bully William Downie and his friends upon their arrival in San Francisco in 1849, he reported that all that was required to scare them off was to announce that “nothing could scare us, we had just landed after a long voyage and nothing would please us better than a good live fight.”¹³⁷ Victorians also singled out “the English convicts from Sydney” for using slung-shots.¹³⁸ Slung-shots were a “coward’s weapon” because they allowed a man to incapacitate or kill without giving the victim a chance to resist.¹³⁹ This was an even more cowardly, and therefore unmanly, form of robbery than most others. As cowardly criminals, Australians violated the codes of behavior embedded in Victorianism and republicanism, underscoring their threat to the nascent political and social order in San Francisco.

Victorian reactions to the Australian immigration ranged from antagonism to near-hysteria. To some commentators, the Australians were the epitome of

¹³⁶ The *Alta* complained of the universality of equating “South Pacific islanders” with criminals. See “Crime Among Us,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 28 October, 1850. Of course, just under a month later, the *Alta* did exactly that and identified immigrants from Australia as criminals in spirit, if not in fact. “Immigration of Convicts,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 20 November, 1850. Victorians in California tended to stereotype the Irish as drunks and wife-beaters, though even this was more individual than racial/ national. See “Local Matters,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 March, 1850; “Marital Rights,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 28 April, 1851; “The Same Old Drunk,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 August, 1851. Given that many of the migrants from Australia were originally from Ireland, the linking of criminality with Australia may have had the effect of encouraging Victorians to think of “bad” Irish as Australian, while “good” Irish were identified with Ireland. This may help to explain why the “Irish” (or at least a portion of them) received a far warmer welcome in California than on the contemporary east coast. On the migration and acceptance of Australian Irish in California, see Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland’s New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 86 – 91, 95 – 103.

¹³⁷ Downie, *Hunting for Gold*, pp. 11 – 12.

¹³⁸ C. Sam to Willie, 27 February 1851, Mss C-B 547:53, BANC. A slung shot was a heavy object tied with a length of rope to the wrist. This allowed the attacker to throw it at an opponent and pull it back to throw again.

¹³⁹ “A Coward’s Weapon,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 May, 1850.

the creatures that are making our State, as far as in their power, a perfect Pandemonium. They have come here by the thousands. They are like the locusts and vermin of Egypt; they are everywhere. Not alone in the mines, engaged in robbery and murder; they are in our midst. They are upon us; our motions are watched, our steps followed; the privacy of home, of the business office, of the study, and the dormitory, is nothing. They see all, know all, and if vigilance is slackened for a moment, the theft, the robbery or the murder is almost certain to follow.¹⁴⁰

The “crying evil” of Australian criminality was “sapping the foundations of civil and social life.”¹⁴¹ Over the course of 1850, public opinion swung increasingly into line with the *Alta* when it agitated for an organized response to the “Australian problem.” By late 1850, the *Alta* suggested immigration restrictions and deportation by the Federal government, but the weak presence of the Federal government in California, a similarly weak state government controlled by Democratic politicians, and the mounting tensions between Victorians and Australians meant that events would come to a head before the state or Federal government acted.¹⁴²

At the same time that concern over the Australians intensified, San Francisco’s memories of the events surrounding the Hounds began to morph so that the citizen’s committee, which had been organized by *Alcalde* Leavenworth, came to be seen as oppositional and superior to the *alcalde*. Many Victorians now saw Leavenworth as “a very weak, undecided and inefficient officer, who looked with fear and trembling upon the Hounds and dared not act.” In contrast, these same Victorians remembered Samuel Brannan and the citizen committee acting quickly and decisively. It was Brannan and the committee, argued the *Alta*, who were responsible for the suppression of “the spirit of ruffianism and disorder” that had “jeopardize[d] the peace of the community.” When it forgot the role of the legal authorities and idealized the actions of men

¹⁴⁰ “Immigration of Convicts,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 20 November, 1850; See also Alonzo Rathbun, Alonzo W. Rathbun Diary 1849 – 1851, 9 May 1851, BANC; de Russailh, *Last Adventure*, pp. 17 – 18.

¹⁴¹ “Immigration of Convicts,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 20 November, 1850.

¹⁴² “Immigration of Convicts,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 20 November, 1850.

like Brannan and other “good citizens,” the *Alta* was part of a shift in California that undercut the legitimacy of official structures of authority and instead glorified the ability of “good citizens,” that is strong, independent white men, the embodiment of Victorian and republican virtues, to exercise authority when needed.¹⁴³ This shift would help enable the formation of the first Vigilance Committee in 1851.

On 22 February 1851, two Australians, named Stuart and Wildred, were arrested on suspicion of “being the robbers and attempted murderers of Mr. Jansen,” a San Francisco store owner.¹⁴⁴ The perception of crisis galvanized much of the San Franciscan Victorian community to question the ability of the government to deal with criminals like Stuart and Wildred. As the *Alta* put it, “Every honest man feels indignant against the vile miscreants who have fired our houses, robbed our citizens, and murdered them,” a state of affairs that was “the inevitable result of a shameful laxity in the administration of our lower courts.”¹⁴⁵ Despite what the *Alta* portrayed as unanimity of public opinion about the state of affairs in San Francisco, the actual attempts to subject the men to popular justice were, as the *Alta* would comment months later, “farcical.”¹⁴⁶ A militia unit stopped a mob in the courtroom from seizing the prisoners, and subsequent attempts were foiled by the police.¹⁴⁷ A committee elected by an angry crowd, and headed by Samuel Brannan, arranged with Mayor John Geary to serve as the jury in a special trial of Stuart and Wildred, yet the jury emerged deadlocked and unable to render a verdict. By

¹⁴³ “Law and Order,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 July, 1850.

¹⁴⁴ “The Excitement Yesterday,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 February, 1851; “Incidents of Yesterday – Trial of Jas. Stuart,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 February, 1851.

¹⁴⁵ “What Should our Citizens do?,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 February, 1851.

¹⁴⁶ “Secret Organization,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 June, 1851.

¹⁴⁷ “The Excitement Yesterday,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 February, 1851; “Incidents of Yesterday – Trial of Jas. Stuart,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 February, 1851.

24 February the “feverish feelings” had dissipated and Stuart and Wildred were committed for regular trial at the District Court.¹⁴⁸

Despite the bungled attempts at popular justice, the Stuart and Wildred affair marked a key point in the evolution of how certain segments of San Franciscan Victorian society thought about the role of the citizenry and government in making order. In hindsight, it is apparent that the vigilance forces during the Stuart and Wildred affair had several major weaknesses. The continued allegiance of the military and police forces to the official municipal government was crucial for forestalling attempts to seize the prisoners. This meant that neither the crowd nor the committee was able to present the government with a *fait accompli*; instead, buttressed by the support of armed and disciplined force, the state shaped events to a considerable degree. While the size of the crowds outside the courthouse and in the Plaza gave the committee considerable leverage, the committee had only limited control over the crowd’s actions, as evidenced by several independent attempts to seize the prisoners and the speed with which the “excitement” abated on 24 February.¹⁴⁹ Ultimately, the lack of real organization, and especially the inability of the committee to challenge the coercive authority of the government, meant that the committee only had power as long as the populace remained excited. This situation was ultimately self-defeating for the committee because it rested its legitimacy on republican values that required calm, collective action. The committee could not effectively call for calm and keep the crowd excited.

¹⁴⁸ “Incidents of Yesterday – Trial of Jas. Stuart,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 February, 1851; “City Intelligence – Yesterday,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 25 February, 1851.

¹⁴⁹ “The Excitement Yesterday,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 February, 1851; “Incidents of Yesterday – Trial of Jas. Stuart,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 February, 1851; “City Intelligence – Yesterday,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 25 February, 1851.

The Stuart and Wildred affair demonstrates that while there was some dissatisfaction with the legal system, a coherent logic justifying lynch law as a suitable alternative had yet to emerge. Indeed, the *Alta*, which would emerge later in the year as the most important public advocate for vigilantism in California, voiced significant reservations about lynch law as a concept. While the *Alta* went to great lengths to stress that the committee was cool, calm, and reasoned and that the crowd “were not rowdies, but the majority were our best citizens,” and were therefore acting in keeping with the ideals of Victorianism and republican virtue, the project they were embarked upon, lynch law, was more dubious.¹⁵⁰ Initially, the *Alta* argued strongly that the courts remained the best venue for trying criminals, especially if the public demonstration had been “sufficient to abate the evil” of lax courts “without a further and more violent vindication of justice and equity.”¹⁵¹ The next day, the *Alta* bizarrely attempted to justify the actions of the committee by citing British parliamentary procedure. Yet, once again, the *Alta* backed away from supporting lynch law and instead asked for

stringent laws...[and] firm, honest and stern men to administer them, or mobs, riots and lynch law will become the order of the day, and the palladium of our safety lost forever. We do not advocate Lynch law. Well regulated courts, intelligent juries, learned and honest judges, administering a well digested code, is what our city and State requires.¹⁵²

For the *Alta*, then, white men acting through properly constituted systems of government remained the key to an orderly society. Indeed, while the *Alta*'s sympathies were clearly with the committee, it expressed relief on the 25th that “these ebullitions of feeling” had “cooled down” without the actual imposition of lynch law.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ “The Excitement Yesterday,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 February, 1851; “Incidents of Yesterday – Trial of Jas. Stuart,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 February, 1851.

¹⁵¹ “What Should our Citizens do?,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 February, 1851.

¹⁵² “The Courts and the People,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 February, 1851.

¹⁵³ “City Intelligence – Yesterday,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 25 February, 1851.

The inability of the committee or its supporters to present a clear and consistent narrative justifying the supersession of the government by an organization of “the people” was further compounded by the very competent reactions of what would later be termed the “law and order” faction. Not only did prominent jurists refuse to serve in the popular trial, but Judge David Shattuck, acting as defense for the accused, objected to hearsay, circumstantial evidence, and the lack of witnesses allowed the defendant, and protested that he had been unable to interview his own client. When the court recessed, Shattuck went outside and addressed the crowd, saying that he had just received alibis proving Stuart could not have committed the attack. As important as the ways that Shattuck undermined the case against Stuart and Wildred was the way that he undermined the legitimacy of the entire trial. Shattuck directly likened the trial to the lynchings on the Mississippi, arguing that innocent men had been killed because the “hot haste” of those proceedings. By linking the lynchings in Vicksburg to San Francisco, Shattuck attempted to repudiate the committee’s claim to be acting as a cool, rational manifestation of the will of the people, and instead suggested the trial was the result of the actions of an inflamed, irrational mob.¹⁵⁴

Indeed, had the Great Fire of May 4th not occurred, it is likely that the vigilance movement in San Francisco would have remained a historical footnote. However, very quickly it became widely understood that the fire was the work of organized criminal “incendiaries” who were assumed to be Australians.¹⁵⁵ The perceived weak response of legal authorities evidently re-galvanized the members of the February citizens’ committee to form “The Committee of Vigilance” sometime in early June.¹⁵⁶ This time, however, Samuel Brannan and the other

¹⁵⁴ “Incidents of Yesterday – Trial of Jas. Stuart,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 February, 1851.

¹⁵⁵ Letts, *A Pictorial View of California*, p. 54; Senkewicz, *Vigilantes*, p. 81.

¹⁵⁶ *San Francisco As It Is: Manuscript*, p. 181.

members of the committee moved proactively to ensure they would have an organization in place that could replace the legal system should the opportunity arise. Working in secret, the committee secured the participation of large numbers of merchants and others who would act in accordance with pre-arranged signals.¹⁵⁷ In the absence of any new acts of arson, a theft on 10 June 1851 provided an opportunity for the committee to make its public debut.¹⁵⁸

That evening, a local merchant discovered that his safe containing \$1500 had been stolen. Boatmen at the docks noticed an Australian, John Jenkins, placing a heavy parcel into a rowboat and setting off across the bay. Chasing Jenkins, the boatmen caught him just after he dropped the safe overboard. Instead of taking Jenkins to the Station House, the boatmen instead conveyed their prisoner to Brannan's house, where he was put under guard. About this same time, various bells were rung around the city, serving to summon the members of the committee.¹⁵⁹ Resisting attempts by police officers to take the prisoner, the Committee tried Jenkins in secret and Brannan then "informed [the gathered crowd] that the man had been fairly tried by a committee of citizens, and that no doubt of his guilt existed."¹⁶⁰ In the early morning hours of 11 June, the Committee marched Jenkins to the Plaza, hanged him and left his body suspended from a beam as a warning to other criminals.

The execution of Jenkins emerged as the central performance of the Committee's legitimacy (or illegitimacy, for its opponents). The key tactic of the Committee was to create the impression that it acted as the embodiment of the will of the people. Therefore, Brannan

¹⁵⁷ "The Vigilance Committee" in *The Daily Alta California*, 13 June, 1851; "City Intelligence – The Coroner's Inquest Continued" in *The Daily Alta California*, 13 June, 1851.

¹⁵⁸ "Secret Organization," in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 June, 1851; *San Francisco As It Is: Manuscript*, p. 181.

¹⁵⁹ "Arrest of a Robber! Trial and Sentence by the Citizen Police. Execution on the Plaza!" in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 June, 1851; *San Francisco As It Is: Manuscript*, p. 180 – 181.

¹⁶⁰ "Arrest of a Robber! Trial and Sentence by the Citizen Police. Execution on the Plaza!" in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 June, 1851; "City Intelligence – Coroner's Inquest" in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851.

addressed the crowd and told them that Jenkins had been “fairly tried” and that “no doubt of his guilt existed,” and then asked them, the citizenry, if they supported the actions of the Committee.¹⁶¹ Unsurprisingly, many in the crowd answered “Aye!” and “Hang Him!”¹⁶² The Committee and its supporters also tried to make the pulling of the hanging rope a mass act, with Brannan reportedly exclaiming “a long pull, and a strong pull altogether – let every honest citizen be a hangman for once!” and later claiming during the coroner’s inquest that he could not identify who actually pulled the rope.¹⁶³ When the Coroner named certain Committee members as directly responsible for the death of Jenkins, the Committee countered that all two hundred members shared equally in the act.¹⁶⁴ For the Committee, it was the citizenry who hung Jenkins, not individual men.

The success of the Committee of Vigilance hinged on a few key factors. On a pragmatic level, its ability to organize and deploy men clearly took the initiative from the government, allowing the Committee to present the population with a *fait accompli*, which, in turn, gave it the ability to shape the narrative surrounding its actions. While organization and speed made it possible for the Committee to execute Jenkins, it was the narrative of the Committee as acting in keeping with the best traditions of republicanism that gave the Committee the legitimacy it needed for broad and sustained support. First, the Committee asserted that the arrival of “large numbers of the most daring, depraved and reckless men” “from every part of the habitable globe, but more particularly from the British penal colonies,” had left the city at “the mercy of

¹⁶¹ “Arrest of a Robber! Trial and Sentence by the Citizen Police. Execution on the Plaza!” in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 June, 1851.

¹⁶² *San Francisco As It Is: Manuscript*, p. 181.

¹⁶³ Palmer, *The New and the Old*, p. 73; “City Intelligence – Coroner’s Inquest” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851; “City Intelligence – The Coroner’s Inquest Continued,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 13 June, 1851.

¹⁶⁴ “The Verdict of the Coroner’s Jury in the Case of Jenkins,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 June, 1851.

organized gangs of the worst felons.”¹⁶⁵ The courts and police had failed, “through want of energy or collusion,” to protect the “good citizens” of San Francisco.¹⁶⁶ In response, the “good citizens,” “men of standing, character and influence,”¹⁶⁷ “industrious, orderly and patriotic men,”¹⁶⁸ that is, men who embodied republican virtues, were “compelled” to organize into a body to restore order to society.¹⁶⁹ Following this reasoning, the Committee members, who were mostly merchants, claimed that they did not organize for their own financial interests, but instead assumed a responsibility to protect society out of “stern necessity.”¹⁷⁰ The Vigilantes claimed to act not out of self-interest, but out of a sense of duty and propriety informed by both Victorian social norms and republican virtues. Furthermore, by acting in accordance with these social norms, that is, by being “quiet” and “orderly,” the crowds reflected the inherent propriety of the Committee’s actions.¹⁷¹ Talking about the crowds as quiet and orderly transformed the public gathering from an excited mob into a political body of independent men exercising their rights as citizens. Finally, while rejecting the authority of what they termed a corrupt government, the Vigilantes went to great lengths to stress that they were not a revolutionary group bent on the overthrow of a system of government and were instead acting in the name of the society that government should have been protecting.¹⁷² In this way, the 1851 Committee of Vigilance used

¹⁶⁵ “Law and Order,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 June, 1851; “Organization of the Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851; “The Execution of Jenkins,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851.

¹⁶⁶ “Law and Order,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 June, 1851.

¹⁶⁷ “Secret Organization,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 June, 1851.

¹⁶⁸ “Law and Order,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 June, 1851.

¹⁶⁹ “The Execution of Jenkins,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851; “Law and Order,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 June, 1851.

¹⁷⁰ “The Execution of Jenkins,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851; “[Title Illegible],” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 June, 1851.

¹⁷¹ “The Execution of Jenkins,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851; “Public Meeting,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 June, 1851.

¹⁷² “Law and Order,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 June, 1851; *San Francisco As It Is: Manuscript*, pp. 185-186.

the language of republicanism to justify vesting sovereignty directly in themselves as representatives of the good citizenry of San Francisco in order to suppress the threat represented by bad men from Sydney.

It would be five years until another organization modeled on, and drawing membership from, the 1851 Vigilance Committee would assemble. And in 1856, as in 1851, local merchant elites used the pretext of a supposed crime wave to justify their actions. Again too, the Vigilance Committee drew heavily on the language and popular understandings of republicanism to legitimize its actions. This time, however, the duration and extent of the Vigilantes' actions would far exceed the 1851 precedent. It began in late November, 1855, when the *Alta* and other supporters of lynch law began agitating about what they perceived as the sure-to-be biased trial of Charles Cora, a gambler reputed to have “friends, rich, powerful, influential, talented, fertile in expedients, active and determined to rob justice of its own.”¹⁷³ Anger about Cora's trial and subsequent hung-jury failed to mobilize the population, however. Instead, it was the murder of James King of William, an anti-Democratic newspaper editor, at the hands of a rival newspaperman, James Casey, on 14 May 1856 that proved the flashpoint. King had been an active supporter of the 1851 Vigilance Committee, and his newspaper, the *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin*, had been a leading voice in the anti-gambling hysteria of 1855 and 1856, focusing in particular upon the case of Charles Cora.¹⁷⁴ It took little incentive for many in the

¹⁷³ “The First Legal Execution,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 21 November, 1855; “Progress of Civilization” in *The Daily Alta California*, 28 January, 1856.

¹⁷⁴ John Findlay, *People of Chance: Gambling in American Society From Jamestown to Las Vegas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 96; Frank F. Fargo, *A True and Minute History of the Assassination of James King of Wm. at San Francisco, Cal: Also Remarks of the Press Concerning the Outrage; an Account of the Formation and Action of the Vigilance Committee; Meetings and Resolutions of the Citizens of Sacramento, Marysville and Stockton; Funeral Ceremonies of Mr. King, with the Addresses of Rev. Messrs. Cutler and Lacy over the Body; and the Execution of Casey and Cora / Carefully Compiled from Various Sources*, p. 2, State Archive.

population to seize upon this coincidence as proof of a conspiracy between gamblers, arsonists, and corrupt politicians and officials.¹⁷⁵

The second Vigilance Committee grew quickly out of the skeleton of the first committee.¹⁷⁶ By 18 May, when the Vigilance Committee seized Cora and Casey from the jail at gun and cannon point, they claimed almost three thousand men under arms, many of whom had defected from militia units stationed in the city.¹⁷⁷ With the death of James King on 20 May, the Vigilance Committee moved quickly to try both James Casey and Charles Cora. Both men were tried privately, found guilty, and hanged by the Committee on the 22nd from the windows of the Committee's rooms.¹⁷⁸ From then until they disbanded on 18 August, the Vigilance Committee executed two more men, caused the suicide of another, and banished, deported, or drove into hiding at least twenty-seven more.¹⁷⁹ Through it all, city, state, and federal officials were largely helpless or unwilling to challenge the Vigilantes due to the Vigilantes' large numbers and a lack of clear support for the established local government by Federal officials. The U.S. military, the only force large enough to suppress the Vigilantes, did little.¹⁸⁰

As historian Robert Senkewicz has shown, what was initially justified as a reaction to a perceived crime wave and the ineffectiveness of the courts quickly became a purge of the

¹⁷⁵ Fargo, *A True and Minute History of the Assassination of James King of Wm*, pp. 2 – 3.

¹⁷⁶ "Incidents of Wednesday's Occurrence" in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 May, 1856; Senkewicz, *Vigilantes*, pp. 134, 170.

¹⁷⁷ "Events of Yesterday – Rescue of the Prisoners, Casey and Cora, Without Resistance" in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 May, 1856; "Incidents of Wednesday's Occurrence" in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 May, 1856; Senkewicz, *Vigilantes*, pp. 134, 170.

¹⁷⁸ "Events of Yesterday – Death of Mr. King – A Wonderful Sensation in the Community – The Whole City Draped in Mourning," in *The Daily Alta California*, 21 May, 1856; "Events of Yesterday – Funeral of Mr. James King of Wm. – Execution of Casey and Cora by the Vigilance Committee!! – The Day," in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 May, 1856.

¹⁷⁹ "Events of Yesterday," in *The Daily Alta California*, 21 June, 1856.

¹⁸⁰ Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 55 – 56.

Democratic Party in California.¹⁸¹ More than any other factor, it was the Committee's use of the language of republicanism that facilitated the shift of an organization originally intended to protect the citizens from the "thief, burglar, incendiary, assassin, ballot-box stuffer, or other disturbers of the peace," to an almost exclusive focus on the "ballot-box stuffer."¹⁸² Nor did it take much to convince much of the population of San Francisco that this shift was logical, necessary, and justified.

By 1856, many Victorians in San Francisco believed they were in the midst of a crime wave and, even more importantly, that the legal authorities were at best hamstrung by the technicalities of the law, and at worst complicit in shielding criminals from justice. Corrupt officials, though hardly rare in the nineteenth century (indeed, more notable in their absence), were anathema to republican philosophy. At the core of American republicanism was the ideal of the independent citizen, free from encumbrances, exercising his political voice.¹⁸³ Of course, this ideal was strongly gendered, as only men could vote, and also heavily raced, as non-Whites were explicitly denied the right to vote in California.¹⁸⁴ Ballot-box stuffing and other forms of electoral fraud were therefore more than a danger to the legitimacy of the civil government; these actions threatened the racialized and gendered privileges upon which white men constructed their superiority. Without free elections, white men were no better than the women and non-whites to whom they denied a place in government. Even more striking, is rhetoric suggesting that the loss of the vote through fraud reduced white men to the slaves of corrupt politicians and their

¹⁸¹ Senkewicz, *Vigilantes*, pp. 186 – 187.

¹⁸² "Constitution of the Committee of Vigilance, San Francisco – Adopted May 15th, 1856" in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 June, 1856.

¹⁸³ Foner, *Free Soil*, pp. xi – xxvi; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 50 – 51, 66 – 74; Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 55 – 58; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, pp. 61 – 63, 92 – 94.

¹⁸⁴ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 127 – 130.

criminal allies.¹⁸⁵ Practically speaking, then, in California this meant that Democrats were either in league with, or the tools of, a range of off-white and non-white criminals. This association transformed men who should have been good citizens into bad men, and therefore a dire threat to the republic and to the rights and privileges of the good citizens of California, in this case, the middle-class Victorian merchants and their supporters who made up the Vigilance Committee.

In place of “slavery” at the hands of corrupt politicians and criminals, the Vigilance Committee offered “good citizens” the means by which “the people” could vest sovereignty directly in themselves, purify the political system, and impose a new order on San Francisco. This order would be one that was predicated on the rule of “good citizens,” which, practically speaking, meant the political allies of the Vigilance Committee, but which rhetorically linked the racial and gender requirements of citizenship, the attributes of republicanism, and the moral code of Victorianism.

Under the social order the Vigilance Committee attempted to impose, the key determinant of participation and place within the system was whether an individual qualified as a “good citizen” or a “bad man.” The qualities of good citizens read like the attributes of the ideal Victorian man. A good citizen was a calm, cool, and hard-working man, who did not want violence, but did not shy away from it when necessary.¹⁸⁶ Members of the Vigilance Committee, as the paragons of good citizens to their supporters, were described as “men of honor, intelligence, high social worth, worthwhile integrity, and patriotic hearts; men whose hands no bribe has ever stained; men whose hearts are ever-throbbing with the pulses of a high and pure

¹⁸⁵ For examples of the importance of the rhetoric of slavery for white Americans, see Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 36, 55 – 60, 66 and Edmund S. Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox,” *The Journal of American History* 59, no. 1 (June, 1972): pp. 5 – 29.

¹⁸⁶ “[No Title],” in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 May, 1856; “[No Title],” in *The Daily Alta California*, 20 May, 1856; “The Law of the People is Supreme,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 June, 1856; “The Address of the Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 June, 1856.

patriotism.”¹⁸⁷ Further emphasizing their distance from impetuous action and their status as men, they were, according to the *Alta*, “playing no school boy game, they have well weighed the consequences of all their acts.”¹⁸⁸ The Committee went to great lengths to establish the link between themselves and good citizens. According to their Constitution, only “good citizens” could be admitted to the Vigilance Committee; if any “unworthy persons gain[ed] admission” they would be expelled.¹⁸⁹ Though the Committee and its supporters admitted that good citizens could be found among the Law and Order faction, they depicted these men as overly attached to the letter of the law and unwilling to recognize the dangerous situation San Francisco was in.¹⁹⁰ These men, while good citizens, were still not of quite the same character as the men who made up, and supported, the Vigilance Committee.

Opposed to the good citizens of the Vigilance Committee was the Law and Order faction, or “Law and Murder Party” as the Vigilantes sometimes styled them. These “reckless men” had “mercenary and corrupt motives,” and sought to shape society for their own “private interests,” rather than for the public good.¹⁹¹ Moreover, unlike good citizens who operated as autonomous individuals, bad men operated in “organized gangs” as subservient followers of gang leaders or bosses.¹⁹² In the eyes of the Vigilantes, these men supported the governor (who saw the Vigilantes as an illegal organization and declared San Francisco in a state of insurrection), not

¹⁸⁷ A Looker On, “Thoughts From a Looker-on, to Those in the Distance – No. 2,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 22 July, 1856.

¹⁸⁸ “The Ultimate Result,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 July, 1856.

¹⁸⁹ “Constitution of the Committee of Vigilance, San Francisco – Adopted May 15th, 1856,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 June, 1856.

¹⁹⁰ “The Executive Committee of the General Committee of Vigilance,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 August, 1856.

¹⁹¹ “To the People of California,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 June, 1856.

¹⁹² “To the People of California,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 June, 1856.

out of any sense of civic duty or higher ideals, but out of a sense of self-preservation.¹⁹³ In reality, the Law and Order party was a loose alliance formed around the core of the Democratic party, and as such consisted of Democrats, many recent European immigrants, particularly the Irish and other Catholics, and an assortment of civic elites opposed to the idea of popular justice.¹⁹⁴ Though there is little evidence to suggest the Law and Order Party mobilized on anything other than a rather ad hoc basis, the driving force behind the group was Governor John Neely Johnson, a former Whig elected on a Know-Nothing platform.¹⁹⁵

Despite the strong linkages of crime with non- and off-whites, the difference between good citizens and bad men was not strictly a division between American citizens and foreigners. Instead, the vigilantes differentiated between groups of foreigners. The acceptance of white men of presumed “Anglo-Saxon” descent, as long as they supported the Committee, was so assumed that it was not even commented upon.¹⁹⁶ More surprising was the acceptance of French and German nationals into the Committee. The French population was generally derided for their supposed attachment to a theoretical, rather than “practical,” form of republicanism and for their “religious horror to all laborious avocations.”¹⁹⁷ Victorians understood the Germans as being “industrious, orderly and contented,” but too easily satisfied with “slow, but constant returns”

¹⁹³ “The Address of the Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 June, 1856.

¹⁹⁴ Senkewicz, *Vigilantes*, pp. 171 – 172; Bancroft, *History of California*, p. 744.

¹⁹⁵ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, pp. 200, 247 – 248; H. Brett Melendy and Benjamin Gilbert, *The Governors of California: Peter H. Burnett to Edmund G. Brown* (Georgetown, Calif: Talisman Press, 1965), pp. 67 – 73.

¹⁹⁶ Indeed, the English can be thought of as invisible immigrants and instant citizens, their presence so normal as to be virtually unremarkable. If the British were not exactly citizens, then they were almost so, and in the fluid world of the California gold rush, “close enough” seemed to suffice for many Americans in most circumstances. For a discussion of the invisibility of English immigrants in American immigration, see Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, pp. 97 – 100. In a telling example, Borthwick noted that the post office had two windows, one for foreigners. The Americans and Englishmen went to the other window. See Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, pp. 91 – 92. Also, see Pringle Shaw, *Ramblings in California: Containing a Description of the Country, Life at the Mines, State of Society, &c. Interspersed with Characteristic Anecdotes, and Sketches from Life* (Toronto: J. Bain, [1856?]), p. 25.

¹⁹⁷ Shaw, *Ramblings in California*, p. 16.

and unwilling to demonstrate the same desire for improvement as Victorians.¹⁹⁸ The work ethic (and in the case of the French, political philosophy) of the French and Germans suggested that neither of these groups were ideal citizens because of their propensity for wage labor or non-productive labor. Their work ethic set them apart from Victorians and linked them with the supposedly more lazy off-whites and non-whites of California. And yet, the *Alta* defended the French population as the “most loyal and law-abiding of our people” while the Germans were supposed to show similar restraint and a tendency toward order, especially in the exercise of their franchise.¹⁹⁹ But this acceptance was provisional. Though French and German participation was welcomed in the rank and file of the Vigilance Committee, the leadership remained overwhelmingly dominated by Victorians.²⁰⁰ The position of the French and Germans mirrored the ideal position of such off-white foreigners in the social order the vigilantes sought to create. The Committee looked favorably upon the French and German members because they seemed content to occupy a subordinate, but loyal, position in the committee and society in general. Tellingly, both groups were praised for not running for office or being “rowdy” at the polls.²⁰¹

By contrast, the Vigilantes singled out the Irish as bad men. Some scholars have argued that the Irish faced less discrimination in California than along the east coast of the United

¹⁹⁸ Shaw, *Ramblings in California*, p. 18. For other descriptions that emphasize similar descriptions of Germans, see Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out*, pp. 264 – 265; William Shaw, *Golden Dreams and Waking Realities* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1851), p. 20; Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Land of Gold, Reality versus Fiction* (Baltimore, Md.: H. Taylor, 1855), p. 33.

¹⁹⁹ “The French Citizens of the Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 May, 1856; “Adopted Citizens and the Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 June, 1856.

²⁰⁰ *San Francisco Daily Herald*, 12 June, 1856; Senkewicz, *Vigilantes*, pp. 169 – 170; Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, pp. 142 – 143; Ethington, *The Public City*, pp. 96 – 97. Both the Germans and French were praised for contributing a company of men to the Committee. “Events of Yesterday – Rescue of the Prisoners, Casey and Cora, Without Resistance” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 May, 1856.

²⁰¹ “Adopted Citizens and the Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 June, 1856.

States, and while this is true to an extent, there was still a degree of anti-Irish sentiment.²⁰² Though not as intense as in the Atlantic world, stereotypes of the Irish as degraded, drunk, street thugs still had considerable traction. The concentration of the Irish population along the waterfront (a poor, working-class neighborhood) reinforced these images.²⁰³ The Irish also came from the Northeastern United States, where many of them had developed ties to the Democratic Party, or from Australia, further reinforcing negative stereotypes.²⁰⁴ These factors led to the targeting of the Irish as “ballot-box stuffers, election bullies, thieves, murderers, and other bad characters.”²⁰⁵ Even so, the Committee was careful to distinguish between those Irish who had “*honestly* differed” from the Committee and the group it referred to as the “low Irish.”²⁰⁶ Here class divisions operated to separate working-class Irish from Irish merchants, lawyers, and politicians who met the standards of public behavior embedded in Victorianism. Like the French and the Germans, there was hope that these Irish gentlemen could find a (subordinate) place in the social order of the Vigilantes. Even with all these factors working against them, the Irish straddled the border between whiteness and off-whiteness.

The terms “good citizens” and “bad men” act to obscure the role of women in the 1856 Vigilance Committee. While active participation in the Committee was the exclusive right of men, respectable Victorian females were still important as ladies, and therefore as an audience

²⁰² For an example of this argument (more of a truism, really), see Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 5; R. A. Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish, 1848-1880* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979).

²⁰³ Senkewicz, *Vigilantes*, p. 137.

²⁰⁴ Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, pp. 3, 34; Steven P. Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 26 – 30, 33 – 35.

²⁰⁵ “Those Notified to Leave,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 June, 1856; A Looker On, “Thoughts From a Looker-on, to Those in the Distance – No. 2,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 22 July, 1856.

²⁰⁶ “The Executive Committee of the General Committee of Vigilance,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 August, 1856; “Adopted Citizens and the Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 June, 1856.

for male fantasies of control and order. The men of the Vigilance Committee believed that “the virtuous woman cannot inhabit the same abode with the prostitute” and that they, as respectable men, needed to act to defend their homes, their families, and their women.²⁰⁷ At drills, mass meetings, and parades, ladies were present as silent spectators, “len[ding] their smiles to the important occasion” and occasionally showering the men with flowers.²⁰⁸ It is telling that virtually the only time a female voice supporting the Committee emerges in the historical record, the woman, Miss Louise Dam, spoke as the voice of “every true woman,” and directly linked the actions of the Committee to those of “patriots of earlier days.”²⁰⁹ This sort of recognition by respectable ladies was crucial to the Vigilantes’ claim to be respectable white men and the true heirs to the legacy of republicanism in the United States.

The Vigilantes’ relied heavily on comparisons between their actions and those of the Founding Fathers because it helped to establish the legitimacy of their challenge to the legal system. The Committee claimed to reject the “mere name” of the law, which they argued was corrupt, and instead to embrace “the FACT of the law,” arguing that “when the protection which [the law] should afford is severed from it [the law], the mere name which is left behind becomes a mockery.”²¹⁰ The Committee argued that the “supreme power [sovereignty] in the State is the People.”²¹¹ The “shoulder-strikers, loafers, and rowdies, who [had] pretended to govern” were

²⁰⁷ “Evening Press,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 17 May, 1856.

²⁰⁸ “Mass Meeting of the Citizens,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 15 June, 1856; “Fort Vigilance,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 13 June, 1856; “The Mass Meeting Last Night – A Concourse of 10,000 People! – A Terrible Rebuke to Ballot-box Stuffing! – Great Unanimity of Action! – Speeches, Resolutions, Incidents, &c. &c.,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 13 July, 1856; “Banner Presentation – The Vigilance Committee Endorsed by the Ladies,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 July, 1856; “Events of Yesterday – Grand Parade and Review of the Vigilance Committee! – 5,000 Men Bearing Arms! – Immense Concourse of Citizens! – Particulars, Incidents, and Reflections,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 August, 1856.

²⁰⁹ “Banner Presentation – The Vigilance Committee Endorsed by the Ladies,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 July, 1856.

²¹⁰ “[No Title],” in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 May, 1856.

²¹¹ “The Law of the People is Supreme,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 June, 1856.

not a legitimate government and needed to be overturned.²¹² It was no coincidence that the *Alta* described the Address of the Vigilance Committee (a justification and statement of principles) as “equal almost to the Declaration of American Independence.”²¹³ By acting as the will of “the people” against a corrupt and abusive government that denied them their rights as free men, the members of the Vigilance Committee positioned themselves as direct successors to the American Revolution; in other words, as the ultimate republicans.

The conundrum the Vigilantes found themselves in was that while they wished to be associated with the Founding Fathers, they had little desire to actually be branded revolutionaries. What they wanted was to shape Californian society and politics to their ends and still be perceived by the rest of the nation as the embodiment of American republican virtues, manliness, and whiteness. Unfortunately for the Vigilantes, the Law and Order faction, as well as some in the East, saw the committee as a treasonous, revolutionary group *opposed* to the republican values of the United States.²¹⁴ Indeed, on 3 June Governor Johnson issued a proclamation declaring the city of San Francisco to be in a state of insurrection. Although the Vigilantes attempted to belittle the Governor’s decree, calling it “absurd” and “ridiculous,” the possibility of military intervention was a real concern.²¹⁵ Ultimately, Governor Johnson was never able to actually enforce martial law in San Francisco. Unable to put boots on the ground in San Francisco, General Volney Howard, commander of the State militia, continued to argue,

²¹² “The Law of the People is Supreme,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 June, 1856.

²¹³ “The Address of the Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 June, 1856.

²¹⁴ “The Effect in the East,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 20 June, 1856; F. W. H., “News from California – The Revolution in San Francisco,” in *The New York Times*, 30 June, 1856; “Revolution in San Francisco,” in *The New York Times*, 14 June, 1856.

²¹⁵ “Martial Law,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 4 June, 1856; E. B. Boutwell to Governor Johnson, 29 June 1856, Vigilance Collection 1856, folder 27, State Archive; “Rumors of an Attack on the Vigilance Committee by the U.S. Authorities,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 24 July, 1856; “An Anticipated Collision,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 25 July, 1856; “The Committee and the U.S. Officers,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 28 July, 1856.

The insurgents aim at nothing less than an entire overthrow of the State government and secession from the Federal Union....[they] have levied actual war upon the State,...[and] They have committed treason, murder, piracy and the felony of kidnapping. They have violently, and with force of arms, trodden down the authority of the Executive and the Judiciary.²¹⁶

Governor Johnson made the same case publicly and in his reports to the federal government.²¹⁷

This view of the Vigilantes as dangerous men opposed to republican values found considerable traction outside of California.²¹⁸

The Vigilantes tried to calm these fears by creating two categories: “lynch law” and “mob rule” and locating the Vigilance Committee’s actions as firmly in keeping with the former. Lynch law, by the definition of the Vigilantes, was “an American institution,” that “had a more orderly and civilizing aspect...[and should] never be identified with ‘mobs’ and ‘riots’ and personal affrays with pistols and knives.”²¹⁹ Instead, attention to the forms of the law, trials, and most importantly, cool and calm deliberation by the “people” characterized lynch law.²²⁰ In his sermon, “Vigilance and Reform,” Joseph Benton argued:

If the evils suffered are absolutely intolerable, and can not be borne till the close of their [corrupt public officials] terms, then the people *must* resume their original power. For them to do so is legitimate, if not legal. Rising in their majesty, coolly and firmly, they may either depose their nominal rulers, or act as though there were none. This is the right of self-defence, and self-protection; a right belonging to communities no less than individuals. It is not mob-law, though it easily degenerates into it; - it is the law of necessity; the law of nature.²²¹

²¹⁶ “Report of Maj. Gen. Volney E. Howard,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 26 June, 1856.

²¹⁷ “The Vigilance Committee Correspondence – Interesting Documents – Gov. Johnson’s Letter to the President – The President’s Reply – Letters of Gov. Johnson, Gen. West, Wool, Capt. Farragut, Capt. Bentwell, Judge Terry, &c.,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 September, 1856.

²¹⁸ Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*, pp. 55 – 58.

²¹⁹ “The Origin of Lynch Law,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 3 August, 1856.

²²⁰ “Events of Yesterday: Rescue of the Prisoners, Casey and Cora, Without Resistance,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 May, 1856; “[No Title],” in *The Daily Alta California*, 21 May, 1856.

²²¹ Joseph Benton, Sermon [Vigilance and Reform], 18 May 1856, Joseph Augustine Benton Collection, box 28, State Archive.

The Vigilantes argued that lynch law only replaced the corrupt men who had failed to implement the laws fully and fairly and had instead instituted “a reign of violence and bloodshed.”²²² Mob rule, on the other hand, was the work of the “ungovernable passions”²²³ of an “infuriated band of men...combined to effect an evil, or selfish object, in an unlawful way,” and was therefore capricious, unjust, and regrettable.²²⁴ Indeed, mob rule was the result of the antithesis of the good citizen: the bad man.

All these concerns came to head when the Committee arrested and charged Judge David Terry of the State Supreme Court with stabbing Sterling A. Hopkins, a vigilante “police officer,” on 21 June 1856. Though accounts varied, a general consensus held that Terry had been present in the office of the United States Naval Agent when Hopkins and some other Vigilantes attempted to arrest Rabe Maloney, a Democratic operative. Terry had forced the Vigilantes to leave and was then escorting Maloney through the streets to a Law and Order armory when he and Hopkins again encountered each other. At this point, either Hopkins attempted to arrest Maloney again and was attacked by Terry or Hopkins rushed at Terry, attacking him. The fight ended when Terry drew his knife and stabbed Hopkins in the back of the neck, badly wounding him. Terry, Maloney, and a few others then fled to a nearby armory, where the Vigilance Committee quickly surrounded them. Heavily outnumbered by the Vigilantes, Terry

²²² “[No Title],” in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 May, 1856; “The Necessity of a Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 May, 1856; “Gone,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 June, 1856; “The Address of the Vigilance Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 9 June, 1856; “The Address of the Committee,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 June, 1856; “Revolution,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 June, 1856.

²²³ “The Effect in the East,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 20 June, 1856.

²²⁴ Joseph Benton, Sermon [Vigilance and Reform], 18 May 1856.

surrendered.²²⁵ By the end of the day, the Vigilance Committee found itself stronger than it had ever been, but also poised on the brink of a disastrous confrontation with the federal government.

With the arrest of Terry, the Committee had won a pyrrhic victory. This is because, ironically, while the arrest of Terry and the capture of the Law and Order armory seemed to herald the total victory of the Committee, neither Terry nor the Law and Order militias had previously been much of a direct threat to the Committee. Now, if Hopkins died, the Committee would have to try a senior representative of the state government for murder, a trial which would almost certainly have to result in a guilty verdict or risk exposing the Committee to charges of hypocrisy. The execution of such a high-ranking Democrat and state official risked bringing about a direct confrontation between the Committee and the federal government, which many felt would be compelled to act if Terry was killed. Any confrontation between the federal government and the Committee would almost certainly destroy the reputation of the Committee members in the East. Even if Hopkins lived, the Committee would have to find a way of saving face by giving Terry some consequences without catalyzing the intervention of the federal government. On balance, the Law and Order faction was actually quite happy with the situation, recognizing that the whole affair undermined support for the Committee.²²⁶

²²⁵ “Events of Yesterday – Murderous Attack Upon S.A. Hopkins, of the Vigilance Committee! by D.S. Terry, of the Supreme Court – Arrest of Terry and Maloney by the Committee – Surrender of the “Law and Order” Forces! – One Hundred Prisoners Taken! – 2,000 Arms Secured – Vigilance Committee Triumphant! – Condition of the Wounded Man – Particulars and Incidents,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 22 June, 1856; “Events of Yesterday – The Day After the Surrender – Release of the Prisoners of War – Arrest of J.L. Durkee by the U.S. Marshal – Condition of Mr. Hopkins – Further Particulars and Incidents,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 23 June, 1856; “Report of Maj. Gen. Volney E. Howard,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 26 June, 1856; Vigilance Collection, 1856, box 324, unnumbered folder, State Archive.

²²⁶ “The Vigilance Committee Correspondence – Interesting Documents – Gov. Johnson’s Letter to the President – The President’s Reply – Letters of Gov. Johnson, Gen. West, Wool, Capt. Farragut, Capt. Bentwell, Judge Terry, &c.,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 September, 1856; E. B. Boutwell to Governor Johnson, 29 June 1856; William Kibbe to J. Neely Johnson, Governor, Vigilance Collection 1856, 14 August 1856, folder 18, State Archive.

While both sides waited, with somewhat morbid curiosity, to see whether Hopkins would succumb to his wound, support for the Vigilance Committee continued to dwindle.²²⁷ Despite the best efforts of the Vigilante press, internal divisions over Judge Terry and rumors of the disbanding of the Committee persisted.²²⁸ Only on 7 August, when Hopkins was finally pronounced recovered, could the Committee finish its trial of Terry. They ultimately found him guilty on two counts of assault and one for resisting arrest. Terry's "sentence" was a demand that he resign his office, which Terry proceeded to ignore.²²⁹ A little under a month later, the Vigilance Committee declared victory and quickly disbanded.²³⁰

Ultimately, the 1856 Vigilance Committee was far more successful in reshaping the social order of San Francisco than the previous vigilante movements in the city, yet this very success engendered their greatest opposition. While the Victorian men behind the Vigilance Committee were able to shape San Franciscan society to a large degree, their vision of society was still actively contested by a wounded but resilient Democratic party and by the numerous non- and off-white residents who would continue to lay claim to a place in the city.

Conclusion

Ultimately, for Victorians, the debate in California over the order of colonial society was not over who would serve and who would rule. Victorians across a wide spectrum of professions, locations, and times agreed that white men should be in charge in California and that

²²⁷ "The Vigilance Committee Correspondence – Interesting Documents – Gov. Johnson's Letter to the President – The President's Reply – Letters of Gov. Johnson, Gen. West, Wool, Capt. Farragut, Capt. Bentwell, Judge Terry, &c.," in *The Daily Alta California*, 6 September, 1856.

²²⁸ "The Vigilance Committee," in *The Daily Alta California*, 13 August, 1856; "The Vigilance Committee," in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 August, 1856.

²²⁹ David Terry, "Trial of David S. Terry by the Committee of Vigilance, San Francisco," (San Francisco: R.C. Moore & Co., 1856), pp. 1 – 73.

²³⁰ "The Executive Committee to the General Committee of Vigilance," in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 August, 1856.

the economic, political, and social system should benefit them first and foremost. But Edward Gilbert's words from the Constitutional Convention that "the meaning of the word 'white'...was not generally understood in this country, though well understood in the United States," reflected a persistent problem in California society: though Victorians agreed that white men should be in charge, how white manliness should be ascertained and who qualified as a white man underwent formation throughout the gold rush period.²³¹

In seeking to address this ambiguity, Victorians in California came to rely on the language of republicanism. Republicanism in California was narrowly focused on defining the type of traits and behaviors that defined a good citizen. As such, it served as a crucial nexus between ideas of race and gender and political participation. The racial and gender ideas embedded in Californian republican thought posed significant obstacles to women and people of non-European descent, but the ideals of the proper behavior of good citizens in a republic (themselves influenced by developing Victorian attitudes) also placed an emphasis on behaviors which could move men of European descent out of the category of white and into the category of off-white. This is what happened to the Hounds, the Australians, and the Irish. The perceived actions of each of these groups caused them to be ostracized from the status of good citizens and to instead be labeled as bad men or off-white. The paradox was that while poor behavior could move a group down the colonial hierarchy, good behavior did not elevate the group with the same rapidity. Instead, as the attitudes toward the French and Germans in both San Francisco and the mines indicate, the response of Victorians to even well-behaved Europeans remained tepid.

²³¹ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, p. 62.

At the same time, Victorians also held divergent opinions as to how white men should rule in California. Again, they agreed that legitimate rule rested on adherence to the values of republicanism and could only be entrusted to proper white men, as defined by their race, gender, and adherence to the behavioral codes of Victorianism. But what form should society in California actually take? Should it be a colonial order of free, independent white men using non- or off-white labor in their mines, farms, and homes? Or should non-whites, or at least some of them, be excluded, so as to preserve the opportunities for white laboring men to advance?

Unsurprisingly, how individuals identified themselves and how they were identified by others tended to influence what sort of colonial republican order they envisioned for California. Victorian merchants and businessmen were far more likely to tolerate and seek to exploit non-whites in both the cities and the mines. A colonial order based on a subordinate non-white labor pool offered both cheap labor and a larger potential market. These men believed they could use, as Charles Thompson put it, “head work & talent” to become financially successful. In so doing, they articulated a worldview that justified colonial domination on the basis of the superior mental faculties of Victorians. For them, the future of California was as a vast emporium, a producer and distributor of goods to the world, and as an entry point for the goods of the world to the United States.

Victorian laborers, whether in the city or in the mines, tended to favor a different vision. For them, non-whites represented potential competition. It is important to note that these men were men who labored, rather than a true laboring class. Many of the men who took up laboring avocations did so as a temporary expedient to save up a “stake” with which to go to the mines, or to “harden” themselves to the physical hardships they expected to encounter on the way to and in the mines. Most too, saw the labor of mining as brief interlude on their path to the wealth that

allow them to support families in relative comfort and start their own businesses or own their own farms. These were men who, despite laboring with their hands, held essentially middle-class values and conceptions of themselves, especially in terms of the social values and standards they embraced. To these men, labor was a temporary expedient, justified by the unique circumstances of California. Instead, the working-class in San Francisco, for example, was made up of foreigners like the Irish, Australians, Chileans, Mexicans, and later, the Chinese. For Victorian laborers, California came to represent an alternative to the industrialized wage labor of the east. These men tried to ensure that California did not come to replicate the industrial east, but as the mining industry changed, particularly around 1852, wage work became more common and Victorian men increasingly found themselves competing for wages with non-white workers.

The colonial republican order that eventually emerged in California was a middle-ground between the two positions. While non-whites were excluded at certain times and places, their presence as a market, and even more importantly, as cheap and exploitable labor meant they would always have some advocates. A similar split between “soft” and “hard” approaches meant that California’s Indian policy vacillated between genocidal attacks and rather half-hearted attempts to mitigate the negative effects of contact with Euro-Americans.

The compromise nature of colonial California society was shaped by several factors. First, the state of development of California at a given time influenced how society was ordered. The early days of the rush, with a distinct lack of centralized government and abundant placer deposits, favored the creation of a social order geared toward the specific interests of Victorian miners. Placer deposits could be effectively mined by small groups of men without the backing of large amounts of capital, and the lack of state organization allowed these men to organize the mines how they saw fit. The colonial order created in California was never entirely spatially

unified, however. From the very early days of the gold rush, a Victorian-dominated merchant elite held considerable sway in the city, and newspapers in San Francisco were often critical of events in the mines. As the gold rush continued, the exhaustion of easily accessed gold deposits, the switch to deep gravel and quartz mining, along with the increasing development of the apparatus of the State, meant that the colonial order in California increasingly came to be dominated by Victorian merchants and businessmen, particularly in San Francisco. And yet this growing domination by San Francisco did not represent the imposition of a new type of order emanating from the urban core into the hinterland. Instead, both the core and hinterland in California shared, through the language of republicanism, race, and gender, fundamental assumptions about the ideal nature of Californian society. The growing domination of San Francisco represented a shift toward increasing concentration of authority in the urban centers and in the apparatus of the State, and away from direct local control.

Chapter Three

English Principles Encounter American Republicanism: Colonial British Columbia

While most white men in California thought of order through the lens of race- and gender-coded republican virtues, when some of these same men went to British Columbia beginning in 1858, they encountered a British population and well-entrenched colonial elite who preferred to order the colony around “English principles.”¹ In British Columbia, many British subjects, especially the colonial elite, claimed that society was based on an equality of nationality. As long as a person was a male subject of the crown, regardless of race, he was theoretically guaranteed all the rights and privileges of a freeborn Englishman.² The colonial elite, and indeed many British émigrés, felt this type of social order was vastly preferable to the discrimination, violence, and irrationality they saw as characteristic of the social order of the United States. However, as numerous scholars have pointed out, nineteenth-century imperialism and colonialism in British Columbia, as elsewhere, cannot be divorced from the language of

¹ I take the term “English principles” from the following article. “Political Meeting,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 9 January, 1860. For British perceptions of American versus British social order, see Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 150 – 151.

² As David Killingray points out, this was not a standard attitude throughout the British Empire. See Killingray, “‘A Good West Indian, A Good African, and, in Short, a Good Britisher,’: Blacks and British in a Colour-Conscious Empire,” in *Ambiguities of Empire: Essays in Honour of Andrew Porter*, eds. R. F. Holland, S. E. Stockwell, and A. N. Porter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 23 – 25.

race, gender, and class that explained and justified them.³ Although those that espoused English principles claimed that they embraced equality between British subjects, the reality was far more complex and less egalitarian. For many British subjects, the ideal social order in the colony on the west coast of North America was one based on a series of interlocking hierarchies.

In the British vision of society, equality and hierarchy existed in harmony. In theory, all British subjects enjoyed legal and political equality, at the same time that class lines ensured social hierarchy. Of course, in reality, social stratification meant that some individuals, particularly those in the upper and emergent middle classes, enjoyed far greater access to political patronage and the levers of power than the lower classes. Gender divided society between the masculine public sphere and the feminine domestic sphere, which served to curtail the involvement of respectable white females in activities ranging from voting to public drinking. Race and gender justified native subordination by depicting natives as childlike, irrational, and culturally inferior.⁴ Race and gender also distinguished white society from non-whites, namely natives. Therefore, while British society in the colony laid claim to a heritage of colorblindness and equality, that ethic only extended to those who met white, British conditions of

³ See, for instance Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Culture in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997); Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830 – 1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849 – 1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁴ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 17 – 21, 51 – 56.

respectability.⁵ “Savage” natives (along with the “heathen” Chinese) were, more often than not, too alien to British expectations of respectability to benefit even from the rhetoric of equality. Only blacks, who spoke English, were generally Protestant, dressed and behaved similarly to Anglo-Saxons, had particular symbolic value deriving from the long history of abolitionism in England, and were useful as a way to distinguish British from American values, really stood a chance at taking advantage of the promise British society offered.

As in California, but in a significantly different manner, the logic of race and gender was used to systematically expropriate resources, claim political control, and organize society. Adele Perry, in particular, has deftly illuminated the connections between race, gender, and class in the creation of a colonial society in British Columbia.⁶ Though the basis of the colonial project was, as Perry notes, the control and domination of native peoples and their resources, during the gold rush, much of the energy of the colonial project was aimed at regulating and controlling non-native society.⁷ In British Columbia, especially during the early part of the gold rush, Americans formed the most problematic aspect of that society. Fear of destabilizing and possibly revolutionary white Americans encouraged the British colonial elite to emphasize national differences in the early years of the gold rush. After 1859, as the American population fell in relation to the British population and American actions demonstrated the willingness of white American men to abide by British rule, ideas of white manliness that emphasized commonalities between white American and British men began to emerge. By the late 1860s, shared

⁵ Nor was this the only instance where British colonial authorities used the assertion that they lacked the race prejudice of other peoples of European descent to justify their own rule. See Christine Bolt, “Race and the Victorians,” *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, ed., C. C. Eldridge (London: Macmillan, 1984), 144. As Krebbs points out, these assertions existed alongside of, and were intertwined with, British racist beliefs. Paula Krebbs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 116.

⁶ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*.

⁷ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, p. 9.

understandings of white manliness underlay a system of colonial domination that paid little more than lip service to the colorblind values of a decade before.

The Wakefieldean Basis of British Columbia

British colonial government in British Columbia, in one form or another, stretched back to 1805 with the establishment of a Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) fur trading fort at McLeod Lake, but it was not until the 1820s that the HBC began to have a significant presence in the region.⁸ In 1821, the Act for Regulating the Fur Trade gave the HBC political control of British Columbia.⁹ In 1843, the HBC, fearing the outcome of the Oregon Boundary dispute, moved its headquarters from along the Columbia River in Oregon territory to the southern tip of Vancouver Island, establishing Fort Victoria.¹⁰ Now British Columbia, not Oregon, was to be the center of HBC activity in the Pacific Northwest. From 1843 to 1849, the HBC ran British Columbia, and particularly Vancouver Island, as its own private game preserve, largely acting to discourage settlement or economic activity that would impede the fur trade.¹¹ The British government soon began to fear the rapidly growing American population south of the border, and in 1849 created the colony of Vancouver Island to attract British settlers and dispatched a governor, Richard

⁸ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), p. 25.

⁹ Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, p. 20.

¹⁰ Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), p. 326.

¹¹ Richard Mackie, "The Colonization of Vancouver Island, 1849 – 1858," *BC Studies* 96 (Winter, 1992-93): 4 – 6.

Blanshard, who was unconnected with the HBC, to run the new colony.¹² Upon arrival, Blanshard discovered that real power lay with the HBC, which owned virtually all the land, controlled the major industry, and directly employed a majority of the existing colonists. Blanshard lasted just nine months, and when he quit, the colonial office made James Douglas, the Chief Factor of Victoria and the senior HBC official in the region, the colonial governor. The appointment of Douglas both reflected and secured the power of a group of senior HBC officials and their families in the colony.¹³

This group of officials and their families would come to be labeled the “Family Company Compact” by their opponents, and they wielded a disproportionate power in the colonial society of British Columbia throughout the gold rush period. At its core, the Family Company Compact consisted of a small group of inter-related families, usually headed by a patriarch of Scottish descent who held, or had held, a senior position in the HBC organization in the far west.¹⁴ Key to the influence of the Family Company Compact throughout the colonial period were the policies of the British government for both promoting and controlling immigration to the region.

At the time, the theories of British politician Edward Wakefield heavily influenced British colonization. Wakefield argued that the problem of colonization was an economic one. Too often, he claimed, colonies were cursed with an imbalance between labor and capital, and the shortage of labor resulted in economic stagnation and social decay. England, on the other

¹² The history of colonial British Columbia governance is complicated. In 1849, the colony of Vancouver Island was created first under Governor Richard Blanshard, then James Douglas. The mainland, known as British Columbia, was left as the domain of the HBC. Then, in 1858, British Columbia became a colony, and Douglas was appointed governor of both Vancouver Island and British Columbia, though they were technically separate colonies. In 1864, the colonies became less intertwined with the appointment of Governor Arthur Kennedy to Vancouver Island and Governor Frederick Seymour to British Columbia. Largely for financial reasons, the colonies were amalgamated in 1866 to form a new colony also called British Columbia under Governor Seymour. This continued until British Columbia joined Canadian confederation in 1871.

¹³ Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, p. 36 – 37.

¹⁴ Sylvia Van Kirk, “Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria,” *BC Studies*, 115-116 (Autumn-Winter, 1997-98): 149 – 152.

hand, suffered from the problems of a “surplus population” that needed to be removed overseas where it could then enrich the mother country through productive trade. Wakefield’s solution was simple and, especially to fiscal conservatives, appealing. Wakefield proposed to “make the cheapest land [in the colonies] somewhat dear” by setting the price of “waste land” high enough to ensure that laborers would be unable to afford land, which would, in turn, prevent a shortage of labor. The result would be that “Gentry” and “Capitalists” would have an exploitable labor force that would allow for the economic development of the colony. In other words, Wakefield and his contemporaries argued that the preservation of British class relations was essential to the economic development of the colonies and to the future well-being of the Empire and of England.¹⁵

This system had obvious appeal to the colonial government in Victoria and the Colonial Office in London. Not only would class relations be preserved (conveniently side-stepping the dangerous, democratizing appeal of “free land”) but colonization would be self-supporting with the sales of land going to an emigration fund that would bring “young married couples, or...young people of the marriageable age in an equal proportion of the sexes.”¹⁶ Steady economic and demographic growth would occur hand-in-hand with the preservation, indeed the strengthening, of class hierarchies in the colonies.

Though Wakefield drew from his own experiences in Australia, the example he held out of settlement run amok was the United States. There, he believed, cheap land encouraged a dangerous democratic sentiment, an equality “not before the law only, but equality against nature

¹⁵ Edward Wakefield, *A View of the Art of Colonization, with Present Reference to the British Empire; in Letters Between a Statesman and a Colonist* (Kitchener, Ont.: Batoche Books, 2001), pp. 18, 24 – 25, 28, 44, 94 – 103.

¹⁶ Wakefield, *A View of the Art of Colonization*, p. 115.

and truth; an equality which, to keep the balance always even, rewards the mean rather than the great, and gives more honour to the vile than the noble.”¹⁷

Though observers like Wakefield were biased in their perceptions of American settlement and its results, the United States did have a substantially different settlement policy. The Preemption Act of 1841 and the Homestead Act of 1862 both provided relatively cheap paths to land ownership, while squatting was relatively common in practice.¹⁸ Even more importantly, both of these acts traced their ideological lineage back to Jeffersonian republican ideals which held that cheap, easily accessible land would be a safety-valve for the nation, helping to preserve its republican virtues by allowing men to become economically self-sufficient. In this way, Wakefield and his contemporaries accurately identified the link between land policy and national mythology.

The pre-rush immigration policy of British Columbia was Wakefieldian in its assumptions and practices.¹⁹ Land sold for £1 per acre with the specific intention of controlling the pace and nature of settlement on Vancouver Island.²⁰ At the same time, a British subject had to own 20 acres of land to vote and 300 acres to run for office, conditions which helped ensure the continued political dominance of the Family Company Compact, who owned much of the available land on Vancouver Island.²¹ Though overall immigration remained small between 1849 and 1857, the policy successfully ensured that the proper social classes owned land and the

¹⁷ Edward Wakefield, *The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, ed. Muriel F. Lloyd Prichard (Glasgow: Colins, 1968), pp. 151 – 152.

¹⁸ One work that does much to get at “squatters” perceptions of land use and ownership is Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁹ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 59; Murdoch and Roger to Merivale, Colonial Despatches of British Columbia, 6 January 1860.

²⁰ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, p. 58. While cheap compared to Europe, this meant that land in British Columbia was considerably more expensive (while also being more remote) than land in the United States.

²¹ Mackie, “The Colonization of Vancouver Island,” p. 25.

social hierarchy of the colony remained intact.²² While the economic stagnation of the colony remained a cause of concern for the Colonial Office, the Wakefieldean settlement system remained attractive, especially to the HBC elites, when juxtaposed against the experiences of California. Even after the gold rush had fundamentally altered the nature of society in British Columbia, the land laws and immigration schemes of the colony continued to favor a more restricted British immigration and land policy. Faced with a choice between a large, white, and multinational immigration, and a smaller British immigration, the Colonial Office consistently chose the latter.²³ Wakefieldean immigration practices implicitly supported the assumption that only British subjects could be the type of white men needed for the colony.

The fur trade did more than provide the basis for the Family-Company Compact, it also laid the groundwork for a particular colonial order in British Columbia. By the time of the discovery of gold along the Fraser River in 1858, the HBC had over thirty years of direct experience with the natives of British Columbia, while some native groups had upwards of seventy years' experience dealing with European fur traders coming by land and sea.²⁴ Long experience taught both the natives and the HBC that they would have to at least partially adapt to the others' ways. Both sides came to understand the relationship between natives and the HBC through the lens of paternalism. HBC Factors played the part of the benevolent patriarchs, dispensing both valuable trade goods and gifts, but also rebukes and punishment when they felt it necessary.²⁵ For their part, the natives involved in the fur trade came to expect fair treatment, generous gifts, and hospitality when dealing with the HBC. Though framed in the language of

²² Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, p. 39.

²³ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 127 – 128, 131 – 138, 146 – 166.

²⁴ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, pp. 2 – 3.

²⁵ The title “Factor” means to act on the behalf of the HBC. Modern usage would refer to these men as agents. The Factors were the highest ranking HBC personnel in British Columbia.

paternalism, mutual obligations and respect generally characterized the interactions between natives and the HBC. At the heart of this dynamic was the balance of power in British Columbia. Simply put, it was impossible for relatively small numbers of HBC personnel to dominate the vast landscape and large native population of British Columbia. Outside of the HBC's forts, the HBC had limited coercive authority, and, as a result, HBC employees often had to rely on persuasion, gifts, and other native forms of peacefully resolving disputes in order to accomplish their goals. As a result, by the time gold was discovered along the Fraser River, the HBC and much of the native population had developed a way of dealing with disputes that, while far from perfect, combined European and native practices, and recognized and respected the place of natives in British Columbia.²⁶ These pre-existing practices and relationships between the colonizers and the colonized would open the door for natives during the gold rush to assert rights that would have been unthinkable in California.

By April, 1858, Governor Douglas and the other ruling elites of Vancouver Island and British Columbia had well-formed opinions about both the nature of their neighbors to the south and the likely result of a major gold discovery in British territory. Gold had been discovered in the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1851 and small amounts had been found on the mainland in 1857.²⁷ Having experienced the Queen Charlotte rush and considered the California and Australia gold rushes, Governor Douglas in Victoria and the Colonial Office in London realized that the discovery of a sizable amount of gold in British Columbia would spark an immediate immigration, an immigration that would draw most heavily from the closest population center,

²⁶ For an analysis of the balance of power between the HBC colonizers and the native population, and the repercussions this had for HBC policy toward natives, see Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, pp. 24 – 72.

²⁷ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, pp. 64 – 67.

California. This prospect unsettled and concerned both the local colonial elite and their superiors in London.

When the colonial elite of British Columbia and the Colonial Office thought of social disorder, they thought of California. The reasons for this are myriad. To the British elite, America, and especially California, represented the dangers of overly-democratic and unorganized society. For these elites, a lack of social graces, a disturbing crassness, and a tendency to violence characterized American society. Nor did the aggressively expansionist nature of the United States soothe the nerves of the British colonial elite. The prospect of American emigration to British Columbia brought with it memories of the Oregon Question of the 1840s and numerous filibustering expeditions throughout Central and South America. As Governor Douglas worried to the Colonial Office in 1858:

The interests of the empire may suffer, from the introduction of a foreign population, whose sympathies may be decidedly anti-British, and if the majority be Americans, strongly attached to their own country and peculiar institutions... There will always be hankering in their minds after annexation to the United States, and with the aid of their countrymen in Oregon and California, at hand, they will never cordially submit to British rule, nor possess the loyal feelings of British subjects.²⁸

Additionally, the racial attitudes of Americans, their “prejudices as to colour and race,” as Supreme Court Judge Matthew Begbie termed it, threatened the ability of a supposedly color-blind British government to function, as did their attachment to republican and democratic forms of government.²⁹ Though some British immigrants looked upon the Americans with a more forgiving eye, many saw them as needlessly reckless and expressed revulsion at their habit of

²⁸ Governor Douglas, “Letter to Colonial Secretary,” 8 May, 1858, Great Britain, Colonial Office, GR – 0326, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, British Columbia (hereafter BCARS).

²⁹ Matthew Begbie to Governor Douglas, 18 May 1859, Colonial Correspondence, file 142b1, B0137, BCARS. Of course, as we will see, British subjects “saw” race just as much as Americans, they just saw it differently. See also Kinahan Cornwallis, *The New Eldorado, or, British Columbia* (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1858), p. xvi.

wearing weapons and other customs.³⁰ In response to the threat of democratic, disorderly, and potentially disloyal American emigrants, the colonial government would protect British Columbia through the legal institutions of the state and by encouraging the immigration of “suitable” subjects who, it was believed, would reinforce the British conception of order.

The first group of migrants Governor Douglas encouraged were the blacks of California. On 14 April, 1858, Jeremiah Nagle, captain of the steamship *Commodore*, reportedly at the behest of Governor Douglas, spoke at the black Zion Church in San Francisco to an overflow crowd gathered to discuss plans for organized black colonization outside of the United States.³¹ Nagle told the assembly that blacks would be welcomed and afforded protection in British territory. Encouraged by these words and by reports of gold that Nagle brought from British Columbia, thirty-five blacks left San Francisco almost immediately, arriving, along with 400 to 500 white men, in Victoria on 25 April.³²

Violence and Order in the First Year of the Rush

With the start of the gold rush in 1858, the colonial elite in British Columbia clearly saw the influx of Americans as potentially destabilizing the colony. At this time, the claims of Americans to be white men mattered far less than their perceived national proclivities to violence and disorder. To counter the threat of white Americans, Governor Douglas appointed black men as Victoria’s first police force shortly after their arrival. The significance of this act, especially

³⁰ Cornwallis, *The New Eldorado*, pp. xv – xvii, 157 – 159, 205 – 206; T. G. Price, “Letter From Victoria,” in *The Merthyr Telegraph*, 31 May, 1862; Returned Digger, *Cariboo: The Newly Discovered Gold Fields of British Columbia* (Fairfield, Wash: Ye Galleon Press, 1975), p. 7.

³¹ James Pilton, “Negro Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1871” (master’s thesis, University of British Columbia, 1951), p. 30.

³² Edward Cridge, Diary 6 June 1853 – 19 October 1854; 10 February, 1858 – 3 June 1859, Cridge Papers, p. 91, Mss 0320, BCARS; Pilton, “Negro Settlement,” p. 30; Crawford Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia* (Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre, 1978), pp. 23 – 25.

for the black population, is hard to overstate. Though no government record of this decision survives, it seems likely that blacks were chosen not only for their loyalty and status as British subjects (most were Jamaican), but also to convey a message to newly arrived white Americans that they were now on British soil. As Judge Begbie pointed out, “Their [the ‘negro’ or ‘mixed negro population’] presence [is]...the test and pledge of British, as contrasted with U.S., domination.”³³

Predictably, white American resistance was high. American John Gibson remembered that “the Americans swore they would kill every one of them [the ‘Negro Police’] and that they would do as they had a mind to if they did not put other men on the Police.”³⁴ Not only were the black police “heartily despised by the Americans,” but in at least one incident an American crowd supported a thief who admitted his guilt, but refused to be arrested by a black man.³⁵ White Americans forced the British colonial elite to choose between maintaining order with a white police force or face a disorderly and surly American population. Faced with this amount of resistance, white British subjects soon replaced the black police officers.³⁶ Thus, almost from the beginning of the gold rush, the British elite began to compromise on the ideas about race they believed set them apart from their American cousins in order to establish a more orderly society based on British ideas of social hierarchy. The Americans, for their part, had signaled that they were willing to abide by the laws and authority of the British, but only so far as they perceived that doing so did not threaten their status as white men.

³³ Matthew Begbie, “Letter to Douglas, 30 April, 1860,” in Colonial Correspondence, file 142c, B01308, BCARS. Emphasis in original.

³⁴ John Gibson, “Letter to Mother, 12 October, 1858,” in John C. Gibson Letters, box 206, California State Archive.

³⁵ Quote is from Cornwallis, *The New El Dorado*, p. 283; Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing*, p. 47.

³⁶ Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing*, p. 47.

But while the use of black men as police in Victoria proved a small flashpoint between the British elite and the predominantly American population in 1858, the real concern of the colonial elites was for the lower Fraser River, where the colonial state was weak and relations with the local native populations precarious. Within weeks after news of gold reached San Francisco, an overwhelmingly American population had moved in unprecedented numbers into territory along the Fraser River held by various native groups. Many of these miners had experience fighting natives, either in California, Oregon, Washington, or on the overland trail, and if they had not fought natives themselves, they had heard and read enough to *know* that natives were not only inferior, but dangerous. Given these circumstances and the weak presence of the colonial state in the Fraser Canyon in the first year of the rush, it is perhaps surprising that there were only two major incidents between miners and natives and that neither devolved into the genocidal conflict characteristic of California or Oregon. Nevertheless, the colonial authorities feared that the Americans would threaten British sovereignty directly and increase the risk of conflict with natives, which could also undermine British authority in British Columbia.³⁷

Governor Douglas, fearful of a wider conflagration, acted quickly and decisively to defuse an early conflict at Hill's Bar in late May and early June 1858. The underlying cause was a contest between the natives and the newly arrived Euro-American miners, both of whom asserted their right to mine the bar.³⁸ These tensions were exacerbated when a man named Taylor began selling liquor to the natives.³⁹ In the eyes of the Americans, liquor had the

³⁷ T. A. Rickard, "Indian Participation in the Gold Discoveries," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (Jan. 1938): 12.

³⁸ Daniel Marshall, "Claiming the Land: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to British Columbia" (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 2000), pp. 87 – 88.

³⁹ Rickard, "Indian Participation," 13; James Douglas, "Letter to Colonial Secretary, 15 June, 1858," in *Colonial Despatches of British Columbia 1858*, James Hendrickson, ed. (March, 1988).

potential to inflame the passions of the local natives, who were already upset, and could prompt an attack. The miners

marched down to Taylor's camp and confiscated the whole contents of his cargo of liquor, got axes and smashed in the heads of each keg of liquor and dumped the contents on the bar, and gave Taylor twenty minutes to strike camp and leave, which he did in less than the time allotted.⁴⁰

According to the miners, it was this action that precipitated a series of escalating threats, intimidations, and posturing by the natives and the miners. In this early stage, the American miners had responded much as they would have in California, by organizing themselves into a vigilante organization and unilaterally expelling offending parties.

Aware only that the situation on the river was tense, Governor Douglas arrived on 31 May with the "sloop-of-war *Satellite*...and a dozen blue jackets on board."⁴¹ He found the natives "mustered under arms...threaten[ing] to make a clean sweep of the whole body of miners assembled there."⁴² Douglas defused the situation with time-honored tactics developed in years of service with the HBC. He spoke first with the natives and then with the miners, informing the miners that they had no

rights of occupation to the soil...that Her Majesty's Government ignored their very existence in that part of the country, which was not open for the purpose of settlement, and they were permitted to remain there merely on sufferance; that no abuses would be tolerated, and that the Laws would protect the rights of the Indian, no less than those of the white man.⁴³

Douglas accompanied this assertion of authority with the appointment of a British subject, George Perrier, as Justice of the Peace as well as several "Indian Magistrates," native men who

⁴⁰ James Moore, "The Discovery of Hill's Bar in 1858," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (July, 1939): p. 219.

⁴¹ Moore, "The Discovery of Hill's Bar," p. 219.

⁴² James Douglas, "Letter to Colonial Secretary, 15 June, 1858," in *Colonial Despatches of British Columbia 1858*, James Hendrickson, ed. (March, 1988).

⁴³ James Douglas, "Letter to Colonial Secretary, 15 June, 1858," in *Colonial Despatches of British Columbia 1858*, James Hendrickson, ed. (March, 1988).

would “bring forward when required any man of their several Tribes, who may be charged with offences against the Laws of the country,” to enforce British law on both the native and white populations.⁴⁴

By resolving the conflict at Hill’s Bar in this manner, Douglas asserted the power and sovereignty of the British state over both white and non-white inhabitants. By asserting that the rights of natives and whites were equal, Douglas was articulating a key claim to difference from California: that in British Columbia, the state was colorblind. And if the state was colorblind, then the British white men who ran it were different from, and superior to, their American counterparts. Therefore, while ensuring that the white miners could continue to mine, Douglas positioned the colonial order of British Columbia as a superior alternative to California, one that did not endorse independent warfare against natives. However, the proposition that in British Columbia Indian fighting, abuse, or assault would bring the reaction of the state would soon be put to the test.

The next major incident, often referred to as the Fraser River War, bore many of the hallmarks of California Indian fighting, leading at least one scholar to suggest that the Fraser River mines were an extension of the California mining and Indian warfare frontier.⁴⁵ In some ways, the Fraser River War was a quintessentially Californian conflict. In response to perceived native “outrages,” Victorian miners gathered in mass meetings, appointed leaders, and organized militia units to “chastise” the natives of the Fraser Canyon without waiting for, or seeking, approval from Victoria, much as they would have in California. Here, however, the similarities

⁴⁴ James Douglas, “Letter to Colonial Secretary, 15 June, 1858,” in *Colonial Despatches of British Columbia 1858*, James Hendrickson, ed. (March, 1988), University of Victoria. James Moore also claimed that Douglas gave the natives “a blowout of hard tack and malasses” which would be in keeping with HBC practices. See Moore, “The Discovery of Hill’s Bar,” p. 219.

⁴⁵ Marshall, “Claiming the Land,” pp. 33, 124, 141, 199 – 200, 244.

between the conflict in the Fraser River and California end. The Fraser River War did not degenerate into a genocidal bloodbath. Though some fighting did occur, and at least three native villages were burnt, the end result was a series of treaties between the native groups of the Fraser Canyon and the white miners. How and why this occurred draws attention to the evolution of fundamental differences in how Victorian men in British Columbia thought of themselves and of natives in comparison to California.

Tensions had been mounting with the natives of the Fraser Canyon since the arrival, earlier in the summer of 1858, of the miners, who were predominantly American citizens or individuals who had spent a significant period of time in the United States. Finally, in August, a French miner fired on some Thompson River natives, and the resulting fire-fight killed two men on each side. Matters might have ended there, but a large prospecting party of about sixty men was nearby, rushed to the scene, and “immediately commenced firing on the Indians and killed nine of them.” This started a wholesale panic among the miners in the upper Fraser Canyon, and hundreds fled downriver to Fort Yale or Fort Hope or left altogether.⁴⁶ The natives, for their part, abandoned their lower villages and moved farther up the canyon and deeper into the surrounding mountains. As they retreated down the canyon, the miners burnt several unoccupied villages, destroying homes and supplies needed for the coming winter.⁴⁷

The miners on the Fraser acted as if they had been expecting an Indian war because, to a large extent, they had. Many of the miners came from California where the native population had been forcibly displaced in the early years of the rush, and those who came from elsewhere

⁴⁶ Sewell, “Letter from Fraser River,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 3 September, 1858. For more details on this initial encounter, see Hubert Bancroft, *History of British Columbia* (San Francisco: History Co., 1887), p. 395; “Indian Difficulties,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 20 August, 1858; H. M. Snyder, “The Indian Difficulties,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858; “Account of Captain Snyder’s Expedition,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 1 September, 1858.

⁴⁷ Sewell, “Letter from Fraser River,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 3 September, 1858; Bancroft, *History of British Columbia*, p. 395; H. M. Snyder, “The Indian Difficulties,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858.

often “knew” of natives through stories and articles that depicted them as dangerous, warlike, thieving, and yet also cowardly and treacherous. More immediately, isolated attacks by natives on whites and vice-versa had raised the possibility of conflict, a possibility that rumors and circumstantial evidence seemed to support. For weeks, reports of mutilated bodies washing down the river had circulated among the miners.⁴⁸ That the deaths might be the result of accidents on the dangerous river and the surrounding cliffs, and the “mutilations” the result of bodies being washed through a turbulent river, did not occur to most commentators.⁴⁹ Instead, fear of natives and a belief in their penchant for committing horrific atrocities gave these stories credibility and fueled the growing hysteria.

As in California and elsewhere in North America, white miners had a hard time attributing the natives’ hostility solely to the natives themselves. They believed that while the natives might be predisposed to theft and violence, just as often, outside provocateurs incited and encouraged them. In the Fraser Canyon, two groups quickly came to share the blame for the state of affairs in the canyon: degraded whites who sold liquor to the natives and Chinese miners who supplied them with arms and ammunition.⁵⁰ The hastily-formed militia units that departed Fort Yale on 18 August sought to reopen the Fraser to mining by dealing not only with the natives, but also with the degraded whites and Chinese who were, in the eyes of the white miners, destabilizing the region. The Fraser River War was discursively a conflict about respectable white men re-establishing order over a range of socially marginal groups.

⁴⁸ Marshall, “Claiming the Land,” pp. 206 – 220.

⁴⁹ The Fraser Canyon is a notoriously dangerous stretch of river with rapids ranging from class III to IV surrounded by steep canyon walls. Bodies entering the upper canyon would be subject to several stretches of significant rapids, whirlpools, and eddies before they reached Fort Yale.

⁵⁰ “Selling Liquor to the Indians,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 10 August, 1858; H. M Snyder, “Letter from Captain Snyder,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858; “Account of Captain Snyder’s Expedition,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 1 September, 1858.

Different factions put forward two strategies for dealing with natives. The smaller faction, led by Graham and Galloway, “avow[ed] their intention to make it a ‘war to the knife,’ on men, women and children.” The larger faction, led by the American Harry Snyder and John Centras, “endeavor[ed] to effect a peace with the Indians by peaceable means if possible, and only as a last resort to use force.” Supported by the majority of the miners, Snyder, by threatening to withdraw and leave Graham’s much smaller company exposed, convinced Graham to follow behind and only come up the river if needed.⁵¹ The miners supported Snyder for pragmatic and ideological reasons. Snyder argued that a peace policy would yield results sooner, allowing the men to return to mining on the river. While the danger of Indian fighting had a certain appeal to Victorian men seeking to assert an identity as tough, manly, white men, it was also a distraction from economic opportunities and risks of mining.

The rough terrain of the canyon, combined with the native strategy in the days following the outbreak of hostilities, also discouraged miners from seeking to exterminate the natives. By withdrawing into the rugged and inaccessible country around the canyon, the natives virtually ensured any war would be long, bloody, and, just as important to the white miners, costly. Indeed, the militia units that departed Fort Yale took only five days of supplies with them, demonstrating their unwillingness and inability to engage in a protracted conflict.⁵² These factors allowed the proponents of treaty-making to control the situation, even in the face of what many believed was the start of an all-out native war in the colony.

⁵¹ “Account of Captain Snyder’s Expedition,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 1 September, 1858. Graham and Galloway were not identified by first name and only Snyder’s nationality can be determined with any degree of accuracy.

⁵² Sewell, “Letter from Fraser River,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 3 September, 1858; Bancroft, *History of British Columbia*, p. 395; H. M. Snyder, “The Indian Difficulties,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858; E. O. S. Scholefield, *British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present* (Vancouver, B.C.: S.J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1914), p. 35; “Letter from Fort Yale,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858.

The remainder of the Fraser River War can be quickly described. Snyder's party made a series of treaties with the natives of the Fraser Canyon, who were just as eager as the miners to avoid bloodshed. Shortly after the first negotiations were concluded, Graham's party was attacked at night by natives who had not been informed of the treaty. Graham and his lieutenant, James Shaw, were the only casualties of the attack. The death of Graham and the panic among his company took whatever wind remained out the sails of the "war to the knife" faction. Most white commentators blamed Graham for his own death because he trampled a white flag sent by Snyder and failed to post sentries. Within days, Snyder and his men returned to Yale, accompanied by five chiefs, to whom Snyder wished to demonstrate the numbers and strength of the white population.⁵³ Chinese miners and those suspected of selling liquor to the natives were harassed and advised to leave until the situation had settled.⁵⁴ By the time Governor Douglas arrived with a force of thirty-five men, the miners had been back at work for a week, and many had returned to the upper canyon.⁵⁵ At Fort Hope, Douglas met with the Thompson River chiefs who had accompanied Snyder downriver. Douglas reassured the chiefs they were under the protection of Her Majesty's Government, gave them gifts, and offered "much useful advice for their guidance in the altered state of the country." Seeking to address some of the perceived underlying causes of the conflict, Douglas banned the sale or gift of liquor to natives and

⁵³ T. W. G., "Letter from Fort Yale," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 1 September, 1858; "Account of Captain Snyder's Expedition," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 1 September, 1858; Richard Hicks, "Official Correspondence Relative to the Indian Difficulties on the Upper Fraser - Letter to Governor Douglas, 22 August, 1858," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 27 August, 1858.

⁵⁴ "Selling Liquor to the Indians," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 10 August, 1858; H. M. Snyder, "Letter from Captain Snyder," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858; "Account of Captain Snyder's Expedition," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 1 September, 1858.

⁵⁵ James Douglas, "Letter to Stanley, 27 August, 1858," in *Colonial Despatches of British Columbia*, James Hendrickson, ed.; Rickard, "Indian Participation," p. 16.

reserved some sections of the river for their exclusive use.⁵⁶ In other words, as Douglas acted to calm relations in the aftermath of the Fraser River War, he was already embarking upon a process that pushed the American and British miners together by dividing them from natives.

Academics and amateur historians have seen many things in the Fraser River War. Some, such as Daniel Marshall, argue that the native-newcomer conflicts along the Fraser River represent a virulent form of racism transported north by American miners.⁵⁷ Others, such as Donald Hauka, see the war as a key turning point that revealed the potential military strength of the American population and shaped Governor Douglas's subsequent reactions to disturbances among the American miners.⁵⁸ In this view, the Fraser River War (and particularly the miners' meetings and militia units) represented an American challenge to British authority and the supposed American preference for more republican forms of government. A close reading of the language surrounding the Fraser River War, however, reveals that the colonial authorities believed that the American population acted with restraint and they therefore began to appear less threatening to colonial authorities like Governor Douglas.

Although the conflict and its resolution undoubtedly informed Douglas's perceptions of the situation on the Fraser River and of the American population, Douglas would not have been unaware that the conflict had resolved itself far differently from similar events in California. Snyder struck a defiant tone, wondering why, in the face of seeming indifference on the part of the Governor and other colonial officials, "should the miners wait for the officers of the English Government to protect them in their just rights[?]" yet his actions seemed to have pleased Douglas, who offered Snyder a position in the colonial bureaucracy, an offer Snyder politely

⁵⁶ James Douglas, "Letter to Colonial Secretary, 12 October, 1858," quoted in Rickard, "Indian Participation," pp. 16 – 17.

⁵⁷ Marshall, "Claiming the Land," pp. 33, 124, 141, 199 – 200, 244.

⁵⁸ Donald Hauka, *McGowan's War*, (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 2003), p. 99.

declined.⁵⁹ Though Douglas was probably trying to shore up the strength of the colonial government by incorporating an influential local leader, he was not the type to appoint someone he regarded as incapable of acting in accordance with the wishes of the British Empire. By pursuing a peace policy with the local natives, and by controlling the excesses of the more hardline miners, Snyder had acted much as Douglas or another British official might have in his place.

A close examination of miners' meetings during the conflict also raises questions about any assumption on the part of the miners that their interests were incompatible with those of the colonial government. Although the letter drafted by the residents of Fort Hope laid some of the blame for the situation at the feet of colonial officials, their solution was to call for greater and more active involvement by the colonial government.⁶⁰ Various other correspondents also complained about the lack of colonial authority in the Fraser Canyon, particularly in view of the mining licenses most of the men paid.⁶¹

Here too, Douglas acted to address the miners' concerns, appointing a Justice of the Peace and a Chief Constable in Hope when he arrived in September.⁶² The American miners did not want less British authority but more, because a strong colonial government meant they could get on with the business of mining. This is important because of the strong correlation between self-identification and what constituted an acceptable form of government. For both British and American white men, a proper and legitimate government would place white men at the top of a

⁵⁹ Snyder, "The Indian Difficulties," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858; Snyder, "Latest News Direct From the Fraser River," in *The San Francisco Bulletin*, 25 September, 1858, quoted in Marshall, "Claiming the Land," p. 243.

⁶⁰ "Meeting of Miners and Residents at Fort Hope," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858.

⁶¹ T. W. G., "Mining Correspondence," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 25 August, 1858; Snyder, "The Indian Difficulties," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858.

⁶² Scholefield, *British Columbia*, p. 36.

social, political, and economic hierarchy. That the American miners saw British colonial authority as an acceptable alternative to republican governance is remarkable when it is considered that many Americans still held out British governance as an example of despotism. The economic incentive to concentrate on mining instead of governance and the pre-existing and functioning British colonial state allowed Americans to imagine a well-functioning British colonial bureaucracy as an adequate substitute for American-style republican governance. Given the strong links between ideas of race, citizenship, and good government in the United States, that some Americans were able to do so, suggests that they saw British colonial officials as white men.

Though too late to avoid the Fraser River War, a well-functioning bureaucracy is what Douglas sought to create in the Fraser Canyon. From the Fraser River War, Douglas learned that the American miners wanted and would follow competent officials and that the ideological distance between at least some Americans and the British colonial elite was not as great as he had first feared, at least with respect to the ideal social order in the colony. It is ironic, then, that the relative dearth of capable colonial officials in British Columbia would be a recurring source of friction between the Governor and the American miners. By the end of the year, the incompetence of the colonial officials around Fort Yale sparked another armed conflict in Fraser canyon, this time pitting two groups of Americans against each other and drawing the colonial government into a conflict between itself and the miners. This conflict came to be known as “Ned McGowan’s War.”

The “war” itself started just after Christmas, 1858, when a dispute over jurisdiction between Justices Peter Whannell of Yale and George Perrier of Hill’s Bar resulted in Whannell arresting Perrier’s constable. In response, Perrier swore in Edward McGowan and twelve to

fourteen other Hill's Bar men as special constables and issued a warrant for the arrest of Whannell, the freeing of the constable, and the transfer of a witness to Hill's Bar.

Edward (or Ned "Ubiquitous") McGowan was a former judge and high-ranking member of the Democratic party of San Francisco. He had spent months in hiding during the second Vigilance Committee's reign in that city in 1856 while being hunted as an accessory to a murder. Though he eventually cleared his name in court, McGowan clearly realized that he was a marked man as long as he remained in California, and along with many other Law and Order faction members, followed the reports of gold north in 1858. McGowan arrived in British Columbia with many friends, but also with an unenviable reputation. Proceeding to Hill's Bar, he quickly emerged as a leading figure in the American community there.⁶³

Arriving at Yale, McGowan's posse seized Whannell at gunpoint from his bench and hauled him back up to Hill's Bar where Perrier fined him \$25 for contempt of court.⁶⁴ Whannell was then released, whereupon he immediately returned to Yale and penned a frantic dispatch to Governor Douglas charging that "a lawless band of ruffians" led by McGowan had usurped his authority, and by extension, the authority of the Crown. This report led Douglas to dispatch a small military force under Colonel Richard Moody, a police force under Chief Gold Commissioner Chartres Brew, and the newly-appointed Supreme Court Judge of British Columbia, Matthew Begbie, to the scene.⁶⁵

Historians have often interpreted Ned McGowan's War as a challenge to the authority of the colonial government by a dangerous and unruly American mob, led by a known criminal,

⁶³ Edward M'Gowan, "Reminiscences: Unpublished Incidents in the Life of the "Ubiquitous," in *The San Francisco Argonaut*, 18 May, 1878, 25 May, 1878, 1 June 1878.

⁶⁴ Begbie, "Letter to Douglas, 3 February, 1859," quoted in Frederic Howay, *Early History of the Fraser River Mines* (Victoria, B.C.: C.F. Banfield, 1926), pp. 32 – 40.

⁶⁵ Whannell, "Letter to Douglas, 31 December, 1858," quoted in Howay, *Early History*, p. 57.

Ned McGowan. In this narrative, if not for the strong and decisive action of colonial authority, “McGowan might have turned his comic revolt into a genuine takeover and become the *de facto* ruler of the gold fields,” possibly resulting in American annexation of the mainland.⁶⁶ In reality, however, Ned McGowan’s War resulted from two distinct, but interrelated, conflicts: one between the various colonial officials in and around Yale, and the other between remnants of the Vigilance Committee and the Law and Order Party of San Francisco. The war did not represent a challenge to British ideas of order or even the authority of the British colonial state. Instead, the Americans mainly concerned themselves with their own conflict, and when they acted, they acted in support of one colonial official against another.

At the time of Ned McGowan’s War, the American population near Yale had divided into two camps: south of Yale at Hill’s Bar, McGowan and other former Democratic party operatives from San Francisco were the dominant force, and according to at least one account, harassed and threatened former vigilantes passing by on their way up the river.⁶⁷ The former vigilantes clustered in Yale, where their most prominent member was Dr. Max Fifer. Both factions remained antagonistic and looked to settle old scores. Crucially, each group believed that the other had subverted the local colonial officials and, either independently or with the acquiescence of those officials, would try and move against them.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing*, p. 88. For similar sentiments, see Edward F. Miller, *Ned McGowan’s War* (Don Mills, Ont.: Burns and MacEachern, 1968), p. 4; Hauka, *McGowan’s War*, pp. 2, 99. Even more recent books that downplay the potential for conflict cite McGowan’s later claims that he was prepared to lead a rebellion. See Mark Forsythe and Greg Dickson, *The Trail of 1858: British Columbia’s Gold Rush Past* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Pub, 2007), p. 43. Other works reflect a similar stereotypical view of American and British relations in the colony. See George Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of the Gold Rushes, 1849 – 1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 7, 72. Of course, many histories simply ignore the entire event. See, for example Barman, *The West Beyond the West*.

⁶⁷ Begbie, “Letter to Douglas, 3 February, 1859,” quoted in Howay, *Early History*, pp. 32 – 40; David Higgins, *The Mystic Spring: And Other Tales of Western Life* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1904), p. 51.

⁶⁸ Begbie, “Letter to Douglas, 3 February, 1859,” quoted in Howay, *Early History*, pp. 32 – 40; Whannell, “Letter to Douglas, 31 December, 1858,” quoted in Howay, *Early History*, pp. 56 – 57.

Such a tense situation would have required the united efforts of respectable and commanding colonial officials to manage. Unfortunately, the colonial officials around Yale were particularly ill-suited to their jobs. Richard Hicks, appointed Yale's revenue officer that summer by Governor Douglas in the immediate aftermath of the Fraser River War, was denounced by the miners there as "an unscrupulous man, as well as a corrupt public officer."⁶⁹ Whannell shared these concerns about Hicks and would, over the next few months, consistently charge Hicks with bribery, corruption, "disgraceful intoxication," and dereliction of duty.⁷⁰ Judge Begbie, upon arriving in Yale in February 1859, found that "Mr. Hicks is totally unworthy of serving Her Majesty in any capacity whatever: and that it woud be salbruely proper that criminal proceeding shod be instituted against him."⁷¹

Whannell, for his part, was a fraud. Though he represented himself as an officer of the Royal Victoria Yeomanry Corps and a gentleman, he had actually only served as a private before deserting to California where he owned a saloon at Shaw's Flat.⁷² According to some reports, Whannell was also given to bombastic, arrogant, and erratic behavior, especially when drunk, which was a not-uncommon occurrence.⁷³ The Justice for Hill's Bar, George Perrier, seems to have shared some of the weaknesses of character, if not the same checkered past, as Whannell. In Begbie's analysis, the greatest factor contributing to Ned McGowan's War was that both

⁶⁹ Douglas, "Letter to Stanley, 15 June, 1858," in James Hendrickson, ed., vol. 1a, *Colonial Despatches of British Columbia: 1858*, University of Victoria Library, Victoria, British Columbia (hereafter UVIC); "Miners' Meeting at Hill's Bar," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 6 November, 1858.

⁷⁰ Bancroft, *History of British Columbia*, p. 402; Whannell, "Letter to Brew, 8 Feb, 1859," quoted in Howay, *Early History*, pp. 71 – 76; Colonial Secretary, "Letter to Brew, 18 January, 1859," file 186, Chartres Brew Correspondence, B01310, BCARS.

⁷¹ Matthew Begbie, "Letter to Governor, 3 Feb, 1859" in Colonial Correspondence, file f142a, B01307, BCARS.

⁷² Carl Wheat, "Ned, the Ubiquitous," in *California Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (March, 1927), p. 26; James H. Ross, "Letter to Governor Douglas, 9 May, 1859," quoted in Howay, *Early History*, pp. 58 – 59. The Royal Victoria Yeomanry Corps was an Australian unit.

⁷³ Higgins, *The Mystic Spring*, pp. 52 – 54; George Perrier, "Letter from Justice Perrier," in *The Victoria Gazette*, 1 February, 1859.

Perrier and Whannell were “carried away with the most unbounded ideas of the dignity of their offices and themselves.”⁷⁴ More than just being unfamiliar with the law, Perrier and Whannell did not have the strength of character that British elites felt should characterize colonial officials. Both men tried to use the office to bolster their character, rather than use their character to bolster the office.

In fastening the blame for the disturbances on Whannell and Perrier, Begbie emphasized a particularly British vision of society. As David Goodman has argued in his comparison of the Australia and California gold rushes, British ideas of authority and order were “derived from the person of the official, who had to be visibly invested with the dignity of office,” in contrast to California, where order was “inseparable from the morality of the population in general” and from the forms of authority there.⁷⁵ This is why in California, vigilantes could assert legitimacy by claiming to act in the interests of the population and by assuming the forms of law: trials, judges, lawyers, juries. In British Columbia, by contrast, the key to preserving order was to admit only the proper type of men, gentlemen, to the upper levels of colonial service. This had several repercussions. First, it automatically disqualified Americans, with their dangerously democratic notions, from public office, and indeed, raised concerns about their participation in politics at all. Second, it meant that colonial officials were expected to act in accordance with a particular set of manly values including dignity, authority, and restraint. Through their conduct during Ned McGowan’s War, Whannell and Perrier demonstrated that they lacked the strength of character for their positions.

⁷⁴ Begbie, “Letter to Douglas, 3 February, 1859,” quoted in Howay, *Early History*, p. 39.

⁷⁵ David Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 96, 104.

The colonial officials dispatched upriver generally expressed pleasant surprise at the miners' conduct. Far from encountering a rebel army, Colonel Richard Moody reported a peaceful march to Hill's Bar where he received a gun salute and "three long loud cheers" after Moody "thanked them in the Queen's name for their loyal reception."⁷⁶ Soon after, the miners held a public meeting which commenced with "3 cheers for the Governor" followed by an address "with a good many epithets, pitching heavily into Whannell." Moody stopped the address and asked the Americans to redo it without the epithets, and they complied. By so doing, Moody and the Americans agreed to a form of public discourse more in keeping with British notions of how inferiors should address their superiors. Of course, the fact that Moody was listening to a public meeting underscored that this was actually a compromise. While the language and behavior of the meeting reflected British notions of class and status, the forum was American.

The fizzling-out of Ned McGowan's War demonstrated that the Americans around Yale, far from challenging the authority of the colonial state, actively supported it and only wanted honest and respectable colonial officials who would protect them from old enemies and would not actively harm their financial interests, as had Hicks.⁷⁷ Most American miners, it seems, did not particularly care whether the governance was British or American in character, only that it

⁷⁶ Richard Moody, "Letter to Arthur Blackwood, 1 February, 1859," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 25, nos. 1 & 2 (January – April, 1951): pp. 97, 99. Some scholars misread Moody's letter as stating that the Hill's Bar men fired at one of his detachments. However, Moody concludes they were shouting and firing into the air, that it "probably was only a bravado." Alternatively, it could have been a celebration for the arrival of the colonial officials, as the salute given Moody would suggest. Either way, the Americans clearly did not fire *at* the detachment, because, as Moody notes, no bullets came anywhere near his men. Further, most accounts that argue that McGowan intended to overthrow the colonial government draw on his account of events, published in 1878 in California. They fail to consider that McGowan, an American politician, wrote this document to justify his actions to an American audience. Unsurprisingly, McGowan emerges from his own account patriotic, brave, and cunning. See Edward M'Gowan, "Reminiscences: Unpublished Incidents in the Life of the 'Ubiquitous,'" in *The Argonaut* (San Francisco, 1878).

⁷⁷ Begbie is particularly eloquent on this point. See Begbie, "Letter to Douglas, 3 February, 1859," quoted in Howay, *Early History*, p. 39.

functioned and allowed them to concentrate on taking the economic risks that mining presented. When McGowan and his “lieutenant,” identified only as Kelly, appeared before Begbie and Brew to answer for their role in the posse that “assaulted” Whannell, they claimed “that they were acting under virtue of a warrant from a justice of the peace wch they were in fact precluded from even questioning.” Begbie and Brew agreed with this line of reasoning and dismissed both men.⁷⁸ The day after the trial, Colonel Moody, Lieutenant Richard Mayne, and Judge Begbie toured Hill’s Bar, where McGowan toasted the Queen with champagne, much to the delight of his guests.⁷⁹ Moody even speculated that with “*watching*” it might be possible to convert McGowan “into a valuable subject of the Crown eventually.”⁸⁰ Moody, at least, seems to have reached the conclusion that McGowan and his countrymen could be assimilated to English principles, given time and competent governance.

McGowan’s war is therefore valuable because it suggests that colonial officials were finding a way to be open to a degree of “Americanness” in British Columbia, pragmatically using stereotypical American public forms like mass meetings and resolutions in a manner that supported British authority and conceptions of order. The colonial elite maintained the peace in the colony, even as they hoped to enlighten the American population to British values. This process was accelerated by rapidly diminishing British fears of American influence. By 1859, many Americans had pronounced the lower Fraser a “humbug” and returned to California, and in

⁷⁸ Begbie, “Letter to Douglas, 3 February, 1859,” quoted in Howay, *Early History*, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Richard Mayne, *Four Years in British Columbia and Vancouver Island: An Account of Their Forests, Rivers, Coasts, Gold Fields and Resources for Colonisation* (London: John Murray, 1862), p. 70; Richard Moody, “Letter to Arthur Blackwood,” p. 103.

⁸⁰ Richard Moody, “Letter to Arthur Blackwood,” p. 103. Emphasis original.

the coming years, an increasing percentage of immigration consisted of British subjects.⁸¹ As the demographics began to change and the colonial elite grew more accustomed to those Americans who remained, the process of compromise and conciliation between the white American and white British aspects of the population accelerated.

At the same time, McGowan's War also demonstrates that the American population was growing more and more comfortable with British colonial authority. By embracing British colonial governance, Americans of European descent signaled that they saw Anglo-Saxon British subjects as fellow white men. This is because for men whose views of the world were vested in an understanding of republic virtues, only white men could create and administer a government that would be a tolerable alternative to the ideal government of white men, the republic. Just what this emerging American emphasis on race would mean for the colony, and whether the British population would reject or adopt it, would fuel ongoing controversies over the racial segregation of space in the colony.

Segregation Debates

While the fear of American disorder on the lower Fraser began to ebb, on Vancouver Island the black population continued to be a particularly important touchstone for the nature of society in the colony. Would British Columbia be a racially organized society akin to California, or one in which class, status, and nationality played the critical role in determining an individual's place? Because the black population was so symbolically important as "the test and pledge of British, as contrasted with U.S., domination," its changing position within British

⁸¹ Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia, a History* (Toronto: MacMillian, 1958), pp. 159, 184; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 14, 132 – 133. For an indication of the changing demographics of the colony, see A. C. Elliott, "Lillooet, B.C. Census 1862," in Colonial Correspondence, B01327, BCARS; "Mining Intelligence," in *Daily British Columbian*, 10 August, 1865.

Columbia society revealed a shift in the idealized colonial order.⁸² By the late summer of 1858, racial segregation of church and theatre space emerged as a crucial point of contention between people with competing views of the ideal colonial society.

When the black immigrants arrived in Victoria, they found an early supporter in Reverend Edward Cridge of the Anglican Church. Cridge visited with leaders in the black community shortly after their arrival and expressed support for their desire to worship in an integrated setting.⁸³ For several months, Anglican services were integrated without incident, but on 24 August 1858, someone using the pseudonym “Sharpstone” wrote a letter to the *Victoria Gazette* complaining of the “aromatic luxury” of the black members, and drew a direct line between integrated church services and interracial unions. In arguing for segregated church services, Sharpstone conflated class and racial divisions, asserting that “the English nation are divided into classes. The negro has his place, there, and ever will have so long as his skin is black.”⁸⁴ The next day, Mifflin Gibbs, a leader of the black community, lashed back at the man he labeled “Dullstone,” pointing out that any “aromatic luxury...is not only endured, but apparently enjoyed by some of these carpers when Venus is the star of their adoration” and that, even more importantly, the black population had come to British Columbia on the promise that “they should have the same legal protection, and enjoy the same immunities – other things being equal – as could the most favored subject; and that the color of their skin should never debar them from their rights.”⁸⁵ Cridge, for his part, lectured the congregation that there was no

⁸² Matthew Begbie, “Letter to Douglas, 30 April, 1860,” in Colonial Correspondence, file 142c, B01308, BCARS. Emphasis in original.

⁸³ Cridge, *Diary*, pp. 91 – 95.

⁸⁴ Sharpstone, “An Earnest Appeal,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 24 August, 1858. Emphasis original. “Aromatic luxury” is code for the perceived body odor of blacks and was a common racist trope at the time.

⁸⁵ Mifflin Gibbs, “An Answer to ‘An Earnest Appeal,’” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 25 August, 1858. “Venus,” in this contest, refers to black women.

difference between whites and blacks, before God or on Earth. However, he also reached out to the Americans in his congregation, stressed the “high respect” he and others felt for the Americans, and insisted that the seating arrangement had not been a “studied insult,” but rather “an honest endeavor to do the best which circumstances allowed.” Cridge ended by hinting that a more “commodious” church would solve the problem.⁸⁶ Evidently, the lecture and Gibb’s letter had the intended effect as there were no more complaints until the arrival of Reverend William Clarke later that month and Reverend Matthew Macfie in September, both Congregationalists.

Despite both being sent by the British Colonial Missionary Society, Clarke and Macfie held widely divergent views on race and on the place of blacks within the church. Though the Anglican, Episcopalian, and Methodist churches were already integrated in the colony, Clarke, an ardent abolitionist, made it a point to appeal to the black community. Evidence does not survive, but it seems likely, given his strong views on race and his calling as a minister, that he advocated racial integration and other abolitionist viewpoints in Victoria. This would seem to be the only explanation for why his congregation, out of all the integrated congregations, drew such attention.⁸⁷ Clarke’s stance led to the continuing flight of white members, a trend that was exacerbated when his fellow Congregationalist minister Matthew Macfie criticized him for promoting miscegenation and opened a church that required blacks to sit in a designated area. The battle between Clarke and Macfie quickly escalated as Clarke found himself preaching to an ever-smaller and ever-blacker congregation.⁸⁸ Opposition to Clarke was about more than just the integration of religious services. As one speech in support of Macfie put it, the question was

⁸⁶ Matthew Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia; Their History, Resources, and Prospects* (1865; New York: Arno Press, 1973), p. 389; Cridge, “Letter from Rev. Cridge,” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 26 August, 1858.

⁸⁷ “Religious Feud,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 21 October, 1859; Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing*, p. 59.

⁸⁸ “Religious Feud,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 21 October, 1859.

really, “shall white men or niggers rule in this Colony?”⁸⁹ White Americans in particular perceived Clarke as symbolic of what to them was a disturbing degree of racial equality. By labeling him a “nigger preacher,” deserting his church, and actively discouraging new arrivals from attending, Macfie’s mostly American supporters made Clarke’s position in the colony financially precarious. The death-blow to Clarke’s church came, ironically, from the black population. Not wanting to be associated with a “black-only” church, and recognizing that Clarke was, in many ways, doing more harm than good, the majority of church-going blacks in Victoria chose to attend Reverend Cridge’s Anglican church.⁹⁰ By the spring of 1860, Reverend Clarke had left, though the British Colonial Missionary Society eventually upheld his actions and ordered Macfie to integrate his church.⁹¹

The church dispute demonstrated not only the presence of differing visions of society, but also the amount of traction each of those visions had. While members of the ruling British elite were willing to take a stand in support of the black population – largely because that population behaved itself in a manner that complemented their own beliefs in a class-based system, but also because support for integration underscored the difference between white Englishmen and white Americans – this support could only go so far before an American-led push-back made it too troublesome. The church dispute signaled that the society emerging in the early years of the rush would be more racially tolerant than California, but only up to a point. The widespread criticism of Clarke, and the eventual collapse of his ministry, reflected the outer limits of racial toleration in the colony. As the church dispute indicates, the notion that ideal white manliness in the

⁸⁹ William Clarke, quoted in Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing*, p. 57.

⁹⁰ Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing*, p. 57.

⁹¹ Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing*, p. 58.

colony endorsed colorblindness (and consequently emphasized national differences) was contested from the early months of the gold rush.

The reactions of the general population and the three British ministers to these disputes reveal conflicting attitudes toward race and class in the colony in the early years of the rush. Clarke represented a particularly British way of organizing society along class lines, while Macfie tended strongly toward a more American way of organizing society through racial divisions. Both approaches alienated key constituencies, however. Macfie's racial divisions repulsed many liberal whites, in addition to the black population, while Clarke's approach offended not only many Americans, but a large segment of the population that was increasingly uncomfortable with ideas of racial mixing.⁹² As such, Clarke and Macfie represent the clash of two different logics for organizing society in British Columbia. Cridge, however, represents the beginnings of a compromise position between these two logics. By opposing segregation, Cridge maintained British standards in respect to race, but by reaching out to the American population and alluding to the possibility of a future compromise, he provided some legitimacy for distinctions made on the basis of race and therefore for the American manner of organizing society.

The debate over segregation, such an integral part of American understandings of a racially ordered society, did not disappear. In 1860, blacks contributed financial support to the new Victoria fire company, only to find that while their money was welcome, their participation was not. This rebuff led directly to their organization of Victoria's first rifle company, to which

⁹² Further complicating the debate, the supporters of integration were often members, or allies, of the HBC elite who governed the colony and were themselves under considerable suspicion by *Amor de Cosmos* and the reform faction for their own attitudes toward mixed-race relationships with natives. Though neither side made the connection explicit in the debate over black segregation, the parallel is suggestive of the potentials and limitations of both sides' views of integration and segregation. On criticism of the HBC elite and mixed-race relationships, see Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 58 – 78; Van Kirk, "Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria," 149 – 179.

they denied any white men admittance.⁹³ Critical to the initial success and eventual failure of the rifle company was the amount of support tendered by the colonial government. Under Douglas, the Vancouver Island Volunteer Rifle Corps enjoyed limited financial support and the use of outmoded rifles with which to drill. However, with the arrival of Governor Arthur Kennedy in 1864 and the organization of a white rifle company, this moral and financial support was withdrawn and the black company collapsed soon after.⁹⁴

The most serious contest, however, was in November 1860 over the segregation of the Colonial Theatre in Victoria. The Colonial Theatre had originally been integrated, but following protests by white patrons, the management restricted black patrons to “six or eight seats in the back part of the parquette.” In late October 1860, when a black man sat in the main part of the theatre, he was pelted with eggs. The next day, the local black community, led by George Washington and Thomas Anderson, had a white friend buy tickets for them to the “white” section of the theatre. On the night of 3 November, a crowd of between thirty and two hundred black men arrived and demanded entrance to the main part of the theatre. When they were refused, they forced their way in and a general mêlée ensued. By the time the police arrived fifteen minutes later, several men on both sides had been severely beaten with chairs, slungshots, and fists, and the theatre was on fire in two places. At the trial of three of the black men for inciting riot, some of the white witnesses testified that when Lamber Beatty, one of the owners, in an attempt to disperse the crowd, told the blacks, “Gentlemen you are doing wrong,” at least one black member of the crowd replied “You white son of a bitch[,] are we [doing wrong?].” The black population saw the segregation of the theatre as part of a disturbing trend

⁹³ Pilton, “Negro Settlement,” pp. 112 – 114; Edgar Fawcett, *Some Reminiscences of Old Victoria* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1912), p. 219.

⁹⁴ Edmund Hope Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney, 1862 – 65* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), p. 193; Pilton, “Negro Settlement,” pp. 112 – 125.

within the colony to recreate the racial stratification of the United States. At the same time, they recognized they could oppose these measures in a way that would be unthinkable in California.⁹⁵ Support from the colonial government remained tepid, however, and the dispute continued to erupt periodically for the next four years.⁹⁶

Faced with continued hostility to racial equality from many white inhabitants, the colonial government remained unwilling to do much beyond affirm the principles of racial equality. This was because, ultimately, the colonial elite had two interlocking goals: to maintain an orderly and peaceful society and to preserve its control of the colonial government. While these goals encouraged the colonial elite to emphasize the differences between British and American society, they also meant they took a fairly pragmatic view toward the large and vocal white American population in the colony. An idealistic stance on the grounds of racial equality could threaten colonial order by aggravating the white Americans. Although official and public discourse still tended to consider British white men better than American white men, on-the-ground experiences and official wavering were undercutting the sense of a real difference between white British and American settlers in the colony. Instead, as the first years of the gold rush drew to a close by the mid-1860s, a noticeable decrease in state and white Britons' support for the black population's claims to equality heralded the arrival of a greater emphasis on racial divisions and a concurrent de-emphasis on national divisions.

Political Maneuverings

When it suited the interests of the Family Company Compact, the principles of racial equality could be enforced in sometimes startling ways. In late 1859, Governor Douglas

⁹⁵ British Columbia, Attorney General, 7 November 1860, file 1860/17, Box 1, GR-0419, BCARS. No white men were charged relating to the riot.

⁹⁶ Pilton, "Negro Settlement," pp. 196 – 200.

prorogued the Vancouver Island Assembly, the token elected body that advised the Governor, and new elections were held.⁹⁷ For the first time, the “government party” faced real competition, most notably from a Nova Scotian émigré (by way of California) named Amor De Cosmos. De Cosmos had changed his name from William Smith in California either to ensure his mail would be delivered or, as he put it, “[not] because it smacks of a foreign title, but because it is an unusual name and its meaning tells what I love most, viz.: Love of order, beauty, the world, the universe.” Upon migrating to British Columbia, from his position as editor of the *Daily British Colonist* De Cosmos had become the leading voice of the “reform” faction in Victoria politics.⁹⁸ De Cosmos attacked Douglas as a corrupt, despotic, and incompetent official who did not know “the feelings of freeborn Englishman” and who instead sought to preserve power and privilege for himself and his HBC cronies, to the detriment of the colony.⁹⁹ De Cosmos argued for full representative government along the lines of the British Parliament and his own experiences in Canada. Already a considerable thorn in Douglas’s side, the potential election of De Cosmos to the Assembly in 1860 only promised to make Douglas’s problems worse.

Douglas found the solution in the black population of Victoria. According to the laws of the colony, only British subjects could vote, and as the colony had no naturalization law, this effectively restricted the franchise to British-born males.¹⁰⁰ Shortly before the election, however, Judge David Cameron (Douglas’s brother-in-law) and Attorney-General George Cary approached Mifflin Gibbs and told him “that colored people who had no political *status* in any

⁹⁷ Pilton, “Negro Settlement,” p. 92.

⁹⁸ Amor De Cosmos, quoted in H. Robert Kendrick, “Amor De Cosmos and Confederation” in *British Columbia and Confederation* ed., W. George Shelton (Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria, 1967), p. 69.

⁹⁹ “[Untitled Editorial],” *Daily British Colonist*, 18 December, 1858.

¹⁰⁰ “Aliens and the Franchise,” *Daily British Colonist*, 29 November, 1859.

other country had a perfect right to vote here on taking the oath of allegiance.”¹⁰¹ In other words, because the *Dred Scott* (1857) decision had denied blacks in the United States the right to become citizens, they had no citizenship to be “erased” with a naturalization law. The American blacks took advantage of this opportunity to secure the franchise – which was not available to white Americans – and, despite the warnings of De Cosmos that they were being “entrapped” and voting illegally, eighteen voted as a bloc on 7 January for Cary and Selim Franklin, giving Franklin the margin he needed for victory.¹⁰² De Cosmos and the “reform faction” were livid. The subsequent debate highlighted the contentious place of national and racial identity on Vancouver Island.

Both the “reform” and the “government” faction claimed to act on behalf of British and “foreign” (namely American) residents at the same time that both disavowed American republicanism and racial attitudes in favor of British-style representative government and social order. Partly this was the result of political pragmatism. As long as the franchise was restricted to British nationals, advocating any sort of American-style governance would effectively have doomed the “reform” faction’s political chances; instead, both factions self-consciously framed their appeal to British subjects.¹⁰³ More than this, both the reform and government factions believed that British-style governance was superior to its American counterpart. Where they differed was over the ideal balance of power and authority between the Governor and the elected Assembly and who should constitute that Assembly.

¹⁰¹ “Mr. Cary’s Meeting,” *Daily British Colonist*, 21 May, 1861. Emphasis original.

¹⁰² Pilton, “Negro Settlement,” p. 94; “A Trap,” *Daily British Colonist*, 21 November, 1859. It should be noted that though Franklin was born in Liverpool, he was part-Jewish and had resided in San Francisco prior to migrating to Victoria. He was, however, a close supporter of Douglas and his loyalty seems to have overridden any concerns about his suitability for office on the basis of his ethnicity or residence in the United States. Sheldon Godfrey and Judy Godfrey, *Search out the Land: The Jews and the Growth of Equality in British Colonial America, 1740-1867* (Montreal, Qué.: McGill-Queen’s Press, 1995), 220.

¹⁰³ “Smith for Victory – But no Victory for Smith,” *Victoria Gazette*, 2 January, 1860; “Political Meeting,” *Victoria Gazette*, 9 January, 1860; “Mr. Amor De Cosmos,” *Daily British Colonist*, 3 January, 1860.

White Americans, and particularly their presumed republican and racial attitudes, were the unspoken issue of the 1860 election. When the American blacks seized on the opportunity to vote offered by the government faction, “Shears,” a particularly vitriolic reform faction partisan, denounced them for flattering themselves that they had triumphed “over American prejudices, or add[ed] some imaginary privilege to the catalogue of rights guaranteed to them in common with all British subjects.” Shears raged that they “sold themselves to the worst enemy of their country” for “fair *promises* of an indefinite amount of that myth called social equality,” when “neither Attorney-Generals nor Governors can increase or diminish the constitutional rights of a British subject, black or white.” By making the election about race, Shears argued, the black voters had betrayed their country and their countrymen. Shears concluded by arguing that the election had demonstrated why “the world is so ready to believe that the colored race is unfit for freedom” and that a backlash by white Englishmen and liberal white Americans combined with continued indifference on the part of the government would make the black population “curse the day they sold themselves to a petty monopoly.”¹⁰⁴ For Shears, at least, race had no place as a political issue in English politics, but racial categories did have explanatory value for an individual’s fitness to have the franchise. In other words, racial categories had meaning, even as their proper place in public discourse was contested. Shears was, in essence, elucidating the basis of racial order that was emerging in British Columbia, one that used the rhetoric of colorblindness and national difference to disguise a social order increasingly predicated on the assumption of the superiority of all white men over non-whites.

The reply from the government faction’s *Gazette* the next day sought to tie the reformers to American racism, noting their use of the term “nigger” and their attempts to show the black

¹⁰⁴ Shears, “The Election and the Colored People,” in *Daily British Colonist*, 12 January, 1860. Emphasis in original.

population as unfit for suffrage. The *Gazette* argued that the black votes were not bought and instead the “manly and straight-forward” blacks voted for “those two candidates, whom they thought the most English in idea – the most likely to support English institutions – and the working of which they know – and thereby benefit the country.” In contrast, the reformers would threaten the ideals of British political equality by “wrest[ing] from [the black population] the privileges they possess.” In other words, it was the reformers who were motivated by un-British considerations of race while the black population acted in the best traditions of freeborn Englishmen.¹⁰⁵

And yet, the *Gazette* also had to acknowledge that racial categories had meaning in Victoria, and that by acting to preserve colorblind political equality, the black population was protecting (legitimately, in its view) their status as black men entitled to the rights of English subjects. Underlying these actions was an assumption that, without an active defense, racial categories could quickly undermine the ideal of colorblind English values and political participation. It was Gibbs who most explicitly tied the reform faction to American racial attitudes, describing the election as “a victory of the philanthropic and magnanimous English principles over the rowdyism and prejudice of that portion of the population which held American sympathies.”¹⁰⁶ By extension, most white Americans were therefore not only ineligible to vote, but fundamentally unsuited to political participation in an English colony. Ultimately, the colonial government was more than willing to push the limits of racial equality for blacks as long as the political value of such a move outweighed the cost. This was pragmatism gilded with idealism, the shallowness of which became apparent in the 1861 assembly election when the Government sided with Joseph Trutch, a white man with close

¹⁰⁵ “[Untitled Editorial],” in *Victoria Daily Gazette*, 13 January, 1860.

¹⁰⁶ “Political Meeting,” *Victoria Gazette*, 9 January, 1860.

connections to Governor Douglas but whose candidacy was illegal, rather than back Jacob Francis, a black man.¹⁰⁷

The tenuous nature of government support for racial equality is also evident in the judicial system. Tina Loo has argued that the transient nature of the gold rush population meant that “British Columbians had limited kinds of relationships with each other – relationships based on consumption and exchange, rather than on affection, kinship, religion, or simple proximity, permanence, and familiarity.” It was through the law, Loo argues, that commonality, community, and relationships were constituted.¹⁰⁸ So it was particularly telling when, in September 1860, two black men called to serve on a jury in the town of Douglas were confronted with an indignation meeting led by whites opposed to sitting on the same jury as black men.¹⁰⁹ As a result of this protest, the government did not call a black man to serve on a jury again until 1872.¹¹⁰ In contrast, white Americans occasionally served on juries, a trend that only accelerated after the passage of “An Act to provide for the Naturalization of Aliens” in November, 1861. Prior to this act, it was impossible for a foreigner to become a British subject in British Columbia (unless they were African Americans affected by the *Dred Scott* decision). This act now allowed all aliens to become naturalized, although in practice, the biggest beneficiaries were Americans of European descent.¹¹¹ Even before the law was passed, however, it was often difficult for Begbie and others to determine whether an individual was an American citizen or British

¹⁰⁷ Pilton, “Negro Settlement,” p. 100.

¹⁰⁸ Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, pp. 65, 74, 91 – 94.

¹⁰⁹ Douglas, also known as Port Douglas, was located at the North end of Harrison Lake and was a major waypoint on the Douglas Road to the gold fields. All were named for Governor Douglas.

¹¹⁰ Pilton, “Negro Settlement,” p. 202; “First Provincial Legislative Assembly – First Session,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 7 March, 1872; “First Provincial Legislative Assembly – First Session,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 21 March, 1872.

¹¹¹ “An Act to Provide for the Naturalization of Aliens, 1861,” *A Collection of the Public General Statutes of the Colony of Vancouver Island, Passed in the Year 1859, 1860, 1861, 1862, and 1863* (Victoria, B.C.: The British Colonist Office, 1866).

subject.¹¹² In contrast, the assumed place of blacks, Chinese, and natives in court was as litigants or witnesses, not as jurors.¹¹³ In both the courts and at the polls, American-born whites gained influence at the same time that people of color saw their influence in those two crucial areas diminish. That these trends seemed to have occurred with the tacit approval of many of the British subjects of the colony, including the colonial elite, speaks to a growing convergence in worldviews between the white American and British populations in the colony, a convergence predicated on assumed commonalities based on race.

The Changing Tide

By the middle years of the 1860s, increasing numbers of both white American and British colonists assumed common bonds of whiteness between their two groups even as they acknowledged that national origins gave each group a particular flavor. This was particularly evident in the final major conflict of the gold rush period, the Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin) crisis of 1864.¹¹⁴ The crisis was precipitated by the attempts of Alfred Waddington to build a road from Bute Inlet to the Cariboo, a route that would dramatically reduce the distance and time required to reach the gold fields. The proposed road would go directly through Tsilhqot'in territory, a native nation that had experienced relatively little direct contact with the colonial state until this time. By 1864, Waddington's road crews had been at work in Tsilhqot'in territory for almost

¹¹² Matthew Begbie, *Journey into the Interior of British Columbia* vol. 3, (London: Royal Geographic Society Journal, 1861), p. 243; Matthew Begbie to Governor Douglas, Colonial Correspondence, 30 April 1860, file 142B1, B01307, BCARS; Matthew Begbie to William Young, Colonial Correspondence, 29 June 1860, file 142c, B01308, BCARS.

¹¹³ “[Untitled Editorial],” in *The Victoria Gazette*, 18 May, 1860; John McLaren, Hamar Foster, and Chet Orlof, eds., *Law for the Elephant, Law for the Beaver: Essays in the Legal History of the American West* (Regina, Sask.: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1992), p. 36.

¹¹⁴ Also known as the Bute Inlet massacre, Chilcotin Uprising, the Chilcotin Resistance, and the Chilcotin War. I use the term the Tsilhqot'in Crisis to avoid the emotional loading incumbent in the other labels and to emphasize that these events marked a tipping point for both colonial and Tsilhqot'in society. I use the modern variation “Tsilhqot'in” instead of the historical “Chilcotin,” because it more accurately reflects proper pronunciation and the wishes of the Tsilhqot'in people.

two years. Then, on the morning of 30 April, approximately a dozen native warriors under the leadership of a man called Klatsassin surprised them in their tents and killed fourteen of the seventeen road workers.¹¹⁵ After killing a ferryman and another isolated party working on the western portion of the road, the natives moved east and attacked the crew approaching from that direction.¹¹⁶ This time, however, forewarned by the native wife of one of the work crew, a running battle ensued; while three more white men died, the rest of the party escaped.¹¹⁷ Word of the attacks spread throughout the colony, and most of the settler population left the affected area.

The colonial government responded to the attacks by forming an expedition comprised of marines, militia units, and special constables that would operate in two columns under the command of Gold Commissioners Chartres Brew and George Cox.¹¹⁸ Though the largest demonstration of force in British Columbian history to that time, the expedition faced the nearly insurmountable challenge of locating a small group of natives in a large and virtually unexplored territory. The columns of the expedition employed very different tactics. While Brew and his men endured considerable hardship hiking through Tsilhqot'in territory, Cox simply built a fort and waited.¹¹⁹ Then, much to the surprise of the newspapers and colonial elite, on 15 August,

¹¹⁵ As pointed out by John Lutz, in the Tsilhqot'in language Klatsassin means "we do not know his name." See "Klatsassin" on "We Do Not Know His Name," www.CanadianMysteries.ca.

¹¹⁶ "Dreadful Massacre – Murder of 14 of the Bute Inlet Road Party by Indians – Miraculous Escape of 3 of the Men," in *Daily British Colonist*, 12 May, 1864.

¹¹⁷ "More Indian Murders! – McDonald and Two of his Party Killed – Several others severely Wounded – The Volunteers, with Indian Allies, on the Track of the Murderers – Marines from the Sutlej to be Landed," in *Daily British Colonist*, 27 June, 1864.

¹¹⁸ Great Britain Colonial Office, B.C. Executive Council Minutes 1864, 14, 16 May 1864, GR-1224, BCARS; Arthur Birch to George Cox, Colonial Correspondence, 14 May 1864, file 379, B01321, BCARS; "The Bute Massacre," in *The Daily British Colonist*, 23 May, 1864; "An Indian Policy," in *The Daily British Colonist*, 30 May, 1864; "The Bute Massacre," in *The Daily British Columbian*, 18 May, 1864.

¹¹⁹ "The Chilcoaten Expeditions" in *The Daily British Colonist*, 8 September, 1864; "The Expedition Against the Indians," in *The Daily British Columbian*, 7 September, 1864; "Later from the Chilacoten Country," in *The Daily British Columbian*, 7 September, 1864.

Klatsassin and seven of his supporters presented themselves at Cox's camp and were arrested.¹²⁰ After a brief trial, Klatsassin, Telloot, Pielle, Tahpit, and Chessus were found guilty of murder in September and executed on 26 October at Quesnellemouth.¹²¹

The attacks and their aftermath ignited an intense debate over the proper response of the colonial authorities, a debate that highlighted changing attitudes toward race, gender, and nationality in the colony. Though different factions within colonial society sought to explain the attack in different ways, by the end of May, public opinion in British Columbia was in general agreement that "fear is the only power that can keep such savages in entire subjection" and that the colonial government had been sorely lacking in impressing upon the natives that fear.¹²² It is clear that the mainland and island populations, both consisting of American and British whites, shared an understanding of native character as greedy, irrational, and childlike -- in a word, savage. To these populations, the superiority of the white man over the natives justified colonialism, and the natives' racial inferiority meant that domination had to be "demonstrated."

This unanimity was undercut, however, by the question of whether Klatsassin and his supporters committed an act of war or of murder. While this might sound like a somewhat academic debate, it had very real implications for how Victorians in British Columbia thought of race and gender, particularly as manifested through political and legal systems. The dominant position, and the one supported by the colonial government, was that the natives should be treated as criminals and dealt with by the judicial system in the hope of precluding a general

¹²⁰ Matthew Begbie to Governor Seymour, Colonial Correspondence, 30 September 1864, file 142f, B01308, BCARS.

¹²¹ Peter O'Reilly, Diary 1864, p. 100, file 3, box 6, A01913, BCARS.

¹²² "The Last Indian Atrocity," in *The Daily British Colonist*, 12 May, 1864. On the debate and the emerging consensus see also "Dreadful Massacre – Murder of 14 of the Bute Inlet Road Party by Indians – Miraculous Escape of 3 of the Men," in *Daily British Colonist*, 12 May, 1864; "The Bute Massacre," in *The Daily British Columbian*, 18 May, 1864; "An Indian Policy," in *The Daily British Colonist*, 30 May, 1864.

Indian war. On 2, June however, an emergency meeting was held in Victoria following reports (later proved false) of another massacre by the Tsilhqot'in. At the emergency meeting, the speakers (who included such notable community leaders as Amor de Cosmos, Alfred Waddington, and the mayor) argued that the natives "knew no law but blood for blood" and that the murderers should be hanged without trial. Interestingly, British subjects organized this meeting, with its strong echoes of the miners' meetings during California's Indian conflicts a decade and a half earlier, and the "war to the knife" faction during the Fraser River War. Indeed, if attendance reflected the demographics of Victoria, British subjects probably made up a significant portion of the audience, suggesting the degree to which American ideals about civic participation and the proper response to native "aggression" had taken root in the psyche of the British population on Vancouver Island by 1864.¹²³ This meeting, and the sentiments it espoused, represented a minority position, particularly among the population of the mainland, who recognized that a widespread Indian war could have disastrous consequences for the colony. Tellingly, these opponents criticized what they called "the American doctrine of 'manifest destiny' in its most fatal form."¹²⁴ The meeting demonstrated that even as American and British attitudes grew more alike, the idea of unacceptable American racial attitudes remained a rhetorical touchstone in British Columbia.

Proponents of treating the attack as a criminal matter drew heavily on the idea of national difference to explain and justify their position. This faction argued that American Indian policy, with its perceived emphasis on warfare and extermination, was antithetical to the British goal of

¹²³ "Emergency Meeting," in *The Daily British Colonist*, 2 June, 1864.

¹²⁴ "An Indian Policy," in *The Daily British Columbian*, 21 May, 1864.

educating and civilizing colonized peoples.¹²⁵ Instead, they argued that British Indian policy, as practiced in British Columbia, “assumed a paternal oversight of the Indians, treating them as minors,” a policy that would lead to the natives being “peaceable, orderly and well disposed towards the Government.”¹²⁶ For the British, the proper role of the white man in colonial society was not as slayer of natives, but as father-figure to racialized children.

This explains why the Tsilhqot’in crisis also galvanized criticism of Governor Douglas’s “bread and treacle” Indian policy.¹²⁷ Instead of being based in what Governor Arthur Kennedy, Douglas’s successor who had just arrived in March 1864, called “strict justice, good faith, and the greatest firmness,”¹²⁸ Governor Douglas’s Indian policy could, in the eyes of at least one critic, “be summed up in two words – *cunning* and *deceit*.”¹²⁹ “A policy which may have proved tolerably successful in bartering brass buttons and glass beads for skins [was] hardly the thing to regulate the intercourse of the British Government with these ‘ancient lords of the soil,’” because it degraded both whites and natives.¹³⁰ It was therefore crucial, with the Tsilhqot’in crisis occurring as two new governors took their offices in Victoria and New Westminster, that a new Indian policy be devised and implemented in the colonies, one that would not only keep the natives in line, but would do so in a manner that reflected the British vision of how the white men who made up the government should act. The result was the Tsilhqot’in expedition which sought to marry a demonstration of strength with the restraint of the law. No longer, argued

¹²⁵ “The Way Our Neighbors Settle Indian Difficulties,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 17 September, 1864; “An Indian Policy,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 21 May, 1864.

¹²⁶ “An Indian Policy,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 21 May, 1864; “Our Relations with the Indians,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 13 June, 1863.

¹²⁷ “Sir James Douglas and the Indians,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 8 June, 1864; “An Indian Policy,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 30 May, 1864. Treacle is a type of syrup.

¹²⁸ “Sir James Douglas and the Indians,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 8 June, 1864.

¹²⁹ “An Indian Policy,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 21 May, 1864.

¹³⁰ “An Indian Policy,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 21 May, 1864.

commentators like the editor of the *British Columbian*, would British Columbian Indian policy be based on deception and bribery, actions which reflected poorly on the character of the officials who carried them out. Instead, strength, tempered with restraint, would subdue the naturally effeminate native population and confirm the white manhood of the colonial government and population.¹³¹ This blending of strength with restraint indicated that ideas of white manliness were increasingly seeking to reconcile ideas of restrained and martial manhood. The members of the expedition, and particularly the two leaders, Gold Commissioners Chartres Brew and George Cox, therefore came to be seen as symbolic of an emerging idea of white manliness in British Columbia.

The capture of Klatsassin however raised questions about the character of George Cox and threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the entire project. At first, the surrender seemed to confirm that a demonstration of manly strength could cow the native population. Two weeks later, however, reports circulated that the surrender may not have been as straightforward as the earlier accounts suggested. In these reports, Cox had given the natives gifts, insinuated that he wanted to make peace and “friends,” and invited the natives into camp to negotiate. When they arrived, the natives “found to their surprise that they were surrounded by armed men, who informed them that they were prisoners, and ordered them to lay down their arms.”¹³² Cox’s personal and professional behavior added weight to this allegation of wrongdoing. There were suggestions that Cox had taken up with a “Hideous Klootchman with one eye,” thereby degrading himself as a squaw man.¹³³ Even more concerning was that Cox started late then

¹³¹ “An Indian Policy,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 21 May, 1864.

¹³² “Later from the Chilacoten Country,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 7 September, 1864; “The Chilcoaten Expedition,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 8 September, 1864; Matthew Begbie to Governor Seymour, Colonial Correspondence, 30 September 1864, file 142f, B01308, BCARS.

¹³³ Henry Ball, *Journal of Henry Maynard Ball*, pp. 3 – 4, Mss 0750, BCARS; For an excellent discussion of the racial and gender implications of mixed-race relationships, see Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 58 – 79.

simply built a fort and waited, while Brew's party endured considerable hardship hiking through Tsilhqot'in territory.¹³⁴ That Brew was considered the better officer and the more likely to succeed was evident even in the letter from Arthur Birch, the Colonial Secretary, appointing Cox to command the expedition from Alexandria. "The Governor trusts," wrote Birch, "that under the experienced management of Mr. Brew, the well disposed Indians will be induced to capture and hand over the Murderers."¹³⁵ From the beginning, it is clear that both the government and the public were concerned that Cox lacked the character necessary to command one of the expeditions. So when questions arose as to the nature of Klatsassin and the other natives' surrender, the government was inclined to take them seriously.

Governor Seymour worried that, if true, these rumors might affect future dealings with native tribes, and therefore ordered "the strictest investigation."¹³⁶ Judge Begbie had already concluded that Klatsassin "was completely in the dark as to the consequences of his entering Mr. Cox's camp on the 15th August" but attributed this to a lack of knowledge on the part of Judge Cox and the deliberate manipulation of the situation by a rival chief and interpreter, Alexis. Ultimately, Begbie concluded that because Cox had not deliberately misled Klatsassin and the others and because the natives were, in his opinion, "on the very verge" of "being fairly hunted down," the surrender was inevitable and the honor of the British state had been preserved.¹³⁷ The Governor and Council ultimately agreed "that no promise of any sort was made to any of these Indians by Mr. Cox on their surrender and that there was no reason why the justly deserved

¹³⁴ "The Chilcoaten Expeditions" in *The Daily British Colonist*, 8 September, 1864; "The Expedition Against the Indians," in *The Daily British Columbian*, 7 September, 1864; "Later from the Chilacoten Country," in *The Daily British Columbian*, 7 September, 1864.

¹³⁵ Arthur Birch to George Cox, Colonial Correspondence, 14 May 1864, file 379, B01321, BCARS.

¹³⁶ Great Britain Colonial Office, "Executive Council Minutes, 1864," 16 October, 1864.

¹³⁷ Matthew Begbie to Governor Seymour, Colonial Correspondence, 30 September 1864, file 142f, B01308, BCARS.

sentence of death imposed on five of them by the Law should not forthwith be carried out.”¹³⁸ In the end, Cox’s reputation as a respectable white man was upheld, and through him, the justness of British Columbian native policy was confirmed.

The Tsilhqot’in crisis revealed how a unifying category of whiteness could exist in a colonial setting in which national identities still had significant traction. The response to the Tsilhqot’in crisis demonstrated that while national differences were rhetorically important, there was little concern with foreign nationals themselves. In other words, by the mid-1860s, white Americans were assumed to fit well within a social system organized along British patterns of colonial domination. While American-style colonialism remained an important counter-point used to give British-style colonialism definition (though, as had happened at the Emergency Meeting in Victoria, even those differences could be laid aside), there was little concern that white Americans, as a people, would or could corrupt society. Nor did it matter that in reality, British subjects could be strong advocates of an extermination policy (as they had at the Emergency Meeting) or that not all Americans thought the only good Indian was a dead Indian. What mattered was that the British, and particularly the British colonial elites, could talk as if British subjects unequivocally rejected a straightforward and uncomplicated American extermination policy. In other words, the rhetoric about national difference was increasingly becoming both more important than, and detached from, the actual actions of British subjects and American citizens on the ground.

With the fears of American domination fast receding, white British men found more in common with their American counterparts in the flesh, while at the same time continuing to deploy the rhetoric of the difference with American policy. White American men were no longer

¹³⁸ Great Britain Colonial Office, “Executive Council Minutes, 1864,” 16 October, 1864, BCARS.

the problem, the difference against which white British men could be measured; instead, British subjects in the colony now drew comparisons between their government and the American government, using this to demonstrate the superiority of their ideas, while at the same time opening the door for white Americans to participate in British colonial society. If the problem with white American men was not inherent in themselves, but was a consequence of their system of government, then under a proper, British, style of government, these same men could be perfectly acceptable members of colonial society. The Tsilhqot'in crisis revealed that the differentiation between white Americans as brothers in all but name and American republican government as dangerous had, by 1864, largely laid to rest the old fears of the American population of the colony. Notably absent from the conflict was any concern of American-style militia units that had characterized the Fraser River War five years before. The concern now was for a unitary body of white men, acting through the colonial state, to act in a manner that differentiated the state from its California precedent. Public aberrations to this discourse, like the Emergency Meeting in Victoria, were quickly and quietly forgotten.

Racism and the Rhetoric of Colorblindness in the Cariboo

By the mid- to late-1860s, a strong trajectory toward a racially-organized society that still made rhetorical nods to national differences was well-established. And while these nods belied a fundamental assumption of white superiority, they did have very real implications, particularly for the black population. Even without representation on juries, the conception of blacks as the most respectable of the non-white groups meant they could still find their interests represented by the community as a whole. By the mid-1860s, the black community in the Cariboo was small, but significant, fairly successful, and fairly well-integrated. Blacks tended to consume and invest like their middle-class white counterparts, and indeed, often owned shares in mixed-

race companies.¹³⁹ Blacks also mined as employees in mixed-race or all-black companies.¹⁴⁰

But in 1865, the prominent all-black Harvey-Dixon Company became involved in a legal dispute that demonstrated the fading potential of the rhetorical commitment to colorblindness for even the most accepted of non-white populations.¹⁴¹

The dispute originated when the all-white Aurora Company allowed their claim to lapse on William's Creek. The Harvey-Dixon Company claimed ownership of the ground and then amalgamated with the white-owned Davis Company. Shortly after, the newly amalgamated company (calling itself the Davis Company) made a large strike on the ground the Harvey-Dixon Company had claimed from the Aurora company.¹⁴² The Aurora Company immediately began litigation, arguing the land had been "jumped" by the Davis Company.¹⁴³

After the initial case was thrown out by County Court Judge William Cox, the Aurora Company appealed to Judge Begbie of the Supreme Court who agreed to hear the case before a jury in June, 1866.¹⁴⁴ On 18 June the jury returned a verdict that rejected the Aurora Company's claim that the Harvey-Dixon Company (and therefore the new Davis Company) had jumped their

¹³⁹ See, for example British Columbia Gold Commissioner Cariboo, Mining Licences, 1, 28 May 1866, 6 June 1866, 29 May 1867, 6, 20, 26 July 1867; 5 July, 1868; 23 May, 1870; 26 July, 1870; 23 May, 1871; 2 October 1871, file 5, box 1, GR-0255, BCARS; W. D. Moses, Diary #2 1869, 9 January 1869; 9 May 1869, Barkerville Archives (hereafter BA).

¹⁴⁰ "Arrival of the Enterprise- \$250,000 in Gold Dust," *The Daily British Colonist*, 20 October, 1862; "British Columbia," *The Victoria Daily Chronicle*, 10 July, 1863; "British Columbia," *The Victoria Daily Chronicle*, 12 July, 1863; "News From Cariboo," *The British Columbian*, 15 July, 1863; "Cariboo," *The Daily British Colonist*, 30 July, 1863; "Correspondence," *The British Columbian*, 5 August, 1863; "Later From Cariboo," *The Daily British Colonist*, 20 July, 1864; "British Columbia," *The Victoria Daily Chronicle*, 18 September, 1865; "British Columbia," *The Victoria Daily Chronicle*, 28 September, 1865; "Mining Intelligence," *The Daily British Colonist*, 17 October, 1865; "British Columbia," *The Daily British Colonist*, 4 December, 1865; "Accident," *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 25 June, 1870.

¹⁴¹ Pilton, "Negro Settlement," p. 157.

¹⁴² Pilton, "Negro Settlement," p. 154.

¹⁴³ "Gold Commissioner's Court," *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 24 May, 1866.

¹⁴⁴ "Gold Commissioner's Court," *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 24 May, 1866; "Irresponsible Deputies: Decisive Stand Taken By Judge Cox," *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 31 May, 1866; "Davis Co'y vs. Aurora," *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 7 June, 1866.

claim, but recognized the labor the Aurora Company had put into the land and therefore recommended that the disputed area be evenly divided between the Davis and Aurora companies.¹⁴⁵ At this point, and despite widespread satisfaction with the verdict, Begbie stated that he “quite agree[d] with the findings of the Jury with the exception of one small point,” but he was concerned that the ruling would “not end the litigation, and the expense of actions in one or two other branches of this Court would be heavy on both parties.”¹⁴⁶ Supposedly to prevent future litigation, Begbie suggested binding arbitration, to which both parties consented, presumably believing that he would suggest only minor changes to the decision of the jury.¹⁴⁷

In arbitration, however, Begbie announced to a shocked court that the Aurora Company had, contrary to the testimony provided during the trial, staked out the disputed ground and that the Harvey-Dixon Company had therefore “jumped” the claim.¹⁴⁸ Begbie went on to draw a distinction between the shares in the Davis Company owned by the blacks of the Harvey-Dixon Company and the shares owned by the white members of the Davis Company. Begbie ruled that the disputed land be divided up into nineteen and three-quarter sections, corresponding to the total shares in the Aurora Company and the total white shares in the Davis Company. Five and three-quarter sections of land would be given to the white partners of the Davis Company in recognition of their shares, while the other fourteen sections of land would be ceded to the Aurora Company in keeping with the amount of their company shares.¹⁴⁹ The blacks, whom

¹⁴⁵ “Supreme Court,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 June, 1866.

¹⁴⁶ Judge Begbie, quoted in “Supreme Court,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 June, 1866; “[Untitled],” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 18 June, 1866.

¹⁴⁷ “Supreme Court,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 June, 1866.

¹⁴⁸ “Supreme Court,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 June, 1866.

¹⁴⁹ “Supreme Court,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 June, 1866.

Begbie held accountable for claim “jumping” and who controlled two and a quarter shares of the Davis Company, got nothing.¹⁵⁰

In response to this ruling, a “mass meeting” of approximately six hundred men, mostly miners, met on the 23rd of June 1866 in front of the courthouse in Richfield.¹⁵¹ Tina Loo has suggested that the reaction of Cariboo miners to Begbie’s decision needs to be understood as originating out of a conflict between two competing conceptualizations of the law, one from the state, the other from the community of miners.¹⁵² That Begbie singled out the black miners as guilty, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, suggests that race was also a factor in his decision, though one that both Begbie and the mining community did not want to acknowledge. Begbie’s decision was problematic not because it challenged British assertions of colorblindness, but because given those assertions, the decision had immediate ramifications for all miners, regardless of race. Ironically, the assertion that British law was colorblind meant that an obviously racist decision had to be interpreted as a threatening precedent for the mining claims of white miners.¹⁵³ While in California such a decision would have been understood as separating the claims of white miners from non-white miners, in the Cariboo white miners had to downplay the fact that an all-black company had felt the full weight of Begbie’s decision, and instead react as if Begbie’s decision threatened the community as a whole.¹⁵⁴

White miners extended solidarity to the black miners despite their status as black men. Mr. Laumeister, a white co-owner of the Davis Company, made this clear when he labeled his black

¹⁵⁰ “Supreme Court,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 June, 1866.

¹⁵¹ “Mass Meeting,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 25 June, 1866.

¹⁵² Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, p. 128.

¹⁵³ Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, p. 128.

¹⁵⁴ “Mass Meeting,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 25 June, 1866.

partners as “colored” and “darkies.”¹⁵⁵ Yet, despite their race, Laumeister re-affirmed that they would earn their “pro-rata share.”¹⁵⁶ Given little choice by Begbie’s decision and the discourse of colorblind British law, Laumeister framed the black miners as entitled to the same equitable distribution of recovered gold as their white partners by downplaying their racial identity and insisting their identity as miners superseded it.

Indeed, the only individuals who seemed willing to raise the issue of race directly were black. On the same day as the mass meeting, Colored Miner wrote into the *Sentinel* with the following questions:

First- Have we as colored men the right to pre-empt ground for mining purposes?
 Second- Have we any rights in common with White men?
 Third- Why were our interests taken from us and given to White men?¹⁵⁷

With these three questions, Colored Miner cut to the heart of the contradiction of a racially divided colonial society that espoused a doctrine of colorblindness. By questioning Judge Begbie’s decision through an explicitly racial lens, Colored Miner highlighted the effects of race within the supposedly equitable community of miners. Colored Miner’s questions proved to be highly sensitive and elicited an immediate and sustained response in the *Cariboo Sentinel*.

Directly below Colored Miner’s letter, the editor of the *Sentinel* made it clear that as far as the paper was concerned, the issue at stake was a violation of miners’ rights, not black rights. The *Sentinel* felt that it was “unnecessary to state in answer of Colored Miner’s first and second questions, that the mining laws of this colony make no distinction as to the color of a man’s skin; the laws have been wisely and judiciously framed.” Furthermore, in responding to Colored Miner’s third question, the *Sentinel* merely restated Judge Begbie’s justification of supposed

¹⁵⁵ “Mass Meeting,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 25 June, 1866.

¹⁵⁶ “Mass Meeting,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 25 June, 1866.

¹⁵⁷ Colored Miner, “To the Editor of the ‘Cariboo Sentinel’,” 25 June, 1866.

black knowledge of the claim “jump,” and did not question this reasoning beyond that it was not accepted by the jury.¹⁵⁸

On 2 July, the *Sentinel* carried another response to Colored Miner.¹⁵⁹ D. L., a black man, stressed that “whatever might appear wrong in that judgment let it not be attached to any bias, feeling, or prejudice, so far as English justice is concerned, her history is known in every quarter of the globe.”¹⁶⁰ D. L. went on to state that he did “not think that one holding the position that Hon. Chief Justice does could be biased with any feeling respecting color.”¹⁶¹ While disagreeing with Judge Begbie’s decision, D. L. felt it necessary to defend the institution of British law, in the face of Colored Miner’s attack on the law’s symbolic cornerstone, equality. In D. L.’s estimation, Judge Begbie could be wrong, but neither he, nor the system he represented, could be fundamentally biased because that would throw the legitimacy of the entire system into question. D. L. sought to maintain the legitimacy of one of the main institutions that, theoretically, at least, gave the blacks equality.¹⁶² While D. L. mirrored the *Sentinel’s* early response, he also voiced criticism of Laumeister’s comments at the Richfield courthouse meeting. D. L. felt that that the “word (darkies I mean) should not be used by any gentleman.”¹⁶³ Under a guise of English civility, D. L. attempted to minimize the role of race in the dispute largely because of the threat that the discourse of race posed to the rhetoric of equality in British law. In so doing, D. L. tried to preserve the ability of blacks to cite the ideal of equality in British law. If Begbie’s decision

¹⁵⁸ Colored Miner, “To the Editor of the ‘Cariboo Sentinel’,” 25 June, 1866.

¹⁵⁹ D. L., “To the Editor of the ‘Cariboo Sentinel’,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 July, 1866.

¹⁶⁰ D. L., “To the Editor of the ‘Cariboo Sentinel’,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 July, 1866.

¹⁶¹ D. L., “To the Editor of the ‘Cariboo Sentinel’,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 July, 1866.

¹⁶² D. L. “New Advertisements,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 23 July, 1870.

¹⁶³ D. L., “To the Editor of the ‘Cariboo Sentinel’,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 July, 1866.

was racist, it could undermine black attempts to claim equality before the law and encourage further racial distinctions.

Ultimately, though, the Davis dispute in the Cariboo would prove to be the last gasp of black attempts to seek racial equality in British Columbia. Since the heyday of their activism and power in the early 1860s, the position of blacks in the colony had steadily worsened. On Vancouver Island, the 1864 election split the black population, with a majority of black British subjects proving decisive in defeating a measure that would have allowed black Americans to become British subjects. In response, black Americans labeled the British-born blacks traitors to their race and viciously attacked them in both the Victoria and San Francisco papers.¹⁶⁴ The breach in the black community proved impossible to repair, and blacks never again exercised the decisive influence they had in 1860. Concurrent with the end of electoral significance, blacks found themselves increasingly sidelined in other ways. A growing sense of racism, at least implicitly supported by Governor Kennedy, contributed to the exclusion of the black rifle company from the ceremonies surrounding the transfer of power from Governor Douglas to Kennedy.¹⁶⁵

As racial categories continued to harden and grow in significance in British Columbia, events in the United States contributed to the end of widespread black participation in colonial society. The end of the civil war in 1865 and the years of reconstruction that followed convinced most black Americans to return to the United States, depriving the community in British Columbia of both numbers and leadership.¹⁶⁶ The remaining black population was scattered,

¹⁶⁴ Pilton, "Negro Settlement," p. 107.

¹⁶⁵ Pilton, "Negro Settlement," pp. 117 – 125.

¹⁶⁶ Mifflin W. Gibbs, *Shadow and Light: An Autobiography* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1968), p. 108; Pilton, "Negro Settlement," p. 200.

politically divided, and largely irrelevant to the discourse of race and gender in the final years before British Columbia joined confederation in 1871.

Conclusion

By the time colonial British Columbia joined the Canadian confederation in 1871, the definition of white manliness had shifted considerably from 1858. In the early years of the rush, the British population, and in particular the powerful colonial elite, strove to create a colonial society predicated on what they saw as uniquely British principles: male equality, colorblindness, and order. Ironically, it was the treatment of racialized groups, like the natives and blacks, that served as proof of the superiority of British principles and the justification for colonial domination by British subjects. It was the American population, with its perceived racism, violence, dangerously democratic mob mentality, and aggressively expansionistic state, which particularly concerned the colonial government in the early years of the rush. To counter this threat, the colonial government advocated a society in which British principles, as embodied by proper British subjects, ordered a society that was legally egalitarian yet socially hierarchical.

The equality advocated by British principles was, of course, more rhetoric than reality, but even the rhetoric had important implications for the discourse and experience of race and gender in the colony. While British colonialism claimed colorblindness, in reality, it was predicated on the assumption that white men would rule. The incorporation of black men into colonial society was therefore not a recognition of their worth as black men, but a result of their being “whitened” through their manners, political beliefs, faith, economic position, and political utility to the elites of the colony. White men would rule the colony, and ideals of white manliness would be enforced and protected by the colonial state. In the early years of the rush, these ideals were posited as existing in distinction to two main groups: natives and white

Americans. As in other colonial contexts across the globe, the native population's perceived racial inferiority (coded as savagery, filthiness, irrationality, greed, and childishness) provided the justification for a supposedly paternalistic colonial state. Unlike in many other British colonies, the close proximity of the United States meant that the Americans came to represent an alternative form of colonialism. The influx of Americans posed a double threat to the colonial state in the British colony. First, there was the threat of outright annexation or rebellion from a population that the British believed was naturally inclined to challenge British styles of governance. Second, the presumed attitudes of Americans that informed their style of colonialism (a style that explicitly embraced white supremacy while largely rejecting any sort of paternalistic role) were also a threat, as they could undermine the colonial state by causing conflict between racial groups under the protection of the Crown. White manliness was therefore the dominant, if unspoken, logic of the colonial project in the British Columbia, yet it was also a logic that was heavily influenced by perceived national differences and a commitment, ironically, to a degree of colorblindness.

Yet, by the middle years of the 1860s, the British population and government of the colony began to perceive that the American population was not the threat they had once supposed. In events such as the Fraser River War and Ned McGowan's War, white American men demonstrated a surprising willingness to be governed by the colonial elite, and indeed, appealed for a stronger colonial state to govern their lives. It was at this point that ideas of white manliness underwent their most profound shift during the colonial period as the real-world implications of a colorblind society became increasingly disregarded. Certain aspects of a British attitude toward race and dealing with racialized groups were maintained, most notably in terms of Indian policy, but overall a more encompassing idea of white manliness began to

supersede national divisions. As a result, non-white groups who had previously enjoyed numerous privileges, such as the black population, found they no longer enjoyed the support from the colonial state that they once had. The rhetoric of colorblindness largely remained, but increasingly, ideas of race undermined this rhetoric and paved the way for more explicitly racial policies in the post-confederation period.

This change in the attitude of the colonial government both reflected and affected a similar shift going on among the population at large. As white Americans became more integrated into colonial society, as the discourse of race gained ever more traction globally, and as the threat of an American invasion or takeover receded, British and American Victorians increasingly saw each other as white cousins. By the end of the colonial period, therefore, we can see the creation of a hybrid understanding of white manliness in the actions and policies of the state. The transnational unity of the category of white had grown in importance, at the same time that older national differences continued to posit that certain policies and practices proved the superiority of British, as opposed to American, colonial domination. Nevertheless, the actual position of non-whites in the colony had become, on the whole, that of second-class citizens, while white British subjects and American citizens increasingly found common ground in terms of the ideal nature of society and white Americans gained the ability to become British subjects in 1861. Whereas in the early period of the gold rush, the colonial government saw the American population as largely inassimilable, by the end of the colonial period, little objection was raised to white American migration presumably because they were so easily assimilated. The change was not in the American immigrants' attitude (who had, right from the start of the gold rush, demonstrated a willingness to conform to many aspects of British rule), of course, but rather, in the attitudes of the British toward American white men.

Chapter Four

Pursuing Dame Fortune: Risk and Reward in the California and British Columbia Gold Rushes

In the mid-nineteenth century Euro-American gold miners came from a society and culture that espoused a belief that hard work and dogged perseverance would result in success.¹ Financial success was a key metric of an individual's character, at a time when the best character was presumed to be that of a respectable white man. But in California and in British Columbia, gold-seekers discovered that "the success of the miner depends a great deal upon luck. He may be industrious, economical, possessed of good morals, labor perseveringly for months, and sometimes years, and still be poor," while "an unprincipled spendthrift in a few months may realize a fortune."² Victorian miners had come face to face with one of the main ways that gold rushes upset the assumed relationship between work, reward, and character that was integral to ideologies of white and male supremacy. In an environment where risk and chance seemed to permeate all of society, these young men had to find new ways to create and maintain their identity as white men. How these Victorian men understood the risks of gold mining shaped how they talked about, perceived, and performed white manliness. In other words, concepts of risk and chance shaped, and were shaped by, Victorian claims to white manliness in California

¹ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 179 – 181, and Rotundo, "Learning About Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800 – 1940*, eds. J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 37; Thomas Augst, *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 4.

² D. B. Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water* (1857; New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 187. In essence, the clash between the "Culture of Control" and the "Culture of Chance" identified by Jackson Lears occurred in magnified form in California. Jackson Lears, *Something for Nothing: Luck in America* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), p. 7.

and British Columbia. In both gold rushes, ideas of risk and chance were important in informing how Victorian men conceptualized and justified a social order predicated on their domination of others and preferential access to political, social, and economic resources.

The concept of risk in the nineteenth-century remains largely unexplored, and the links between risk, race, and gender have only begun to be investigated.³ Although scholars of modernity, such as Christopher Dummitt, have paid some attention to risk, they have (unsurprisingly, given their topic) located its origins in modernity, particularly in the emergence of large bureaucracies.⁴ But the Victorian men who participated in the Gold Rush also sought to control risk, to assess it, to predict outcomes of risky behavior, and to establish ways of acting to minimize difficulty. They examined and discussed various aspects of risk and chance compulsively; indeed, it often seemed as if they talked about little else. Unlike the men Dummitt studied, however, Victorian gold miners were unscientific in their approach to the concept of risk. They relied on personal and anecdotal evidence, rather than statistical analysis, and their understanding of causation often identified factors, such as God or Fortuna, at which many in the twenty-first century would scoff. Without bureaucracies or modern statistical methods, Victorians in California generated and propagated understandings of risk (and of how to ameliorate, avoid, or explain risk) through the way they talked about and performed white manliness.

³ Histories of gambling, such as John M. Findlay, *People of Chance: Gambling in American Society from Jamestown to Las Vegas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Ann Fabian, *Card Sharps and Bucket Shops: Gambling in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Routledge, 1999), and Lears, *Something for Nothing*, are some of the most detailed studies of the social and cultural attitudes and practices surrounding risk in the nineteenth-century, even if they do not interrogate the concept itself.

⁴ Historians of modernity actively engage with risk as a concept. See Christopher Dummitt, *The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), p. 13 and Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 3 – 4.

While historians of the California Gold Rush have long used accounts of gambling and of miner's luck in the diggings to add excitement and variety to their narratives, they have paid less attention to the relationship between these accounts and Victorian identity.⁵ Arguably the two most incisive analyses of the California Gold Rush in recent years, Brian Roberts's *American Alchemy* and Susan Lee Johnson's *Roaring Camp*, take only a slightly closer look at these concepts. Roberts linked the spectacle of gambling to representations of a white middle-class identity created through accounts of slumming, while Johnson briefly noted the link between gambling and placer mining before discussing gambling largely as a cause of violence between groups.⁶ Although John Findlay has explored the links between gambling and speculation in California, arguing that the inherent luck involved in gold mining encouraged Victorians "to take a chance on almost any economic prospect," neither he nor any of the others deeply explored the meanings Victorians gave to risk and chance in the gold mines and towns of California.⁷ These meanings are crucial because they show how many Victorians sought to assert an identity as white men and how these men claimed the right to dominate colonial society by virtue of, in part, their taking of well-considered risks.

For Victorians of the early and mid-nineteenth century, risk and chance (often called "gamble," "fortune," or "luck") were related but not interchangeable concepts. While "chance" was "an event that happens, falls out, or takes place, without being contrived, intended, expected, or foreseen," and was therefore, by definition, independent from human influence, "risk" entailed

⁵ Some narratives that use gambling and miners' luck in a fairly uncritical manner include H. W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), pp. 251 – 254; J. S. Holliday, *Rush For Riches: Gold Fever and the Making of California* (Oakland, Calif.: Oakland Museum of California, 1999); Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁶ Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 205 – 208, 210, 215; Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), pp. 177 – 180.

⁷ Findlay, *People of Chance*, pp. 87 – 88.

human agency.⁸ Risk entailed the decision to expose oneself to the vagaries of life, the decision “to hazard; to put to chance; to endanger” one’s health, finances, reputation, even sanity, in pursuit of “striking it rich” in California.⁹ While chance or luck could strike randomly, risk was the result of a deliberate decision. Victorians believed that risk, more than chance, could be controlled, avoided, or mitigated. For Victorians, the luck perceived as inherent in the primary economic activity of California, mining, and the most talked about leisure activity, gambling, pointed to a perceived disjuncture between work and reward.¹⁰ In their own ways, both gambling and mining undercut Victorians’ received wisdom as to the relationship between hard work, self-control, and success; indeed, in California it often seemed that success attended the lazy or impulsive. While this alone would have been troubling enough, the concerns of Victorians in California were compounded because ideas about work and leisure did more than shape how Victorians spent their time: They also defined who Victorians were. The presence of agency in the concept of risk gave Victorians a way to reconcile life in California with expectations from the Atlantic seaboard about how respectable Victorians were supposed to work and play.

By the mid-nineteenth century, work and leisure were central to middle-class Victorian concepts of character and identity. Working and playing in certain ways marked Victorian men as both manly and white, in explicit opposition to non-whites, off-whites, women, and children.

⁸ Noah Webster, Chauncey A. Goodrich, and Noah Parker, *An American Dictionary of the English Language; Containing the Whole Vocabulary of the First Edition...the Entire Corrections and Improvements of the Second Edition...to Which Is Prefixed an Introductory Dissertation on the Origin, History, and Connection, of the Languages of Western Asia and Europe, with an Explanation of the Principles on Which Languages Are Formed...Rev. and Enl. by Chauncey A. Goodrich...With Pronouncing Vocabularies of Scripture, Classical and Geographical Names* (Springfield, Mass.: George and Charles Merriam, 1856), p. 190.

⁹ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which the Words Are Deduced from Their Originals, Explained in Their Different Meanings, and Authorized by the Names of the Writers in Whose Works They Are Found* (London, 1815), s.v. “risk.”

¹⁰ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, pp. 179 – 181 and “Learning About Manhood,” p. 37; Augst, *The Clerk’s Tale*, p. 4.

Middle-class, Victorian men from the Northeast believed that, as white men, they exemplified the virtues of bravery, determination, dignity, and self-control -- attributes manifested in the truism that dogged determination would be rewarded by economic independence, which would, in turn, allow a white man to participate, on his own terms, in the market and in politics and to sustain a domestic “hearth” with a wife and children. While financial success was the goal, just as important to his status as a white man was how he attained financial success. For these men, steadiness, determination, honor, and self-restraint characterized a white man’s pursuit of wealth. In becoming financially independent, Victorian men were supposed to demonstrate their status as white men. These same qualities were also supposed to typify their leisure pursuits. The rough culture of the laboring class, centered on the tavern, card table, and physicality, was explicitly juxtaposed against “proper” forms of leisure, such as lectures, visits, and balls.¹¹

In California, however, the dominant forms of work and leisure, especially before 1852, explicitly challenged these paths to white manhood. On the one hand, much of Californian society mirrored the rough working-class culture of the Atlantic world with its emphasis on manual labor, drink, and gambling. On the other hand, work and leisure in California were bound up with chance and risk, further undermining the ability of Victorian men vested in middle-class values to use work and leisure activities as paths to becoming proper, as opposed to degraded, white men. Yet, lured by the promise of wealth (especially given the depressed economy of the Atlantic world), thousands of Victorian men struggled with the riskiness of work and leisure in California to bolster their claims to an identity as white men. They did so by linking the concept of risk, with its assumption of human agency, to the forms and practices of

¹¹ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, pp. ix, 3, 20 – 22. Not only did the dominant group of migrants to the gold fields come from the Northeast, but they were also, according to Anthony Rotundo, the most influential group of Americans in shaping American attitudes toward manhood.

work and leisure in California. Victorian men thus sought in part to protect what seemed to be at risk in California: their status as white men.

“Life’s Prizes are by Labor Got”: Risk and Work in California

Eastern audiences were particularly crucial for Victorian performances of white manliness. The vast majority of Victorian gold miners came to California with little intention to settle. Instead, they viewed the Gold Rush as a means of securing the wealth that would allow them to return to the East and establish themselves as independent farmers or businessmen surrounded by supportive and dependent families.¹² The assumption of a return to the East shaped how Victorian men in California talked about their experiences to eastern audiences. But letters and accounts published for audiences in the East also attest to the fact that *how* a man got his money in California mattered just as much, if not more, than actually getting it. Understood in the idea that dogged determination would eventually lead to success was the assumption that Victorian men would be faced with multiple setbacks and failures along the way. For a white man, a momentary failure was of little importance to the ultimate outcome ensured by undaunted resolve. A failure of character was far more serious, since it revealed the fundamental unsuitability of a Victorian man to ever be a proper white man. This helps explain why some Victorian men were willing to discuss with their families their financial setbacks in the mines and business, while most denied gambling (even though they assured their audiences that

¹² Different groups in the Northeast United States came to equate whiteness with financial independence and control over the domestic sphere. See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. xi – xxvi; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 27 – 36, 43 – 44, 50 – 51, 66 – 74; and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & The Rise of the American Working Class, 1788 – 1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 61 – 63, 92 – 94. Although it analyzes England, the best study of the role of the men in the domestic sphere remains John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999). On the intention of the majority of the gold rushers to make their fortune in California and then return to the East, see Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 23 – 24, 36, 218 – 219, 227 – 228, 256 – 262; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, p. 196; and Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, pp. 36, 256 – 259.

everyone else did it).¹³ In the mid-nineteenth-century Victorian world, wealth could indicate a male's status as a white man but was not a determiner of it. Great wealth gathered through unsuitable means (as was the case with gamblers) would mark a Victorian as off-white.

Even with a pre-existing ideology that helped to account for, and sometimes excuse, failure, Victorian men had to overcome two major discursive obstacles to make mining an acceptable form of work for white men vested in middle-class values. First, mining reflected the rough, dirty work characteristic of the working class in the Atlantic world; second the "gamble" of mining challenged the relationship between work and reward. Indeed, not only did the physical nature of mining challenge received notions of what sort of labor middle-class white men should do, but Victorian miners also worried that they were not particularly well-suited for it. Letter after letter remarked on the hardships involved in mining and, most commonly, on the sickness rampant in the mines. Indeed, according to one correspondent, it was only "the hard-working men, those who are accustomed to exposure and who know how to use the pick and the crowbar -- the men of muscle and robust constitution -- who can be certain of improving their condition by coming to the mines."¹⁴ For many Victorian miners, they would have to "harden"

¹³ "Gold Digging in California – The Other Side of the Picture..." Dec. 27, 1849, in *New York Herald*, folder 1, box 2170, Gold Rush Letters for Proposed Publication, California State Archive, Sacramento, Calif. (hereafter Gold Rush Letters, State Archive); Henry Packer Billington to Mary Judkins, July 20 1857, Henry Packer Billington Letters, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, Calif. (hereafter Billington Letters, BANC); John N. Stone, "Brief Notes of a Cape Horn Voyage in 1849," *California Gold Rush Voyages, 1848 – 1849: Three Original Narratives* in ed., John E. Pomfret (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1954), pp. 167 – 169; Charles Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner, the Adventures of Charles Edward Pancoast on the American Frontier*, ed. Anna Hannum (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), p. 109; H. Darlington to Parents, Oct. 26 – 27 1849, Mss C-B 547:137, Gold Rush Letters, BANC.

¹⁴ "Advice to Gold Diggers" *New York Tribune*, Aug. 30, 1849, folder 1, box 2170, Gold Rush Letters, State Archive. See also E. Gould Buffum, *Six Months in the Gold Mines* (1850; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 132; Felix Paul Wierzbicki, *California As It Is & As It May Be; Or, A Guide to the Gold Region* (1849; New York: Grabhorn Press, 1970), p. 42.

themselves to manual labor, gradually adapting to the physical dangers of mining in California.¹⁵ In addition to “hardening” themselves, some Victorian miners warned of the danger of “over-exertion” and advocated avoiding work in the “*heat of the day...& the chill of the night*” to minimize the chances of illness.¹⁶ But to these commentators, although the labor was rough, because miners worked for themselves and worked with the energy and vigor that characterized the perceived “go ahead” attitude of California, that labor served to ennoble, not degrade, them.¹⁷ And if doing “rough” labor could jeopardize the health of middle-class Victorian men, then, in attempting to minimize those dangers, these men asserted their ability to master, or at least cope with, their environment, an ability that was predicated on adapting their bodies and routines to the rigors of gold mining. Some Victorian men argued that “there is as much difference between the muscular action of a California miner and that of a man hired by the month to work on a farm, as between the agonizing, aimless movements of the sloth and the pounce of the panther.”¹⁸

The role of luck posed another challenge to mining as a path to respectable white manhood. If mid-nineteenth-century Victorians held that hard work, perseverance, and determination led to success, then a man’s character, as manifested by his actions, had a direct

¹⁵ James J. Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine, Reminiscences of Early California* (Boston, Mass.: R.G. Badger, 1922), p. 34; James Duffy to Jenny, June 20, 1853, Mss C-B 547: 128, Gold Rush Letters, BANC; Jacob Fisher to Frederick Fisher, Sept. 21, 1850, Mss C-B 547: 11, in *ibid.*; Thomass Nosseter to John Bell, Dec. 20, 1849, Mss C-B 547: 115, in *ibid.*

¹⁶ Joseph Benton to Dr. I. Linsly, February 27 1850, Joseph Augustine Benton Collection, box 29, State Archive.

¹⁷ For examples of the “go ahead” attitude of California, particularly embodied by New Englanders, see Frank Soulé, *Annals of San Francisco; containing a Summary of the History of* (New York: Appleton, 1855), p. 258; William Redmond Ryan, *Personal Adventures in Upper and Lower California, in 1848-9* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 2: pp. 173 – 175; Eliza W. Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out: or, How we Farm, Mine, and Live Generally in the Golden State* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1856), pp. 257 – 252; Pringle Shaw, *Ramblings in California: Containing a Description of the Country, Life at the Mines, State of Society, &c. Interspersed with Characteristic Anecdotes, and Sketches from Life* (Toronto: J. Bain, [1856?]), pp. 25 – 30; Alonzo Delano, *Pen Knife Sketches; or, Chips of the Old Block, a Series of Original Illustrated Letters, Written by one of California’s Pioneer Miners* (Sacramento, Calif.: Published at The Union office, 1853), p. 43.

¹⁸ William Taylor, *California Life Illustrated* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1860), p. 278.

causal link to his success or failure in life. While men might be “embarrassed” in their fortunes temporarily, outright failure came from a lack of willpower, laziness, or other aspects of a corrupted character that also suggested to other Victorians that they might not be manly enough to really be white men.¹⁹ In the mines, however, major discoveries of gold seemed to happen at random, rewarding undeserving as often as deserving miners. Given that some of the more privileged of these men had classical educations and that Greek and Roman historical and mythological references permeated the culture of the early Republic, second only to the Bible in influence, it is perhaps not surprising that some came to talk of Fortuna or Dame Fortune as influencing their fates in the gold mines.²⁰ It is significant that not only did Victorians in the gold mines come at least partially to reject the truism of the day about determination leading to success, but that, when they did so, they resorted to the imagery of the fickle and capricious female deity. By doing so, they drew on a convention linking chance, irrationality, and femininity that had deep roots in the western intellectual tradition. The ancient Greek word *Tyché* and the Latin *Fortuna* are both feminine nouns; from Plutarch to the present, the deity has been consistently depicted as female in written and visual representations.²¹ The use of Dame

¹⁹ There is a considerable literature on the mid-nineteenth century relationship between a Victorian man’s actions and his character. For examples, see Rotundo, *American Manhood*, pp. 179 – 181, and Rotundo, “Learning About Manhood,” p. 37; Augst, *The Clerk’s Tale*, p. 4; Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830 – 1870* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 4 – 6, 40; and Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 139 – 147.

²⁰ Despite challenges, classical education remained an important component of university education and a notable cultural touchstone. See Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), pp. 18, 175, 180 – 186, 193, 250, and John Pullman, *History of Education in America* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company, 1982), pp. 65, 74 – 75. On the place of Rome in American thought, see Margaret Malamud, *Ancient Rome and Modern America* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), especially chapters 1 – 3.

²¹ For Greek definitions of Tyche, see Henry George Lidell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, Roderick McKenzie, and Eric Arthur Barber, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 1839. For the Latin definitions of Fortuna, see P. G. W. Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 727. The latter provides a useful list of examples of Fortuna embodied as a female in definition number three.

Fortune allowed Victorian men to transfer the agency responsible for their failure off themselves and onto a woman. When miners spoke of individuals as having good luck, especially unusually good luck, they often identified non-white or off-white men as the beneficiaries. As J. D. Borthwick commented, “there was a common saying, of the truth of which I saw myself many examples, that sailors, niggers, and Dutchmen, were the luckiest men in the mines: a very drunken old salt was always particularly lucky.”²² By drawing on the figure of Dame Fortune, Victorian men were able to attribute the success of off-white and non-white men not to their own actions, but to the agency of an outside force.

In contrast, when Victorian miners spoke of white men and Dame Fortune, they talked of winning Dame Fortune’s “favor” through hard work and determination, thereby re-establishing the relationship between work and reward through the exercise of manly attributes.²³ As Timothy Osborn remarked, “faint heart never will win fair lady.”²⁴ Charles Pancoast, a Quaker, followed this logic to its extreme in a poem summarizing his attitudes during a particularly unrewarding period of mining:

If golden Fortune be your goal,
Take off your coat, your sleeves uproll;
Though Fortune is a fickle Dame
She smiles upon the brave of Soul.
But if she frown, still hoe your row,
Pursue her, no surrender make,
The favors she will not bestow
Upon you, you by force may take.
Life’s prizes are by Labor got,

²² John Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters: A First-Hand Picture of Life in California Mining Camps in the Early Fifties*, ed. Horace Kephart (1857; New York: International Fiction Library, 1917), pp. 74, 162 – 163. See also Howard C. Gardiner, *In Pursuit of the Golden Dream; Reminiscences of San Francisco and the Northern and Southern Mines, 1849 – 1857*, ed. Dale Lowell Morgan (Stoughton, Mass.: Western Hemisphere, 1970), pp. 81 – 82, 95; Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, pp. 281, 290.

²³ Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, p. 306; John Marsh Smith to William George, Aug. 9, 1850, Manuscript 308, California State Archive; “Persevere,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, Oct. 17, 1850.

²⁴ Timothy Coffin Osborn, Timothy Coffin Osborn Journal: ms., 1850 June 14 – 1855 Jan. 1, p. 148, Mss C-F 81, BANC.

They come to those who toil and spin;
Strike, strike the Iron while 'tis hot,
Go in and win!²⁵

For Pancoast, the re-establishment of the work-reward relationship would be completed even if it required the virtual rape of Dame Fortune.²⁶ Pancoast was unusual in his assertion that a sufficient application of masculine energy could force “Life’s prizes” from Dame Fortune. Instead, most gold-seekers viewed their relationship with Dame Fortune as a courting ritual, one of the few occasions in nineteenth-century American society when a woman could not be compelled by a man.²⁷ By speaking of mining as a courting ritual, Victorian men asserted their agency, and therefore their manliness, while leaving room for failure to be attributed to the capriciousness of a feminized understanding of luck. The symbolism of Dame Fortune allowed Victorian men to fail in the mines yet not imperil their claim to white manliness.

Despite the way in which the luck of gold mining could be explained away, accounted for, or embraced, significantly, the correspondence and letters from Victorian gold miners to audiences at home reveal how many warned family members or the community at large not to try their luck in California. These accounts often stressed physical dangers, crime, sickness, and the doubtful odds of actually accumulating a fortune.²⁸ When Victorian miners warned friends and family at home not to come to California, they not only described the Gold Rush fairly accurately as a danger to one’s finances, morality, and health but also performed an identity as

²⁵ Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, p. 306.

²⁶ I refer specifically to the lines “But if she frown, still hoe your row,/ Pursue her, no surrender make,/ The favors she will not bestow/ Upon you, you may by force take.”

²⁷ For the gender dynamics of courting, see Rotundo, *American Manhood*, p. 104.

²⁸ Lorenzo Sawyer, *Way Sketches; Containing Incidents of Travel Across the Plains from St. Joseph to California in 1850, with Letters Describing Life and Conditions in the Gold Region*, ed. Edward Eberstadt (New York: E. Eberstadt, 1920), p. 120; “Advice to Gold-Diggers,” Aug. 30, 1849, in *New York Tribune*, Gold Rush Letters, folder 1, box 2170, State Archive; Lucius Anson Booth to Newton Booth, July 16, 1849, in William Benemann, ed., *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 20.

white men for their eastern audiences. By exposing themselves to the gamble of life in California, these men, even if they failed to obtain financial success, still asserted that they, unlike their readers, had actually gone to California and “seen the elephant.” When these warnings listed the dangers of life in California, they provided an easy explanation for the potential failure of a Victorian man to make his fortune and underscored the “anomalous condition” of California. In California, many correspondents argued, normal rules did not apply. A job that in the East would have marked a man as a laborer did no such thing in California.²⁹ Indeed, an aversion to laboring in California could open a Victorian man to charges of thinking himself, in the words of Timothy Osborn, “‘to[o] delicate’ to dig in the mines and too consequential to turn his labor into a plebeann channel.”³⁰ As the historian Brian Roberts showed, many a Victorian man went to California at least partly to prove he was not a “dandy.”³¹ California was, as forty-niner J. W. L. Brown put it, “A place to try a mans grit.”³² By portraying themselves as courageous, firm, and undaunted in the face of the risks and dangers of mining, Victorian miners believed that they revealed essential aspects of their character to each other and to family and friends back East.³³

Of course, many Victorian men “tried their hand” at mining before moving on to take part in that other California Gold Rush: mining the miners. As miners-turned-merchants, such men could lay claim to both the rough physicality of mining and employment in a properly middle-class profession. Victorian miners could not fully resolve the tension between the middle-class identities they aspired to and the nature of the work they were doing, but they

²⁹ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 145 – 146; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, p. 34.

³⁰ Osborn, *Journal*, p. 65.

³¹ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 1 – 15.

³² J. W. L. Brown to Mrs. A. G. Brown, 6 March 1853, Brown Family Papers, folder 1, box 1524, State Archive.

³³ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, p. 3.

largely succeeded in depicting their actions as indicative of the essential respectability of their characters, albeit shaped by the exigencies of life in the anomalous society of California. The result was a way for Victorian men to differentiate themselves from an array of racialized and gendered others.

Beginning around 1851, explicit references to the gamble of mining decreased in the correspondence and firsthand accounts of Victorian miners, corresponding with the increasing dominance of wage work in the mines.³⁴ Employment as wage laborers disconnected Victorian miners from the gamble of trying to “strike it rich,” except to the extent that someone had to find gold in order to ensure that there would be wages to pay. Presumably, the discourse of mining-as-gamble therefore had less relevance to these wage workers. At the same time, however, the trope of mining-as-gamble remained popular in reminiscences and guides to California throughout the 1850s. By 1851 the ideas of white manliness, risk, and mining by small groups of independent white men were firmly cemented together in the popular imagination. This is why Frank Soulé, writing in 1855, could still talk about the gold miners’ business being “closely allied to gambling, with its rare chances of suddenly making a great fortune.”³⁵ Three years later William Taylor asserted that the success of miners was due to “chance... [and] some hav[ing] better health than others,” despite the overwhelming dominance of wage labor in the mines by that date.³⁶ The image of the risky business of mining still had considerable attraction. It was exciting (which helped sell copies of newspapers and published accounts from the gold fields) and suggested that California, despite the “progress” inevitably cited elsewhere in these

³⁴ Rodman Paul located the crucial shift to wage labor occurring in “1850 or 1851.” See Rodman W. Paul, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), 116 – 119; Findlay, *People of Chance*, pp. 79 – 89, 95.

³⁵ Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, p. 403.

³⁶ Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, 279. For a description of the domination of the mines by large capitalists employing wage labor by 1858, see Paul, *California Gold*, pp. 171 – 173.

accounts, retained something of its earlier character, a character that positioned it in contrast to a rapidly industrializing, urbanizing, and wage-oriented Northeast.³⁷

Even as the mining-as-gamble trope faded in importance in California correspondence and firsthand accounts, two related tropes that had more relevance in the emerging wage-labor economy gained traction. The figure of the prospector reflected the assumption that both prospecting and rushing were more risky than mining known deposits for low but consistent wages, since they involved moving to new and unknown locations, multiple hardships, and, especially for prospectors, the potential of encountering Indians.³⁸ As such, prospecting perpetuated the sense of individual opportunity, an opportunity that was explicitly linked to white manliness. Victorian men believed that they, more than any other group, had a drive to seek out the newest and richest diggings.³⁹ The idea that they had a special right to the newest or richest diggings found expression in the numerous incidents throughout the Gold Rush period where Victorian men dispossessed or excluded non-white miners from the mines.⁴⁰ While the

³⁷ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 5, 13, 121 – 129.

³⁸ I use the term “prospectors” to refer to a class of men that Victorians in California saw as distinct. Prospectors were those who perpetually sought new diggings and, most importantly, did so by pushing into native territory. In contrast, most Victorians looked for “prospects” along whatever creek or gulch they happened to find as they followed the crowd from digging to digging. See Taylor, *California Life*, pp. 281 – 284 and Paul, *California Gold*, pp. 56 – 58.

³⁹ For examples of an assumed inclination to prospect by white men, see Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 402 – 403; Charles Thompson to Uncle, Gold Rush Letters, Sept. 10 1850, Mss C-B 547: 8, BANC; A. L. Baker, *Diary in the California Mines: M.S., 1849 – 1850, March 25 1850, Mss 2003/195c, BANC*; Farnham, *California, in-Doors and Out*, p. 264; Buffum, *Six Months in the Gold Mines*, pp. 35, 73; Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, pp. 281 – 284; Paul, *California Gold*, pp. 117 – 131; Edna Buckbee, *The Saga of Old Tuolumne* (New York: The Press of the Pioneers, 1935), pp. 89 – 91. For criticism of rushing from digging to digging (which simultaneously suggests its prevalence), see Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, p. 70, and Gardiner, *In Pursuit of the Golden Dream*, pp. 81, 87.

⁴⁰ Shaw, *Rambling in California*, pp. 21 – 22; Ben Bowen, *Ben Bowen Diary and Notebook: Mss, 1854 – 1859*, pp. 50 – 51, Mss C-F 192, BANC; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 196 – 207; William Downie, *Hunting for Gold: Reminiscences [sic] of Personal Experience and Research in the Early Days of the Pacific Coast from Alaska to Panama* (San Francisco: California Publishing Company, 1893), pp. 21 – 23; J. M. E., “A Letter from the Mines,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, Aug. 31, 1849; “Murder and Lynching,” in *ibid.*, May 5, 1852; Charles Howard Shinn, *Mining Camps: A Study in American Frontier Government* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1885), p. 246.

figure of the prospector was present throughout the Gold Rush period, after 1852 he became romanticized as the embodiment of a type of risk-taking and independent white manliness that represented a similarly romanticized period before the growth of wage labor.⁴¹ The figure of the prospector was given particular meaning when juxtaposed against a second trope, that of “Chinaman’s wages.”

To many Victorians, Chinese mining ideally took place on claims that had already been worked, with the largest and richest deposits previously removed, where the Chinese would make low but consistent “Chinaman’s wages.”⁴² When working in large groups for low pay on the discarded claims of others, Chinese miners conformed to Victorian expectations of feminized non-whites engaging in a form of mining that involved both little or no risk and little or no chance of striking it rich.⁴³ Victorian miners identified with the perceived traits of the prospector -- his courage, self-reliance, and his right to rich diggings -- and against what they perceived as Chinese miners’ cowardice in the face of risk or danger.⁴⁴ These identifications emerged in the early years of the rush and were in place by 1850 and served as another way by which self-

⁴¹ Indeed, to a certain extent, the prospector became the embodiment of the early, more open, days of the California Gold Rush as the 1850s wore on; Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 402 – 403; Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, pp. 281 – 284. Prospectors also embodied the potential of new gold discoveries, which could be celebrated as heralding a return to the “days of ’49.” See, for example “The Gold Diggings on the Fraser River,” in *The Times [of London]*, July 20, 1858; Donald Frazer, “A Trip to Vancouver,” in *ibid.*, Aug. 27, 1858; and “Letter from Victoria,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, July 9, 1858. The figure of the prospector served a dual purpose: as a link between white men and high-risk, high-reward forms of mining and as an embodiment of a continued discomfiture with wage labor among Victorian men in California.

⁴² Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 253; Frank Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills; or, Recollections of a Burnt Journal* (1855; Philadelphia, Pa.: Lippincott, 1962), p. 172; Shaw, *Rambling in California*, pp. 21 – 22.

⁴³ The link between the Chinese and low-risk activity extended to Victorian perceptions of their gambling. Although the Chinese were widely believed to be addicted to gambling, Frank Marryat argued that they played only for “small stakes.” See Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, p. 172.

⁴⁴ Susan Lee Johnson has shown how “Anglo-American” miners in the Southern mines justified vigilante action on the grounds that they were acting to defend effeminate Chinese miners from their more aggressive neighbors; see Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, p. 35. The *Daily Alta*, published in San Francisco, mirrored these sentiments on numerous occasions, see “The Outrages in the Mines,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, July 17, 1850; “More Murder and Robbery,” in *ibid.*, Oct. 7, 1850; “Murders in the Mines,” in *ibid.*, Oct. 12, 1850; and “A Row,” in *ibid.*, May 15, 1851.

professed Victorian white men claimed the right to govern colonial society. The supposed effeminate nature of the Chinese, as manifested through their presumed aversion to risk-taking, demonstrated to Victorian audiences that they were unsuitable for taking, and underserving of, a leadership role in California. At the same time, Victorian understandings that new or rich diggings were for white prospectors and miners also justified a colonial order that saw the Chinese and other non-white groups excluded from or driven out of mining areas. Ideas about risk and mining therefore directly supported the emerging colonial order in California.

The growth of wage labor and the large influx of Chinese in the early 1850s hardened these attitudes, a cycle that, in turn, helped to justify a racially divided work force and, in some cases, the exclusion of non-white laborers from the mines, by suggesting that white men deserved the lion's share of the wealth.⁴⁵ Racial understandings of risk formed in the early years of the Gold Rush informed the creation of a system of racially divided labor in the mines, even as the day-to-day experience of Victorian miners was increasingly removed from the experience of mining as a gamble. As attitudes toward risk and work began to shift, so too did attitudes toward risk in leisure pursuits.

Men with “Clean, White, Soft Hands”: Risk and Leisure in California

Ideas of risk were as critical to Victorian understandings of leisure as they were to their understandings of work. Victorian men saw that they had to take ungentlemanly risks in order to

⁴⁵ While a racial division of labor can be found in California from the earliest days of the Gold Rush when some white men hired native or Hispanic labor, it was the movement to capital-intensive mining and the growing dominance of wage labor that ignited debate over the use of non-white labor and about a racially differentiated wage scale. For discussions, see Soulé, *Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 378, 380 – 381; “The Chinese,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, Sept. 12, 1853; “No Mercy to Chinamen,” in *ibid.*, Nov. 30, 1857; Albert Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 5, 104 – 107; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 240 – 254, 260 – 270; Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, pp. 12 – 13; Daniel Cornford, “We all live more like brutes than humans: Labor and Capital in the Gold Rush,” in *A Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California*, eds. James Rawls and Richard Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 85 – 86, 97; Paul, *California Gold*, pp. 322, 329, 349 – 352.

go after gold, and so they rationalized this by reworking their characterizations of the risky things they were doing – superimposing admirable “white male” traits on to the gold rush activities. The danger of recreational chance-taking was embodied in the way it threatened to erase these distinctions. The risks of mining and gambling both served to define the attributes of, and membership in, the category of white manliness, although in slightly different manners. Like mining, the risks inherent in gambling threatened the integrity of Victorian males’ category of white manliness, either by blurring the distinctions between “white” and “non-white” behavior or by creating situations in which the Victorian man (who should be both acting as and perceived by others as a white man) was either equal or inferior to the non-white men with whom he associated. However, unlike with mining, Victorian men in California made little or no attempt to reframe gambling as indicative of white manliness. Instead, while explaining the preponderance of gambling establishments through California’s anomalous and “unsettled” condition, Victorian men consistently depicted the risks of gambling as threatening to white manhood. By defining white manhood against this activity, Victorian men sought to differentiate themselves from non-white and off-white others in a manner that would be legible to audiences in the East.

That gambling was the defining leisure pursuit of the early years of the Gold Rush is not a coincidence. California was the latest in a series of peripheral areas whose “unsettled” nature allowed gambling to take place openly. Gold mining itself directly fueled the growth of gambling. The wealth generated by the gold mines provided gambling saloons with an inexhaustible source of income. The risks of the gambling hall also seemed to mirror the risks of gold mining, and some have argued that this relationship “encouraged people’s trust in luck and

speculation.”⁴⁶ To be sure, there were some like John Wilson Palmer who arrived in California broke and got nothing but advice to try his luck in the gambling halls. Luckily for Palmer, one man wished to pay a debt owed by his father to Palmer’s father, a proposition with which Palmer was uncomfortable. Palmer and the man then hit upon a compromise: Palmer would stake the “three rascally ounces...on a card; if they are lost, there will be an end of our dispute, and you can tell your father you paid me. If they win, we will divide the spoils.” To this the acquaintance agreed, noting, “You will be sure to win -- the Devil is always kind to the green gamester.” Sure enough, Palmer won repeatedly, eventually walking away with \$384 that, when combined with a loan of a “dozen or so” ounces of gold from his friend, allowed him to open a shop the next day.⁴⁷ Palmer’s tale is unusual for the way it legitimized gambling as a path to middle-class respectability. For most Victorian men, “trust” did not characterize their attitude toward gambling. Rather, revulsion at its moral implications, mixed with attraction to its excitement and potential, was the most common response. When Victorian men sent accounts home for family and friends, they tended to play up the revulsion, or at least downplay the attraction to gambling, because they recognized that those in the Atlantic world would see things differently. Most Victorians, in other words, would never admit to attempting what Palmer claimed to have accomplished.

By 1850 Victorian men perceived California as a place of exceptional social dangers. The lack of social restraints in the form of family, churches, and, most importantly, white women, meant that many who in the East had apparently behaved in a socially acceptable manner now engaged in activities such as drinking, swearing, prostitution, interracial sex, and

⁴⁶ Findlay, *People of Chance*, p. 87.

⁴⁷ John Williamson Palmer, *The New and the Old; or, California and India in Romantic Aspects* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1859), pp. 22 – 31.

gambling.⁴⁸ Of all such behaviors, arguably the most commented on, and the focus of the greatest attempts at regulation, were gambling and drinking to excess, often in conjunction with one another.⁴⁹ The social dangers that most concerned commentators about Gold Rush society took place in public venues. Interracial sex did not seem to concern commentators in 1849 and 1850 as much as gambling because colonized women were expected to be sexually available, and, in the context of California, such couplings were minimized as prostitution and conducted somewhat discreetly.⁵⁰ Perhaps even more importantly, these relationships were understood as temporary arrangements pending the arrival of white women in the West or the return of white men to the East. Gambling, drinking, and swearing, on the other hand, were both very public and common, and they indicated the potential degradation of white men in a manner that imperiled their ability to return to the East as white men and or to “advance” California from its primitive state to civilization.⁵¹ The risk of gambling, drinking, and swearing lay in the way

⁴⁸ Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 74; Brian Roberts used the term “slumming” to describe these behaviors and intention of the majority to reintegrate back into proper society. Roberts, *American Alchemy*, p. 219.

⁴⁹ See, for example, “Doings of the Grand Jury,” in *San Francisco Alta California*, Nov. 30, 1850; “Disgraceful Row,” in *ibid.*, Jan. 26, 1851; “Report of the Special and Judiciary Committee, upon Houses of Ill Fame,” in *ibid.*, Nov. 27, 1855; and “From the Gold Region,” April 22, 1849, in *New York Tribune*, Gold Rush Letters, folder 1, box 2170, State Archive.

⁵⁰ Osborn, *Journal*, pp. 58, 85 – 86, 101 – 102, 114 – 115, 121 – 122, 197, 208, 213; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, p. 36; William Shaw, *Golden Dreams and Waking Realities* (London: Smith, Elder, 1851), p. 20; Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Land of Gold, Reality versus Fiction* (Baltimore, Md.: H. Taylor, 1855), pp. 41 – 43; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, pp. 90 – 91, 123 – 129.

⁵¹ For examples, see Helper, *The Land of Gold*, pp. 36 – 44, 64 – 74, 109, 114; George Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Company, 1853), pp. 75 – 77; Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, pp. 285 – 286. Dame Shirley was a particularly forceful critic of the “profane” and “vulgar,” see Louise Amelia Knapp Clappe, *The Shirley letters From California Mines in 1851 – 52; Being a Series of Twenty-three Letters from Dame Shirley (Mrs. Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe) to her sister in Massachusetts, and now reprinted from the Pioneer magazine of 1854 – 55; with synopses of the letters, a foreword, and many typographical and other corrections and emendations, by Thomas C. Russell*, (San Francisco: T. C. Russell, 1922), pp. 52, 79 – 81, 228. In his fictionalized diary, Chauncey Canfield reflected these concerns when his protagonist, rather hypocritically, condemns the brother of his girlfriend for turning “sport,” remarking “what would Hetty and his folks say if they knew he had become a gambler[?]” See Chauncey L. Canfield, *The Diary of a Forty-Niner* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920), p. 39. Frank Soulé half-heartedly defended some of these practices while revealing a general awareness among Californians as to how the gambling, drinking, and swearing of their society was perceived in the East. Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, p. 503.

these activities threatened to collapse, both publicly and openly, the distinctions between white and non-white manliness. The image of the gambler seemed to embody this threat.

To understand the meaning of gambling to Victorian men in California, it is necessary to understand how most of them thought of the figure of the gambler. In California, gambling did not make a person a gambler; it simply denoted a person as someone who gambled.⁵² Gamblers, also known as blacklegs and sharps, had a number of characteristics that differentiated them from people who gambled at times. The major difference was that gamblers treated the game as their employment, not as a leisure activity. As John Findlay has noted, by the middle of the nineteenth century gamblers had become firmly associated with criminals in the American public mind, but in California the preponderance of wealth meant that gamblers increasingly turned to volume and house odds instead of trickery to secure their income.⁵³ Despite this shift, many miners continued to associate gamblers with trickery and deception.⁵⁴ In California, gamblers were further distinguished by their functional role as dealers or hosts of the game; setting up a game and inviting others to play was seen as marking oneself as a gambler.⁵⁵ If such actions defined a gambler, then their bodies and demeanor also set them apart. While miners embraced a

⁵² Herman Francis Reinhart, *The Golden Frontier: The Recollections of Herman Francis Reinhart, 1852-1869* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), p. 27.

⁵³ Findlay, *People of Chance*, pp. 48 – 50, 83; David Dustin to John K. Dustin, Aug. 14 1850, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:40, BANC.

⁵⁴ For examples of suspicions of cheating gamblers, see Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, p. 17; Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, pp. 300 – 301; Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, p. 76; Silas Weston, *Life in the Mountains, or, Four months in the mines of California* (Providence, R.I.: B. T. Albro, 1854), pp. 27 – 31; “San Joaquin Intelligence,” in *San Francisco Alta California*, Aug. 14, 1850; “Shooting Affray at Shasta – The Murderer Hung by the People,” in *ibid.*, April 10, 1853. Of course, sometimes these stereotypes were right. John Pierce, a gambler, recorded in his diary the key to his marked deck. See John Pierce, “Diary, 1863 – 1873,” p. 106, California State Library, Sacramento.

⁵⁵ For an example of a man being marked as a gambler by setting up a game, see Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 70. For examples of men gambling but not becoming gamblers, see Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: p. 205; Friedrich Gerstäcker, *Scenes of Life in California*, trans. George Cosgrave and Gustave Revilliod (1856; San Francisco: J. Howell, 1942), pp. 80 – 86; Shaw, *Golden Dreams and Waking Realities*, pp. 44 – 46. On the different perception of gambling in California, see James Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines and a Description of the Great Tulare Valley* (Stockton, Calif.: San Joaquin Republican, 1852), pp. 15 – 16, 40 – 41.

dirty, unkempt, “hardened” body and appearance, gamblers were often described as dressing in “foppish” clothes reminiscent of the over-civilized dandies of the East or as having “delicate” or “clean, white, soft hands.”⁵⁶ The gamblers’ character, as reflected by their faces, also underscored their difference from white men. Whereas gamblers’ faces betrayed no emotion when confronting enormous losses or gains, Victorian men frequently grew visibly excited.⁵⁷ This excitement may have resulted from unfamiliarity with gambling; it also demonstrated the threat gambling posed to the self-control that was a vital part of white manliness.⁵⁸ That gamblers, especially non-white gamblers such as Mexicans, could risk huge sums of money without becoming excited only underscored for Victorian men that these groups did not properly value money or work. For Victorian men, these physical traits and attitudes marked gamblers as degraded, in contrast to the miners’ manly natures.

Victorian men had much the same problem with gambling as they did with the “lottery” of mining: They wanted skill and effort to be the determiner of success, not pure luck. If skill determined success at cards, then it could be used as a way to evaluate the character of the player. In the rare instances where Victorian men who gambled were depicted positively, their character was reflected in their skill at card playing.⁵⁹ Mostly, though, Victorian men denigrated gambling as “mere game[s] of chance,” denying that any games, but especially those associated

⁵⁶ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (24 vols., San Francisco: History Co., 1886), 6: p. 224; Delano, *Pen Knife Sketches*, p. 31; Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines*, p. 19; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Findlay, *People of Chance*, p. 94; Bayard Taylor, *Eldorado; Or, Adventures in the Path of Empire, Comprising a Voyage to California, via Panama; Life in San Francisco and Monterey; Pictures of the Gold Region, and Experiences of Mexican Travel* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Son, 1879), p. 119; Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, p. 18; Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: pp. 210 – 212; Theodore Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region, and Scenes by the Way* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), p. 197.

⁵⁸ Indeed, Charles Thompson described himself as going “half-mad” while gambling. Thompson to Uncle, Sept. 10, 1850; Findlay, *People of Chance*, p. 94; John Letts, *A Pictorial View of California: Including a Description of the Panama and Nicaragua Routes, with Information and Advice Interesting to All, Particularly Those Who Intend to Visit the Golden Region / by a Returned Californian* (New York: H. Bill, 1853), pp. 48 – 50.

⁵⁹ “Letter from San Francisco, Alto California, April 1, 1848 [sic]” in *New York Herald*, Aug. 19, 1848; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, pp. 74 – 78; Palmer, *The New and the Old*, pp. 22 – 30.

with Mexicans, required skill.⁶⁰ Instead, they attributed the success of gamblers to the influence of alcohol, cheating, or odds that favored the dealer.⁶¹ That said, the games such as Monte, roulette, and faro, that Victorian players preferred tended to have a greater element of chance than some of the alternatives they might have chosen to play, such as poker. Generally, this was because most Victorian men were new to gambling and preferred simpler games that were fast-paced, exciting, and easy to learn.⁶² It is one of the many ironies of gambling in Gold Rush California that Victorian men, so concerned about the work-reward relationship, played games in which skill was nearly non-existent.

The use of erotic pictures, female bartenders and dealers, alcohol, displays of wealth, the lure of the unknown, a lack of social controls, and an admitted dearth of alternative social outlets all conspired to draw Victorian men into the gambling halls.⁶³ Once there, the long odds of success in mining and the evident wealth piled on the tables “seduced” these men and encouraged them to gamble.⁶⁴ In some cases, a miner felt “*assured he knew the card,*” and, now that it was not a game of chance, but of skill, “took out his bag of dust” before inevitably

⁶⁰ “Interesting Narrative of the Voyage to California, by a New York Volunteer...&c.,” in *New York Herald*, Aug. 19, 1848.

⁶¹ Letts, *A Pictorial View of California*, pp. 48 – 50; Shaw, *Rambling in California*, p. 35; Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, pp. 68 – 69.

⁶² Findlay, *People of Chance*, p. 94; Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, pp. 68 – 69; Taylor, *Eldorado*, p. 91.

⁶³ Albert Benard de Russailh, *Last Adventure: San Francisco in 1851*, trans. Clarkson Crane (San Francisco: Westgate Press, 1931), pp. 12 – 16; Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: pp. 164 – 165, 176; Elisha Capron, *History Of California, From its Discovery to the Present Time: Comprising Also a Full Description of its Climate, Surface, Soil, Rivers, Towns...Agriculture, Commerce, Mines, Mining, &c., With a Journal of the Voyage from New York, via Nicaragua, to San Francisco, and Back, via Panama...* (Cleveland, Ohio: Jewett, Proctor and Worthington, 1854), pp. 148 – 150.

⁶⁴ Gerstäcker, *Scenes of Life in California*, p. 71; *San Francisco Alta California*, Jan. 8, 1855; de Russailh, *Last Adventure*, pp. 13 – 14; H. B. Lum to Brother, July 16 1850, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:35, BANC; John Carr, *Pioneer Days in California: Historical and Personal Sketches* (Eureka, Calif.: Times Publishing Company, 1891), pp. 60 – 61.

losing.⁶⁵ Perhaps most importantly, it may have seemed to some Victorian men that the gaming tables presented a chance to assert their dominance, and therefore their white manliness, over degraded others. Gambling offered the potential to enact white manliness by converting a game of chance to a demonstration of character. If gambling was actually about skill, then a Victorian man who won proved his superior intelligence and nerves. This may help explain why, despite the opprobrium heaped upon gambling and gamblers, so many Victorian men tried their hand at the card table.

Once a miner started betting, he needed to win in order to assert his dominance over the gambler in front of the spectators. In one example provided by John Letts, the miner was “too *shrewd* to let the gambler have his money. He doubles the bet, putting the money on the same card, thinking that a card must, at least, win every other time.”⁶⁶ By making his status as a white man dependent upon his winning the game, the miner essentially wagered his identity. As “the other betters and bystanders now begin to manifest an interest in the affair,” the miner became “excited; he sees that others are looking at him, and displays the greatest amount of courage by taking another drink, and calling for another deal.”⁶⁷ Once he started losing, the miner found himself trapped at the table, unable to withdraw and admit that he had been beaten, until inevitably, he was, as Letts colorfully put it, “immolated upon the altar of avarice.”⁶⁸ Therein lay gambling’s gravest threat to white manliness: its potential to exploit contradictions in the discourse of white manliness to cause Victorian men to degrade themselves and to be dominated by degraded others.

⁶⁵ Osborn, *Journal*, p. 197. Similar instances may be found in Carr, *Pioneer Days in California*, p. 79; Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, pp. 61 – 62.

⁶⁶ Letts, *A Pictorial View of California*, p. 48.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 48 – 49.

⁶⁸ Letts, *A Pictorial View of California*, p. 49; Capron, *History Of California*, p. 150; Gerstäcker, *Scenes of Life in California*, pp. 90 – 92; “The Man Who Wanted to be Broke,” in *San Francisco Alta California*, Sept. 7, 1850.

The spaces in which gambling occurred also underscored the danger that gambling posed to the boundaries between white men and others. From 1849 to at least 1852, gambling halls were, by most accounts, the most opulent buildings in whatever town they happened to be in. Only in the middle years of the 1850s did gambling halls lose their premier standing in San Francisco as a combination of mounting social opprobrium, fires, and legal measures moved them off the major thoroughfares, where they were replaced by more “respectable” businesses.⁶⁹ But in 1849 and 1850 in San Francisco, a place where gaslight was rare and expensive, observer after observer commented on the blaze of light that poured out of the halls. The gambling halls usually occupied the main thoroughfares, and they were almost always the largest buildings in town. In a period and place that valued certain architectural styles as physical markers of the superiority of Victorians, the gambling halls occupied an uncomfortable position as the “best” buildings in town.⁷⁰ For many, the solution was to depict the gambling halls as degraded spaces and their opulence as a trap to lure unwary, weak, or careless Victorian men.⁷¹

To these observers, the occupants of the gambling halls proved the degraded nature of the space. Inside, as Hinton Helper colorfully described,

Octogenarians, youthful and middle-aged men, married and unmarried women, boys and girls, white and black, brown and copper-colored, the quarrelsome and the peaceable, all associate together; and, at times, as might be expected, fight, maim, and kill each other with the same indifference with which people generally pursue their daily occupations.⁷²

⁶⁹ Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 308, 368, 399 – 400, 423, 501 – 502; Bancroft, *History of California*, 6: pp. 240 – 241.

⁷⁰ E. Phelps to J. C. Ray, Nov. 23 1850, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:136, BANC; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, pp. 37, 93; Capron, *History Of California*, pp. 148 – 150; Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water*, pp. 202 – 203; Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 64; Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, pp. 75 – 77; Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, pp. 13, 17 – 18.

⁷¹ Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, pp. 66 – 68; Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: pp. 216, 275 – 276; James Lansing to M. L. Pitly, Jan. 14 1851, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:288, BANC; Capron, *History Of California*, pp. 148 – 150; Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water*, pp. 199 – 203.

⁷² Helper, *The Land of Gold*, p. 73.

In other words, gambling halls were degraded not just because of the gambling that occurred there, but because of the way they collapsed boundaries between people.⁷³ As Frank Marryat put it, just to get in you had to push through “Mexicans, Miners, Niggers, and Irish bricklayers.”⁷⁴ For a social and political order predicated on maintaining difference, the apparent leveling that occurred in the gambling halls made them a major site of social risk for Victorian men.

Some types of gambling were considered socially acceptable, and it is illuminating to examine these for what they reveal about Victorian conceptions of white manliness and risk in California. While some hard-liners, often extremely devout Christians, found any form of gambling to be profane, certain forms met with widespread tolerance.⁷⁵ For many Victorian men a private game between gentlemen, either in the mines or in the cities, was acceptable. Several factors differentiated these games from those held in gambling halls or saloons. First, and most importantly, they were private. As commentators argued, this privacy meant that young men would not be lured into the more dangerous gambling dens. Second, the men who did gamble would go to their ruin “in the most fashionable and genteel manner.” And third, the figure of the gambler was absent from these games.⁷⁶ Without gamblers, these games lacked the threat of a degraded other who used women, alcohol, and trickery to extract money. The very discreetness of these games suggests that they were not about public displays of white manliness and, as such, would have been considered more of a leisure activity than playing in a gambling den. Playing

⁷³ The same sense collapsing social, racial, and gender boundaries found in Hinton Helper is also found in Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: p. 216 and Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 66.

⁷⁴ Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, p. 18.

⁷⁵ For views of Californian gambling as profane, see Capron, *History Of California*, pp. 145 – 151; Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines*, p. 40; Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, pp. 300 – 301.

⁷⁶ “Gambling,” in *San Francisco Alta California*, Feb. 2, 1855; “Dance Houses and Female Saloons,” in *ibid.*, March 28, 1853; Reinhart, *The Golden Frontier*, p. 33; Bancroft, *History of California*, 6: p. 461; Stone, “Brief Notes,” p. 133; Findlay, *People of Chance*, p. 100.

in a gambling hall involved publicly demonstrating white manliness and attempting to establish dominance over a degraded other, making these spaces a perverted version of the masculine world of the market and hence doubly threatening to white manliness. The absence of this display made private games less threatening to the masculine world of the market, curtailing their corruptive influence in a social context largely lacking other forms of social control.

One of the most frequent topics in letters and accounts written for audiences in the East was the prevalence of gambling in California. Accounts commented on the pervasiveness of gambling and that it was “common with all classes.”⁷⁷ Account after account suggested that the author, nearly alone among the throngs of humanity in California, was only an observer of gambling, not a participant.⁷⁸ It is easy to believe Charles Thompson that “if you hear any of them [men in California] ever saying that when he was in California he did not drink, did not gamble & did not dissipate to a greater or less degree you may take my word for it, that he is lying & that in the strongest sense of the term.”⁷⁹ Unlike Thompson, who was unusual in his honesty with his uncle, most Victorian men were probably more like Chauncey Canfield’s fictional miner who recorded his dalliances with gambling and the resulting guilt in his “diary.” Canfield’s miner started gambling to try and meet a French woman who was dealing cards. After losing seventy dollars and failing to get her attention, the miner worried about what his sweetheart back East, Hetty, would think of his gambling. That she might have objected to his reason for gambling did not seem to cross his mind. Several days later, the miner’s guilt was

⁷⁷ “Gold Digging in California,” Dec. 27, 1849, in *New York Herald*, Gold Rush Letters, folder 1, box 2170, State Archive.

⁷⁸ Billington, July 20, 1857; H. B. Lum to Brother, Gold Rush Letters, July 16 1850, Mss C-B 547:35, BANC; Stone, “Brief Notes,” pp. 167 – 169; Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, p. 109; H. Darlington to Parents, Gold Rush Letters, Oct. 26 – 27 1849, Mss C-B 547:137, BANC; Charles Ross Parke, *Dreams to Dust: A Diary of the California Gold Rush, 1849 – 1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 102.

⁷⁹ Thompson to Uncle, Sept. 10 1850.

compounded when he received a letter from his father informing him that his mother was worried about him being in such “an awful wicked place,” but that “he isn’t afraid of his boy not coming out all right.”⁸⁰ Frequent discussions about gambling in letters home indicate the central role it played in both the social and symbolic worlds of the miners. Gambling was one of the most popular leisure activities and seemed to represent a core “truth” of Californian society. That correspondents evinced little interest in reshaping the discourse surrounding gambling to make it a positive indicator of character, despite its widespread popularity, suggests their own deep ambivalence toward the activity and their awareness of the attitudes of their audience.

Unlike mining, gambling could not be redefined to fit the “proper” relationship between work and reward. While individual miners might convince themselves that betting was a test of skill, for the middle-class audience in the East, this flawed logic reflected a mind and character weakened by drink and excitement. Many of the accounts of miners’ gambling produced for Eastern audiences underscored this interpretation, stressing the loss of control, even madness, and ultimate ruin of the Victorian man who gambled.⁸¹ Additionally, while mining seemed to provide a solution for deep-seated concerns about “dandyism” and economic independence, gambling in California was understood by eastern audiences through the lens of gambling. That is to say, whereas the mining aspect of the Gold Rush was a nearly unprecedented phenomenon (certainly in scale), and therefore difficult to fit within a pre-existing framework, gambling in California was never able to shake its pre-existing disreputable reputation as a peripheral,

⁸⁰ Canfield, *The Diary of a Forty-Niner*, pp. 7 – 8. George Payson also stressed the importance of family, particularly female relations, in creating feelings of guilt among Victorian men who gambled; see Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, pp. 76 – 77.

⁸¹ Thompson to Uncle, Sept. 10 1850; Taylor, *Eldorado*, p. 120; Stone, *California Gold Rush Voyages*, pp. 167 – 169; Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, p. 109.

socially dangerous activity.⁸² Even Victorian men in California, who gambled extensively, had conflicted feelings about the activity. They were simultaneously attracted to the thrill of gambling, especially the instant wealth it could grant, and guilt-ridden because they knew family and friends back home (and indeed many of their fellow miners) would see their participation as calling into question their character as calm, rational, self-controlled white men.

Risk and White Manliness in California

Faced with the prevalence of gambling in Californian society, Victorians found numerous ways to explain and excuse its presence. One of the main ways that they explained gambling in California was by pointing to the “anomalous” condition of the state. The unsettled nature of Californian society, its fluid, mobile, and overwhelmingly male society, combined with a dearth of alternative sources of entertainment, meant that, as William Olden explained to his sister, “the great trouble here is where to spend ones evening there is no recourse except the gambling saloon’s.”⁸³ If gambling were not excusable, then its presence in California was at least understandable, even desirable in a way. In his discussion of depictions of violence in forty-niner correspondence, historian Brian Roberts argued that, for many middle-class Victorian men who went to California, the Gold Rush offered an opportunity to “slum,” a chance to move temporarily “down into the real depths and spaces occupied by lower classes and ethnic others.”⁸⁴ Depictions of gambling fit this motif. As with their accounts of violence, Victorian men used descriptions of gambling to stress the differences between their world and that of their audience. The success of this rhetorical strategy lay in the men’s ability to position themselves

⁸² I differ slightly from John Findlay, who saw a shift in attitudes toward gambling in the mid-1850s. I suggest that a focus on legal measures obscures the underlying, extremely conflicted attitudes toward gambling. See Findlay, *People of Chance*, pp. 79 – 89, 95; and Fabian, *Card Sharps and Bucket Shops*.

⁸³ William Olden to Sister, William R. Olden Gold Rush Letters, May 1850, folder 10, box 11, State Archive.

⁸⁴ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 218 – 219.

for their eastern audiences as outside observers of gambling, rather than as participants. As outside observers, they laid claim to an identity as white men slumming among gamblers and their marks. Unlike the people they observed, these correspondents seemingly chose to risk neither their money nor, even more importantly, their status in a game of chance. Implicit in these accounts was the assumption that, as a white man, the author could be trusted because he had more in common with his readers than with the men and women he described. In reading and reproducing these accounts, eastern audiences gave legitimacy to the white manliness of these observers of gambling.

After 1850 the perceived danger represented by gambling and gambling halls meant that local, civic, and state governments all moved to regulate gambling. Although gambling had been given official sanction in October 1849 with the issuance of licenses for dealers in San Francisco, as early as August 1850 a grand jury was already discussing how to suppress “gambling, bull baiting, and prize fighting at any time, and theatrical and other exhibitions for public amusement on Sundays.”⁸⁵ By 1851 gambling had been prohibited on Sundays, but with mixed results, and it would take until 1855 for a more comprehensive law to be passed.⁸⁶ Initially reformers seemed satisfied to drive gambling underground, but by 1858 even this was considered a threat to public order and safety in San Francisco.⁸⁷ Some mining districts followed suit, banning

⁸⁵ “Ordinance for Revenue,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, Oct. 11, 1849; “Local Matters – Report of the Grand Jury,” in *ibid.*, Aug. 22, 1850; Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, p. 231.

⁸⁶ “Sunday in San Francisco,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, Feb. 2, 1851; “Licensed Gambling,” in *ibid.*, Nov. 8, 1857; Gary Kurutz, “Popular Culture on the Golden Shores,” in *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, eds. Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 284 – 289.

⁸⁷ “Gambling,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, Feb. 2, 1855; “A Nuisance,” in *ibid.*, Aug. 2, 1856; “Descent on a Gambling Institution, and Arrest of the Offenders,” in *ibid.*, March 8, 1858.

gambling or driving out professional gamblers, but enforcement, always a problem in California, remained sporadic throughout the Gold Rush period.⁸⁸

These developing regulations point to a shift in public toleration of gambling in California. There are several reasons for this shift, not least of which was an increasing diversity of venues for leisure and sources of income for government.⁸⁹ Arguably the most important reason was the inherently ephemeral attraction of gambling to “slumming” Victorian men. Observer accounts of gambling halls were vested in the assumption that the observer would soon return to the proper world of the East, but this assumption began to be undermined by the presence of Victorian settlers and especially of Victorian women. At that point, Victorian men began to articulate their white manliness not by observing gambling, but by suppressing it, by seeking to “civilize” California. Victorian attitudes toward the risks involved in gambling had not changed; what had changed was the attraction of observing activities like gambling. The voyeuristic attraction of gambling diminished as Victorian men began to worry that it represented a fundamental disorder in Californian society and therefore indicated a weakness in the character of the white men there. For attitudes toward risk in both work and leisure, the years from 1850 to 1852 represent a period of transition.

In the first two years of the California Gold Rush, risk, particularly the risks involved in mining and gambling, had emerged as a way for Victorian men to describe and enforce the bounds of white manliness. Using risk to examine how Victorians thought about themselves in California reveals the centrality of a middle-class vision of the work-reward relationship to white manhood. Understandings of risk helped make the gamble of mining an acceptable activity for

⁸⁸ “San Joaquin Intelligence,” in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, Jan. 26, 1852; “Gambling Law in the Mountains,” in *ibid.*, May 1, 1856; Weston, *Life in the Mountains*, pp. 26 – 31; Findlay, *People of Chance*, pp. 89, 95 – 100.

⁸⁹ Findlay, *People of Chance*, p. 95.

white men, which, in turn, helped lead to the idea of class having less rhetorical importance in California. Concurrently, understandings of risk reinforced middle-class values as the dominant Victorian public ideology in California. As a result, risk contributed to the myth of the California Gold Rush as classless at the same time that its values were inherently class-based. As class became relatively invisible to participants, categories of race and gender grew even more important in defining who was a white man. As such, the discourses and practices surrounding risk were crucial to the formation and maintenance of a form of white manhood in California that was related to, but distinct from, the white manhood articulated in the Atlantic world. Although the gamble of mining became less relevant to most gold miners as wage labor came to predominate in the mines, and gambling itself was forced further and further to the literal and metaphorical periphery of society, the linkage of white manliness with certain types of risk taking remained influential throughout the Gold Rush period.

Concepts of risk were also central to defining a racial and gender hierarchy in California. It was in part through their understanding of risk that Victorian men conceptualized and justified their domination as white men of certain areas of the gold mines. Risk also shaped how they thought of social dangers, particularly the threat that gambling represented to what they thought of as the core characteristics of white men -- their self-control, coolness, rationality, and separation from a spectrum of "degraded" others. Ultimately, the discourses and practices surrounding risk were crucial to the formation and maintenance of a form of white manhood in California that was related to, but distinct from, the white manhood articulated in the Atlantic world.

“Scaling Fortune’s Height” in British Columbia

Sometime in the mid-1860s, James Anderson, the popular poet of the Cariboo, penned a few lines strongly reminiscent of attitudes a decade earlier in California:

The sailor braves the stormy sea,
 And dares the angry wave –
 And the soldier fights for glory,
 That finds him in the grave.
 More daring still, the miner’s strife,
 In scaling Fortune’s height-
 For in the “battle-field of life,”
 His is the hardest fight.⁹⁰

Anderson’s poem demonstrates the continuity of ideas of risk, gender, and race between the two gold rushes. As in California, the figure of the miner remained closely linked to martial, manly figures and to the vicissitudes of Fortune.⁹¹ But while risk remained important to Victorian miners’ self-identification as white men, differences in the social, political, and physical environments, as well as the passage of ten years between the two rushes, meant that the specifics of the interaction between risk, gender, and race in British Columbia differed from what had preceded them in California. The differences between the gold rushes in British Columbia and California also encouraged other concerns to move to the forefront of public discourse about white manliness.

Especially in 1858, the first year of the Canadian rush, men with experience in California dominated in British Columbia. Along with the experience gained from almost a decade of gold rush society in California, Australia, and other locations, many of these men brought with them

⁹⁰ James Anderson, *Sawney’s Letters and Cariboo Rhymes*, (Toronto: W. S. Johnson & Co’y, 1895), p. 54, Barkerville Archives.

⁹¹ Fortune here seemingly represented by the female deity (hence the capitalization), and as a lofty mountain peak to be ascended with difficulty.

the hope that the discovery of gold marked a return to the “days of ‘49.’”⁹² To these men, a return to the “days of ‘49’” meant abundant, easily accessible placer deposits that would provide opportunities for everyone to get rich as individual prospectors instead of working for wages.⁹³ But while they talked of returning to the “days of ‘49,’” in reality they neither fully desired, nor were capable of, turning back the passage of time completely. Instead, a variety of factors including geography, economics, and changing cultural understandings of the meaning of white manliness, shaped how Victorian men in British Columbia perceived the relationship between white manliness, risk, and reward.

By 1858, wage labor for companies dominated gold mining in California.⁹⁴ This was distressing to some Victorians who held onto the belief that gold mining should offer a way to circumvent laboring for wages, and it helps explain the magnitude of the initial rush from California to British Columbia.⁹⁵ At the same time, a return to the “days of ‘49’” also suggested a return to the gamble of mining. Just as the movement to wage work had disconnected Victorian miners in California from the gamble of “striking it rich” by providing steady wages regardless of the success or failure of a particular claim, so too would a movement away from wage work suggest that risk might once again become central to Victorian understandings of the relationship between mining and manliness. Of course, most Victorians did not want to return to the gamble of mining, they wanted the new gold discovery in British Columbia to represent a “sure thing,” a way to avoid wage work and failure, as many of them now believed had been the case in the first

⁹² “The Rush For Fraser River,” in *The San Francisco Daily Alta California*, 21 April, 1858; “Letter from Victoria,” in *The San Francisco Alta California*, 9 July 1858.

⁹³ “The Rush For Fraser River,” in *The San Francisco Daily Alta California*, 21 April, 1858; “Letter from Victoria,” in *The San Francisco Alta California*, 9 July 1858.

⁹⁴ Paul, *California Gold*, pp. 117 – 119.

⁹⁵ “The Rush For Fraser River,” in *The San Francisco Daily Alta California*, 21 April, 1858; “Letter from Victoria,” in *The San Francisco Alta California*, 9 July 1858.

years of the California Gold Rush.⁹⁶ These dreams of recreating the idealized “days of ‘49” in British Columbia collided with the reality of mining in the colony, the most significant aspect of which was the nature and distribution of gold deposits there.

The initial gold discoveries and mining in 1858 took place largely in the lower Fraser Canyon, on the relatively accessible bars that lined the river. These placer deposits were soon depleted and miners were faced with the choice of either heading home or heading further upstream, hoping to find the area from which the placer deposits had been eroded. Though most miners chose the former, those miners who headed upstream eventually did discover large deposits in the Cariboo Mountains as early as 1859. However, the nature of these deposits and their remote location encouraged the formation of well-capitalized companies and the use of wage work. The most significant gold deposits tended to be located meters below the surface, often under layers of hard clay and gravel.⁹⁷ Extracting these deposits required the formation of companies to re-route rivers, to dig mining shafts, and to use hydraulic pressure on a massive scale.⁹⁸ The inaccessibility of these gold deposits meant that most Victorian miners formed partnerships or share-holder owned companies which used wage labor. Large private companies with professional managers, of the sort that characterized the Comstock Lode and later mining rushes, were comparatively rare, though not unheard of.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ “The Rush For Fraser River,” in *The San Francisco Daily Alta California*, 21 April, 1858; “Letter from Victoria,” in *The San Francisco Alta California*, 9 July 1858.

⁹⁷ Robert M. Galois, “Gold Mining and its Effects on Landscapes of the Cariboo” (master’s thesis, University of Calgary, 1972), pp. 3, 34.

⁹⁸ “Forks of Quesnelle,” in *The British Columbian*, 13 February, 1864; “British Columbia,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 31 December, 1864.

⁹⁹ “Supreme Court,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 June, 1866; Bedrock Drain, “Bedrock Drain,” 28 June, 1864, Barkerville Archival System, Barkerville Archives; W. D. Moses, “Diary #2, 1869,” 9 January, 1869, A01046, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, British Columbia (hereafter BCARS); John Evans, “Diary of John Evans: The British Columbia Mining Adventure, 1862 – 1864,” ms. 2111, BCARS.

Crucially too, the gold region of the Cariboo was far more remote and inaccessible than any gold deposits in California. With a few important exceptions, Governor Douglas succeeded in forcing miners to enter the colony via the capital, Victoria. Miners had little alternative to a journey by steamboat to Fort Yale or Fort Hope, and to then undertake “the tallest kind of walking” up the Fraser River to the various diggings.¹⁰⁰ With the discovery of gold in the Cariboo, this process was extended far into the interior of the province. The eventual development of the Cariboo Wagon Road and the Douglas route somewhat diversified the paths to the mines, but with the exception of the mining area in the Cariboo mountains (which formed an interconnected web of settlement and transportation routes more akin to California), Victorian settlement and travel in British Columbia was along a few routes between Forts Hope and Yale and the gold districts. As a result, simply getting to the gold mines entailed considerable time and expense, often leaving new arrivals in the Cariboo with little choice but to take wage work, especially when they discovered that most of the good claims had already been staked off.¹⁰¹

Although many Victorian men worked at one time or another for wages, there is little evidence to suggest the formation of a permanent or coherent class structure among Victorians. Instead, there was a fair degree of movement between the groups. As James Anderson remarked: “minin’s ‘s like the country here,/ has mony an up an’ doon;/ Ane day ye’re stannin’

¹⁰⁰ John B. Wilkinson to his Brother, Letters from Victoria and Cariboo, 1860-1865, 22 September 1860, Barkerville Archives; Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 56 – 57. A very small group of Canadians attempted a ill-fated overland journey to the gold fields, an experiment that was not repeated. More concerning to colonial authorities was the constant trickle of American migrants from Washington Territory, but this route was slow and dangerous, ultimately making the trip to Victoria preferable for the vast majority of migrants. See Reinhart, *The Golden Frontier*, pp. 120 – 130 and Joanne Leduc, *Overland From Canada to British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1981).

¹⁰¹ Amos Wright to Brother, 16 November 1865, Mss 1976, BCARS; Cecil Williams Buckley, Journal, 4, 7 August 1862, E/B/B85, BCARS; Philip Hankin, Memoirs, pp. 55 – 56, E-B-H19A, BCARS; W. M. Mark, *Cariboo: A True and Correct Narrative* (Stockton, Eng: W. M. Wright, 1863), pp. 29 – 34.

on ye're feet,/ The next day on your croon!"¹⁰² Victorian wage laborers were themselves often former or future owners of mining claims who were using wage labor to sustain themselves while waiting for a better opportunity. Mining companies failed more often than they succeeded, hampering the development of a coherent mining capitalist-owner group. When their companies failed, mine owners often found wage labor to tide them over.¹⁰³ With few exceptions, mine owners could not afford to avoid working alongside their employees, and they performed much of the same work and encountered the same risks of cave-ins, flooding, exposure, and exhaustion as their employees.¹⁰⁴ While wage labor was probably not desirable for most Victorian men, the ability to move up (or down), combined with a greater expectation that wage work and mining were compatible, seems to have taken much of the sting out of it. Indeed, instead of protesting the existence of wage work, many would-be miners complained that there was not enough of it.¹⁰⁵

Without a permanent or coherent class structure among miners in the colony, ideas about work, risk, and manliness seem to have been widely shared among Victorian men, even as the prevalence of wage labor made it difficult to revert to the logic of chance and fortune that had characterized the early years of mining in California. However comfortable Victorian men might be with wage labor, as long as it remained a temporary stage on the path to economic self-sufficiency and put food on the table, it still posed a challenge to how they thought about

¹⁰² Anderson, *Sawney's Letters*, p. 22, Barkerville Archives.

¹⁰³ Lucius A. Edelbute, *A True Story of the Adventures of Cariboo Ed in the Far West* (Bountiful, Utah: Family History Publishers, 1998), pp. 52 – 105; Roger Harkness to Sabrina Harkness, Harkness Papers, 10 June 1863, BCARS; Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁴ The evidence that mine owners worked in the mines is somewhat indirect, but compelling. First, the newspapers of the day rarely mention mine owners separate from the act of mining. The best example of this is John Evans. Second, in the court cases analyzed by Loo, no evidence of a worker-management split is evident. Instead, the owners speak and act as if they are mining. Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, pp. 93 – 133.

¹⁰⁵ "Mining Intelligence," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 8 July, 1867; "A Hint to the Unemployed," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 October, 1867; W. M. Smithe, "Editor Cariboo Sentinel," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 1 June, 1868.

themselves as miners. As in California, Victorians linked the figure of the miner to a variety of other figures of martial manhood, such as the sailor and soldier.¹⁰⁶ However, Victorian miners were well aware that combining the heavy physical labor of the mines with wages ran the risk of making them seem, to friends and family in the Atlantic world, analogous to the rough working class of cities. Victorian miners in British Columbia needed a way to distinguish the work they were doing from the wage work found in the Atlantic world. The solution was to emphasize the danger of their labor. In account after account, Victorian men stressed the physical danger posed by traveling, living, and mining in British Columbia. And British Columbia did have its share of physical dangers.

Although Vancouver Island had a moderate climate, during the 1860s mainland British Columbia experienced a series of bitterly cold winters, with the Fraser River freezing almost to the ocean in 1862 and again in 1864.¹⁰⁷ Seasonal flooding also posed a danger to miners and was largely responsible for the perception of the Fraser River mines as a “humbug” in 1858.¹⁰⁸ The trails from the lower Fraser Canyon north were also very arduous. As John Wilkinson put it, “The foot trail through the canions is really an awful one up and down mountains over and under rocks until you really have a doubt in your own mind which you prefer going up or coming down.”¹⁰⁹ W. Champness provided one of the more vivid and detailed accounts of the journey, in which he encountered “swarms of mosquitoes,” dangerous river crossings, mountain ranges, “frightful precipices,” “awful gorges,” “narrow defiles,” waist-deep swamps and mud, “dead and

¹⁰⁶ Anderson, *Sawney's Letters*, p. 54, Barkerville Archives.

¹⁰⁷ W. Champness, “To Cariboo and Back,” in *The Leisure Hour* (London: 1865), p. 234; Edmund Hope Verney to Father, May 5, 1863, in *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney, 1862-65*, ed., Allan Pritchard, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), pp. 137, 184.

¹⁰⁸ Charles C. Gardiner, “Letter to Editor of *The Islander*, 17 Nov., 1858,” in *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 1, (October, 1937), p. 252; Champness, “To Cariboo and Back,” p. 234.

¹⁰⁹ Wilkinson to his Brother, 22 September 1860.

fallen trees,” and, as if that was not enough, bears.¹¹⁰ Champness felt justified in stating that “every one capable of giving an opinion agrees that no country in the world can be compared with British Columbia in this respect.”¹¹¹ Especially in the early years of the Cariboo rush, the physical danger encountered traversing the “most wretched and miserable country” was unparalleled by anything in the California experience, save perhaps for those miners who travelled to California overland.¹¹² It was, claimed Champness, “utterly useless for persons of weak constitution, or feeble powers of endurance to attempt the expedition to the up-country mines of Cariboo and the creeks.”¹¹³

The increasing focus on physical danger and, not coincidentally, on the body, in the accounts of Victorian miners in British Columbia is an early movement toward the shift from manliness to masculinity that occurred more widely at the end of the century.¹¹⁴ Focusing on the physical dangers and hardships of gold mining gave Victorian men a way to differentiate their labor from the working classes in the east and provided a way rhetorically to tie themselves to other figures of martial manhood, like pioneers. Descriptions of the physical hardships of traveling to the mines began to shift in the late 1860s with the building of the Cariboo Wagon Road, the opening of the Douglas route, and the establishment of stage coach lines from New Westminster to Barkerville. In 1861, Francis Barnard began offering the first coach rides to the Cariboo from Lillooet, but they were expensive and did not go all the way to the mines. By 1868, Barnard’s Express had over 2,000 horses stationed at roadhouses every sixteen miles on

¹¹⁰ Champness, “To Cariboo and Back,” pp. 219, 231-233.

¹¹¹ Champness, “To Cariboo and Back,” p. 234.

¹¹² E.J. Neal to Brother, 2 September 1862, p. 1, Barkerville Archive.

¹¹³ Champness, “To Cariboo and Back,” p. 259.

¹¹⁴ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

the route to the Cariboo and ran frequent and affordable stagecoaches.¹¹⁵ With faster, easier, and cheaper travel between the Cariboo and the coast, Victorians' perceptions of the physical dangers involved in travelling to the mines understandably diminished. With pundits touting the "facilities and comforts" of the trip, transportation between the Cariboo and the coast ceased to be a stage for the performance of courageous and hardy white manhood.¹¹⁶ Obviously, environmental dangers such as the cold snap that injured several men in the winter of 1868 still occurred but, for the most part, the population of the gold mines was increasingly made up of residents who lived year-round in the interior, were familiar with the environment, and knew how to deal with it.¹¹⁷ Now Victorian men would complain about the hardships of the journey, but these complaints, and the hardships they referenced, did not bolster an individual's claim to white manliness because the hardships did not stand for physical danger, only discomfort. A man might lose sleep while being whisked to the mines and back, yet he was unlikely to lose his life or become debilitated. But while the trip to the Cariboo became easier, the remaining Victorian population still believed that living and working in the Cariboo required greater toughness than the relatively comfortable lives of people in the lower mainland.

Risk did not completely disappear from the discourse of white manliness in British Columbia. Some miners still talked of trying to entice "Dame Fortune...to smile upon us" and of the same "hard gambling profession of a gold miner," that they had in California.¹¹⁸ For these men, mining remained subject to a capricious, feminized understanding of luck, but they were an

¹¹⁵ Barnard, Francis Jones, Barkerville Archives; "Fare Reduced," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 6 May, 1867; "Later from the Interior," in *The British Columbian*, 4 January, 1865.

¹¹⁶ "Traveling," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 5 May, 1868.

¹¹⁷ Alexander Allan to Thomas Dearberg, Alexander Allan Letterbook: Jan. 2, 1868 – Oct. 20, 1876, 2 January 1868, p. 1, Barkerville Archive.

¹¹⁸ The first quote is from Mark, *Cariboo*, p. 26; The second quote is from John B. Wilkinson to his Parents, Letters from Victoria and Cariboo, 1860-1865, 11 June, 1862, Barkerville Archive. See also James Wilson Nelles, Diary, 7 June 1862, Barkerville Archive.

ever-shrinking minority.¹¹⁹ The risk that most Victorian men talked about in British Columbia differed subtly from the risk talked about in California. In California, the riskiness of mining had stemmed from what appeared to be the nearly random distribution of gold.¹²⁰ And while the distribution of gold remained a factor in mining in British Columbia, an important cultural shift was underway that gained traction as the years passed. While the California gold rush had had a strong amateur streak with a general rejection of European “knowledge,” a greater degree of appreciation for “expertise,” whether it be from experienced Californian miners or educated experts, came to characterize the gold rush in British Columbia.¹²¹ By 1862, mining was still a gamble, but luck was increasingly becoming something you made and risk, something to be managed through the application of knowledge. John Evans, arguably the most famous of the large mine owners in the Cariboo, reflected this new attitude when he secured several claims on both sides of one river, so as not to miss a seam, and also acquired several smaller claims on other rivers. Evans sought to manage risk by diversifying, or, as he put it, looking to have “several strings to my bow.”¹²² Speaking in this way, Evans literally marked himself as a “fortune-hunter,” not only linking mining to another manly, martial activity, hunting, but also simultaneously demonstrating that he was manly because of the way he managed the risk of mining. It was Evans’s skill that secured his status as a white man.

With this shift in attitude toward luck, the outcome of mining increasingly became an indicator of skill and white manliness was increasingly tied to a hierarchy of knowledge and expertise. Whereas in California, the bar for entry into white manliness had largely been about

¹¹⁹ Lears talks about the rise of cultures of control in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Lears, *Something for Nothing*, pp. 138 – 201.

¹²⁰ This refers to the perception of Victorians in California. The gold deposits were not actually random, of course.

¹²¹ “The Scientific American,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 22 January, 1870; “Letter From Victoria, No. 5,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 28 June, 1866.

¹²² Evans, *Diary*, p. 17.

how you mined, with the outcome of mining somewhat disconnected from identity, in British Columbia, a man's success at mining was increasingly an indicator of his status because it indicated his knowledge of mining. The *Cariboo Sentinel*, in addition to listing lectures by experts and disseminating technical knowledge of local geology, called for "a higher degree of mining...[in which] the pick and the shovel need to be supplanted by the steam engine, reservoirs, and aqueducts."¹²³ While incipient, this trend toward specialization and education, occurring in conjunction with the development of wage labor and large mining companies, presaged the eventual development of ideas of white manliness vested in greater social stratification and based on the development of a managerial class.¹²⁴

By bringing skill back into the equation of mining-as-gamble, Victorians in British Columbia sought to undercut the element of chance that had so severely strained the work-reward relationship in the mines of California. Increasingly in British Columbia, white manliness could be measured by success in mining, though the type of white manhood being signified differed from California. As a category of identity, white manliness was linked to demonstrating character by besting various physical dangers, but it was also demonstrated by besting the "gamble" of mining. In British Columbia, knowledge was increasingly tied to physical capability as indicative of character. As such, this was indicative of greater economic and cultural integration with the East and speaks to the growing (though hardly completed) standardization of cultural perspectives on work, race, and gender across the continent.¹²⁵

¹²³ "The Yield of Gold," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 30 June, 1869; "Prospects of Cariboo," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 17 April, 1869. For the dissemination of local geology, see "Mining Intelligence," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 28 May, 1866; 29 July, 30 September, 1867, for examples.

¹²⁴ David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). See especially chapters 2 and 5.

¹²⁵ Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 5, 15, 24-27.

The persistence of older notions of risk was most evident in the continuing celebration of the prospector. As in California, Victorians believed that the new and presumably rich gold deposits were the right of the white man. Non-white miners, such as the Chinese, were more properly confined to working already-mined areas for “Chinamen’s wages” or serving as wage labor for Victorian employers.¹²⁶ As they had in California, these attitudes occasionally manifested as attempts to drive out or exclude Chinese miners from the gold region.¹²⁷ Also as in California, Victorian prospectors, surveyors, and explorers emerged as some of the major cultural heroes in the discourse of the day and in memoirs of the gold rush in the British Columbia interior.¹²⁸ Indeed, the status of these men as exceptional and admirable was given official sanction by the colonial government.¹²⁹ In addition to providing material support for many of the expeditions, particularly to the more remote mines north of the Cariboo, the government also legislated “discovery claims.” A discovery claim allowed the first miner, or party of miners, in a new mining area to record a claim double the usual size.¹³⁰ These discovery claims, combined with the various movements to exclude non-whites, but especially the Chinese, from new or rich diggings, were a concrete manifestation of the widespread assumption that those individuals capable of acting like white men should be the primary beneficiaries of the gold rush and the social and political order of the colony should support that objective. As in

¹²⁶ Argus, “Letter From Cayoosh,” in *Daily British Colonist*, 2 May, 1861; “News From Above,” in *British Columbian*, 30 May, 1861; “Mining Intelligence,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 30 September, 1867; W. M. Smithe, “Editor Cariboo Sentinel,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 1 June, 1868; Alexander Allan to Mr. Suter (ed. Of the Mainland Guardian), Alexander Letterbook Jan. 2, 1868-Oct. 20, 1876, 6 Jan. 1870, Barkerville Archive.

¹²⁷ “News From Above,” in *The British Columbian*, 30 May, 1861; “Arrivals From the River,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, June 10, 1861; Argus, “Letter From Cariboo,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 7 October, 1861; Vialor, “En Route to Cariboo,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 1 June, 1863.

¹²⁸ “A Fine Prospect,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 May, 1869.

¹²⁹ “Exploration,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 1 September, 1869; “Prospecting Willow River,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 6 March, 1869; Explorer, “Peace River Expedition,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 1 May, 1869; “Peace River Expedition,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 May, 1869.

¹³⁰ British Columbia, Gold Fields Act 1859.

California, attitudes toward risk served to organize society and inform the implementation of a colonial hierarchy designed to benefit those who were believed to act like white men. The linking of being risk-averse in mining with effeminacy allowed these measures to be easily justified even in the supposedly colorblind colonial society of British Columbia.

In sum, the dreams of returning to the “days of ‘49,” with their abundant gold and lack of wage work, died soon after the first wave of Californian miners arrived in 1858. After that, the main gold areas moved into the interior of the colony, where geography and economics conspired to make wage labor commonplace. By 1862, with the rush fully underway in the Cariboo Mountains, Victorians now celebrated the management of risk and the braving of physical danger as key markers of white manliness in the mines. At the same time, Victorians also continued, somewhat nostalgically, to celebrate the gamble of mining, most notably in their celebration and support for prospectors. In so doing, however, Victorians re-affirmed the link between mining and manly, martial, white frontier figures. Victorian ideas about risk in the mines of British Columbia therefore indicate that this period was a transition, not only from older ways of explaining and managing risk to more modern methods, but also a foreshadowing of the transition from white manliness to white masculinity.

Miners Will Gamble: Gambling in British Columbia

Although gambling in British Columbia never occupied the central position in public discourse that it did in California, it was still a matter of concern. Legally, British Columbia relied on the Gaming Act (1845) passed by the English parliament for guidance in suppressing undesirable forms of gambling.¹³¹ The most innovative portion of this act, section 18, reversed precedent and made wagers unenforceable contracts. Additionally, British Columbia, like

¹³¹ British Columbia, Attorney General, 14 November 1865, file 1865/37, box 4, GR-0419, BCARS.

England, occasionally enforced an earlier law “proscribing common gaming houses.” These laws functioned in much the same manner as they did in England: to link the legitimacy of gambling to social class by regulating public gaming but condoning private gaming among elites. As in England, colonial elites, especially those in the colonial government, frequently bet on games of chance and skill.¹³² The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Matthew Begbie, was well known as a “man who loved whist.”¹³³ Despite his ostensible knowledge of the game, Begbie lost \$1.25 to Peter O’Reilly, Gold Commissioner, in September, 1864.¹³⁴ Nor were all the games low stakes. On the 11th of August, 1865, Henry Ball, Magistrate, “foolishly lost \$1000” at poker and loo.¹³⁵ To lose a thousand dollars gambling was an almost astronomical loss, more than most men saw in an entire year. Clearly, elites gambled frequently and for sometimes very high stakes. In so doing, colonial elites replicated patterns of gambling prevalent among the British upper classes and aristocracy. While the Gaming Act (1845) had made wagers unenforceable as legal contracts, this may have actually added to the aura of honor surrounding wagers among elites. Bets between the colonial elites, much as those between the English elites whom they emulated, provided not only a way of being white men, but of being white gentlemen.

Yet, at the same time that the colonial elites bet on loo, whist, and poker, they also enforced the Gaming Act and closed down gambling establishments throughout the colony. The result was a fair bit of confusion in the lower echelons of colonial society over the legitimacy of gambling in the colony. George Blake, a police sergeant in the Cariboo, claimed that he had not

¹³² David Miers, *Regulating Commercial Gambling: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 9, 21 – 24.

¹³³ Arthur Birch, *Victorian Odyssey*, Birch Family Papers, p. 90, BCARS.

¹³⁴ Peter O’Reilly, 8 September 1864, O’Reilly Family Papers, box 6, file 3, BCARS.

¹³⁵ Henry Ball, Journal of Henry Ball, August 18, 1864- October 27, 1865, Ball Papers, p. 167, Mss 0750, BCARS. Emphasis original. Loo is a trick-taking game, similar to Whist and Contract Bridge.

laid charges against certain gambling houses because he “thought they would be protected by the government.”¹³⁶ Indeed, Blake claimed his superiors had told him that “Governor Douglas and Mr. Pemberton were perfectly aware of [the gambling] going on.”¹³⁷ Blake’s confusion is understandable given the elite’s practices and that saloons openly advertised “Whist, freeze-out, and other games.”¹³⁸ While these ads claimed that the stakes were “apples,” the prosecution records for the colonies reveal that cash was more common than fruit. Gambling was not conducted on the sly, either. P. Hankin, hardly a fan of gambling, knew well enough which saloons were for gamblers and which ones he could enter.¹³⁹ Despite official prohibition and occasional enforcement, gambling, in common gaming houses or not, was a widely practiced and condoned social vice.

In choosing when to suppress gambling, and which games to suppress, the authorities revealed something about the threat they perceived certain instances of gambling as manifesting. The Gaming Act and earlier laws targeting “common gaming houses” did not make all gambling illegal, just certain types. The Act removed the legal recourse for individuals to recover unpaid wagers, while also targeting public gambling in gaming houses, though not necessarily “private” games. The result was a series of laws that systematically favored gambling among elites while suppressing gambling as a vice among the lower classes. In British Columbia, for example, games run by and for the Chinese were particular targets of enforcement. This was consistent with the increasingly prevalent understanding of Chinese urban spaces as profane and in need of

¹³⁶ British Columbia, Attorney General, 1 January 1864, box 3, file 1864/17, GR-0419, BCARS.

¹³⁷ British Columbia, Attorney General, 1 January 1864, box 3, file 1864/17, GR-0419, BCARS.

¹³⁸ Arcade Billiard and Bowling Saloon, Barkerville Archives; Adelphi Saloon, Barkerville Archives.

¹³⁹ Hankin, *Memoirs*, pp. 55 – 56.

regulation.¹⁴⁰ Interracial mixing at games of skill and chance was also discouraged or derided.¹⁴¹ In this, the motivation for suppressing gambling in British Columbia mirrored much of the criticism in California of gambling as a site of mixed-race gatherings and therefore, as a situation in which white men could be corrupted or taken advantage of by non- or off-whites.

Finally, the status of the participants and the way they gambled was key to the enforcement of gambling. Some of the resistance to enforcing the anti-gambling laws may have come from economic pragmatism, as when Joseph Pemberton, a close associate of Governor Douglas, said to officer George Blake “that miners would gamble[,] mining itself being a sort of gambling and if they could not do it here they would go elsewhere and take much of the money out of the country,” but the only games that were never suppressed were those of the elites.¹⁴² As in California, some types of gambling were more acceptable than others, but unlike in California, which games were acceptable was largely an outcome of the class biases of the colonial elites and their ability to control the regulatory apparatus of the state. The games of the elites were private affairs conducted between equals. The unbalanced games of the saloon or gambling den, played between white men and non-whites or degraded whites, were too public to go without regulation.

P. Hankin recognized the effects of public perception on one’s standing as a white man suitable for employment. As he put it, “One does not, as a rule, feel inclined to give a young man a place in your office, with whom you have been playing cards, or Billiards, until, perhaps

¹⁴⁰ British Columbia, Attorney General, 11 March 1865, box 4, file 1865/15, GR-0419, BCARS; Richfield Police, Court Case Book, 1862-1871, February 8 1868, GR-0598, BCARS. For a discussion of changing attitudes toward the Chinese and their spaces in British Columbia, see Kay Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal, Qué.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991) and Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal, Qué.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978).

¹⁴¹ Richfield Police, Court Case Book 1862-1871, February 8 1868, GR-0598, BCARS; “D.L. to the Editor,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 23 July, 1870.

¹⁴² British Columbia, Attorney General, 1 January 1864, box 3, file 1864/17, GR-0419, BCARS.

one o'clock in the morning – so I took very good care never to be seen in any of the Saloons either by day or night.”¹⁴³ As in California, gambling in British Columbia had repercussions for a Victorian's status as a white man, but in British Columbia, who an individual gambled with and the public visibility of that gambling were more important than whether an individual hosted the game or not. Conversely, if a Victorian man gambled in a respectable (and presumably at least semi-private) manner, gambling might not have affected his standing as a white man at all. Indeed, if a man conducted himself properly, paid his debts, and did not ruin himself, it could enhance his claim to white manliness.

The symbolic importance of gambling to gold rush society and to white manliness in British Columbia was considerably less than what it had been in California, and this shift is revealing of the way in which ideas of white manliness changed between the two rushes. Whereas gambling had arguably attracted more of the attention of social commentators in California, the primary area of concern for social reformers in British Columbia was sexually-based social dangers. As historian Adele Perry has observed, “Sex lay at the heart of both British Columbia's colonial project and critiques of it.”¹⁴⁴ In particular, Victorians in British Columbia worried about the repercussions of mixed-race sexual relationships between white men and native women.¹⁴⁵ While some settlers, notably missionaries and old Hudson's Bay Company employees, saw a potential for the uplift of native women through these relationships, the tide of public opinion swung increasingly to those who saw these relationships as a threat to white manhood.¹⁴⁶ According to one public speaker, the Reverend T. Derrick, even speaking the

¹⁴³ Hankin, *Memoirs*, p. 56.

¹⁴⁴ Perry, *Edge of Empire*, p. 48.

¹⁴⁵ Perry, *Edge of Empire*, p. 68; “Profits of Agriculture,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 24 July, 1869; Thomas Robert Mitchell to his Parents, 25 May, 16 June, 1862, Mss 0838, BCARS.

¹⁴⁶ Perry, *Edge of Empire*, p. 106.

Chinook jargon could endanger a man's manliness; it is easy to infer his thoughts about mixed-race relationships.¹⁴⁷ The reasons for this shift have been studied in detail elsewhere, but suffice it to say that harder attitudes toward race and the arrival of small, but significant, numbers of white women fuelled an increasing trend to see mixed-race sexual relationships as potential sites of degradation.¹⁴⁸

Another major factor in focusing social concern on sex in British Columbia was the fear of permanency. In California, mixed-race sexual unions were perceived as part of the larger act of "slumming" and were therefore by definition temporary, ephemeral conquests that could actually serve to reinforce the white manliness of the Victorian man. The demographics and geopolitical situation of California helped buttress this ambiguous perception of mixed-race sexual relationships. The massive demographic decline of the native population, combined with the continued influx of Victorian women, and the determination of most Victorian bachelors to return to the East to wed, minimized the potential social disruption represented by mixed-race sexual relationships. In British Columbia, in contrast, the demographic and geopolitical situation contributed to moving concerns regarding mixed-race sexual relationships to the forefront of colonial discourse. The gold rush in British Columbia, despite the hopes of its boosters, never brought the same scale of immigration that California experienced. Even at the peak of the rush, immigrants numbered in the thousands, not the tens of thousands as in California.¹⁴⁹

Additionally, while the native population did suffer some decline resulting from increased

¹⁴⁷ "Lecture on Manliness," in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 21 August, 1869.

¹⁴⁸ Perry, *Edge of Empire*; Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*. For one of the seminal works in the field of "the new imperial history," see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁹ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), pp. 95 – 98; Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 66.

contact with Victorians during the gold rush, most notably from the impact of smallpox in 1862, the native population was never decimated as in California.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, until the closing years of the nineteenth century, the native population of British Columbia outnumbered the non-native population, which remained largely confined to Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, and along the Fraser River.¹⁵¹ This persistent native population, combined with limited immigration by white women, occurring within the context of hardening ideas of race linked to biological determinism, meant that mixed-race sexual relationships appeared to pose a much more significant threat to white manliness in British Columbia than in California.

In the eyes of Victorian observers, the threat of mixed-race sexual relationships was that Victorian men risked becoming “squaw men.”¹⁵² The very term “squaw-man” is revealing. In it, the Victorian male, usually the dominant subject, has been reduced to a secondary importance beside the identifier “squaw.” In other words, the Victorian male so described was identified primarily through the traits of the “squaw,” a racialized image strongly linked to disease, dirt, laziness, and prostitution.¹⁵³ Symbolically, then, in mainstream public discourse, a Victorian male who chose to engage in a sexual relationship with a native female stood to lose any claim to white manliness. In response to this threat, social reformers in British Columbia tried to protect white manhood through the development of surrogate white families in bachelor’s halls,

¹⁵⁰ See, for example Robert Stevenson, *Rose Expedition of 1862*, p. 2, Mss 0315, BCARS; William George Cox, Colonial Correspondence, 8 January, 1863, file 378, B1312, BCARS; Elizabeth Furniss, *Dakelh Keyoh: The Southern Carrier in Earlier Times*. (Quesnel, B.C.: Quesnel School District #28, 1993), p. 6.

¹⁵¹ Perry, *Edge of Empire*, p. 4.

¹⁵² “Profits of Agriculture,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 24 July, 1869; Mitchell to his Parents, 25 May 1862.

¹⁵³ Rayna Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex,” *The Massachusetts Review* 16, no. 4 (Autumn, 1975): pp. 700 – 711; Mark, *Cariboo*, p. 20.

YMCA's, literary and mechanics institutes, and the church until white women, that ultimate colonial panacea, arrived in force.¹⁵⁴

While gambling still played an important role in shaping white manliness, it did not occupy the central role that it had in California. Partly this had to do with the nature of gambling regulation in British Columbia, which focused almost entirely on regulating large, public gambling institutions in favor of small, more discrete games. With gambling less public, it became less of a concern for social commentators worried about its effects on white manliness. The attitudes of the colonial elite also helped to legitimize private games as contests between respectable gentlemen. At the same time, the increasing traction of biological notions of racial difference that occurred throughout the European world during the mid-nineteenth-century helped to propel concerns about mixed-race sexual relationships to the forefront of colonial discourse. In so doing, white manliness was increasingly becoming invested in the body and in innate characteristics at the expense of behavior.

Conclusion

Though it never completely disappeared, the importance of risk to Victorian understandings of white manliness diminished from 1848 to 1871 in the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia, largely due to the growth of wage work and an increasing emphasis on the physical body. Throughout the period, however, risk helped to conceptualize and justify a social order in California and in British Columbia in which Victorian men, who claimed an identity as white men, believed themselves to be properly located at the top of colonial society. Risk did this by giving meaning to white manliness. How white men were

¹⁵⁴ Perry, *Edge of Empire*, pp. 83 – 90. On the attempts of the social reformers to increase the number of white women in the colony, see Perry, *Edge of Empire*, 124 – 166.

supposed to react to the gamble of mining, by seeking and finding new, large deposits, served to justify Victorian control of the largest and richest gold areas. In so doing, ideas about risk were one of the crucial ideological supports rationalizing domination by Victorian local forms of government, like mining councils. Even in British Columbia, where the colonial government maintained a far greater degree of control, Victorian miners at times sought to exclude or expel non-whites, particularly the Chinese, from the mining areas, a movement that was justified in part by ideas of risk tied to white manliness.

The gold rush experience caused Victorians to define a white man as someone who took certain types of risks, not just any risk. Indeed, what determined a white man in both California and British Columbia was that they not only knew when to take a risk, but they also knew when to avoid it. The risk of mining was an acceptable, indeed, almost necessary risk. In California, the risk of mining was dealt with through the figure of Dame Fortune, while in British Columbia, expertise and skill increasingly came to be ways that white men were expected to overcome the gamble of mining. Victorians saw non-whites, like the Chinese, as unable to take the proper sort of risks in mining. This did not mean that the Victorian miners in California and British Columbia shut their eyes to mining success by non-whites. Instead, they often remarked upon it. But non-whites who succeeded in mining did so through the application of attributes seen as unmanly. This is why the occasional calls for white men to mine like the Chinese and be content with lower, but consistent, wages were largely ignored. While to do so might mean a steady income, it would also mean seeming to embrace a more effeminate way of mining. For the vast majority of European miners, this was apparently too much to ask.

Conversely, Victorians spent much time worrying about, and claiming to have avoided, the risks of gambling. Where the risk of going out into the countryside, with all its attendant

dangers, marked a Victorian as tough, brave, and determined, the risk of the gambling table did the exact opposite. At the gambling table, Victorian men could lose their composure, self-control, and dominance, and what was worse, they could lose their money to, and be symbolically dominated by, non-whites, gamblers, or other unmanly figures. In both California and British Columbia commentators worried about the effect gambling would have on young or inexperienced Victorian men and the way in which it had the potential to reverse the desirable social order, putting non- or off-whites equal to, or over, Victorian men.

In both societies the reaction was largely the same: Victorians claimed to want to regulate all gambling, but in reality, they focused on the most public forms and the ones in which Victorian men might gamble with non- or off-whites. This too was reflective of the emerging social order of the colonies. In both cases, colonial authorities were willing to tolerate private gambling between Victorian men; indeed, some commentators almost celebrated it, because it presumably was occurring between equals and because, in the case of British Columbia at least, the law provided no recourse, making the bet wholly dependent upon honor. Combined with the suppression of large gambling halls and public places where mixed-race gambling occurred, Victorian attitudes toward gambling served to reinforce perceived differences between Victorians and others, differences that were understood through the lens of white manliness. Like mining, the risks of gambling therefore helped to define for Victorians not only why white men should be atop the colonial hierarchy, but what sort of risks and risk-taking behaviors marked an individual as a white man.

At the same time, attitudes toward risk were related to, yet distinct from, one of the other main ways Victorian men understood themselves and others in California and British Columbia. The attitude of Victorians toward risk cannot be cleanly disassociated from their attitudes toward

the body and appearance of individuals and groups. On the one hand, as the emphasis on the clean, soft hands of the gambler attests, the body was always important for Victorian understandings of the people involved in risky work or leisure. On the other hand, the rise of wage work in California and British Columbia was accompanied by a broader transformation in the European world in the mid-nineteenth century toward a greater emphasis on the body and on biological notions of race. How Victorian understandings of the body and of appearance shifted during the gold rushes in California and British Columbia is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Dirty Clothes, Clean Bodies: The Body and Costume of White Manliness

“I have lived long enough in California” remarked D. B. Bates in 1858, “to learn from experience never to judge a person by his apparel,” a sentiment echoed by participants in the British Columbia gold rush.¹ This was a disturbing trend to Victorians, as appearances mattered in British and American society in the mid-nineteenth century. Appearance was, most commentators held, the key to understanding a person’s character. Outward decay marked inner corruption; likewise, beauty marked inner purity. But while clothes and other outward trappings could and should conform to a person’s inner character, they could also obscure character, as most Victorians realized. If matters were confused enough in the urban centers of the Atlantic world, where confidence men and painted women sought to mislead the unwary, then they were positively chaotic in the gold fields of California and British Columbia.² This was especially problematic in the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia, where character was supposed to largely determine an individual’s place in society. At the same time, however, most of the participants in the gold rushes were strangers to each other, and could not rely on reputation or long experience to inform their perceptions of their neighbors. It therefore became

¹ D. B. Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water* (1857; New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 118. For an example from British Columbia, see R. George Cowley, *Diary*, p. 1, E/B/C831A, BCARS; Matthew Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia: Their History, Resources, and Prospects* (1865; New York: Arno Press, 1973), p. 414.

² On the relationship between appearance and character, especially in the urbanizing Atlantic world, see Karen Haltunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830 – 1870* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 2 – 72, esp.; Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 138 – 141; John Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), pp. 93 – 98; Thomas Augst, *The Clerk’s Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 261.

crucial for Victorians in the gold fields to be able to evaluate an individual's character through their appearance.

Victorian men tried two strategies to make order out of chaos in the gold fields. First, they relied on key stereotypes to give meaning to styles of dress, paying particular attention to how behavior and dress should reflect each other. Second, sensing the ways in which dress could be a disguise, they placed increasing emphasis on "knowing" the nature and characteristics of the body in order to evaluate a person's true nature. These two aspects, dress and body, were how Victorians understood appearance, and through appearance, character and worth, in the gold fields. These two aspects were not static, however, and as ideas about biological difference became more widespread, and the problems of judging people by their clothes and outward appearance more apparent, a gradual shift to emphasize the body over clothing became apparent by the end of the British Columbia Gold Rush.

The Miner's Costume and Other Dress

Common economic, social, and cultural forces acted to create parallel concerns about the meaning of appearances in California and British Columbia. In both societies, the discovery of gold stimulated a massive influx of people from diverse areas of the globe. When these people reached California or British Columbia, most quickly adopted clothes suitable for mining and discarded clothes suitable for a more settled existence in the Atlantic world. But practical considerations were not the only factor shaping the choice of clothes for the vast majority of gold rushers. Accounts often referred to the red flannel shirt, blue pants tucked into rubber boots, and

slouch hat of the miners as a “costume.”³ The act of donning mining clothes was part of a larger performance of a type of white manliness that was, in itself, strongly tied to the particular context of the gold rush. Victorians in other colonial contexts steadfastly clung to clothing that, with minor adjustments, was more appropriate to London or New York than to the colonial environments in which they found themselves, while in California and British Columbia the vast majority of the immigrants embraced an appearance that differed radically from the contemporary norm in the Atlantic world.⁴ This discrepancy is explained by the meaning that the mining costume had in addition to its practicality and availability.

A red flannel shirt, blue pants tucked into the rubber boots, and a slouch hat not only provided durable protection against the elements, they also signified that the wearer was an experienced miner and that he was hardened to the deprivations and challenges of mining. Indeed, to John Borthwick, it seemed as if “old miners” on their way home “were jealous...of every bit of California mud which adhered to their ragged old shirts and patch-work pantaloons,

³ For descriptions of miner’s clothes as costumes, see James Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine, Reminiscences of Early California* (Boston, Mass.: R. G. Badger, 1922), pp. 35 – 36; John Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters: A First-Hand Picture of Life in California Mining Camps in the Early Fifties*, ed. Horace Kephart (1857; New York: International Fiction Library, 1917), pp. 59 – 60, 64; J. K. Osgood, “Letter to George Strang, 20 August, 1849,” in William Beneman, ed., *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 33; Robert Smith Lammot, “Letter to His Brother Dan, 15 January, 1850,” in William Beneman, ed., *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 126; Bayard Taylor, *Eldorado; Or, Adventures in the Path of Empire, Comprising a Voyage to California, Via Panama; Life in San Francisco and Monterey; Pictures of the Gold Region, and Experiences of Mexican Travel* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1879), p. 62; G. W. M., “San Francisco,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 30 October, 1853. For British Columbia see R. Byron Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed. A Few Rough Experiences on the North-West Pacific Coast* (London: S. Low, Martson, Low & Searle, 1872), p. 118; Kinahan Cornwallis, *The New El Dorado, or, British Columbia* (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1858), p. 2; Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, “Letter from Richard Dowson, Victoria, 3 May, 1859,” in *Letters Received Columbia 1858 – 1874*, vol. 1; Sophia Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest: Being Extracts from the Letters of Miss Sophia Cracroft, Sir John Franklin’s Niece, February to April 1861 and April to July 1870* (Victoria, B.C.: [Provincial Archives of British Columbia], 1974), pp. 38 – 39.

⁴ On contemporary styles of dress in the Atlantic world, see Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility*, p. 121. Colonial dress usually reflected, with minor accommodation made for environment, the dominant Victorianism-influenced fashion trends and ideas about health current in New York or London. See, for example Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 149 – 160.

as evidences that they, at least, had ‘seen the elephant.’”⁵ The importance of Victorian men’s dress to their identity as white men was evidenced by their concern about maintaining their appearance, especially to audiences from the East.⁶

There were two accessories to the miner’s costume that confirmed their status as experienced and hardened: weapons and facial hair. In both California and British Columbia, miners frequently wore guns and knives in their belts, concealed them on their person, or kept them close at hand. These weapons were an important part of a miner’s costume. With them, he identified himself as akin to other frontier figures, such as the soldier, the filibuster, and the pioneer. With them, he signaled to himself and others that he would not be dominated by other men, and that he would, if provoked, defend himself with deadly force. Though Victorians in California and British Columbia tended to emphasize the danger of violent crime or native attacks, in actuality, with the exception of Indian warfare in California, both gold rushes experienced crime rates comparable to the Atlantic world.⁷ The profusion of weaponry in

⁵ Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, pp. 59 – 60. See also Paschal Mack to Sister, 20 August 1853, Mss C-B 547:61, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, Calif. (hereafter BANC).

⁶ Although there is little commentary preserved, non-whites must have worn the mining costume. Nevertheless, commentary about the appearance of non-whites in the mines only mentions their clothing as different, or, as we shall see in the case of the dandy, as presumptuous. It is easy to infer that non-whites who wore the mining costume were probably looked on by most Victorians as counterfeit miners. On the other hand, the mining costume also probably functioned as a common identifier that helped to incorporate some off-whites into colonial society. Unfortunately, no conclusive evidence exists, so this must remain speculation.

⁷ For California, see Robert M. Senkewicz, *Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 75 – 77. There are no easily accessible statistics for British Columbia, but the local newspapers are noticeably absent of any crime wave hysteria.

California and British Columbia was more the product of Victorian men's desire to mark themselves as manly, martial men than it was a response to actual conditions.⁸

One of the most striking ways that Victorian men in California and British Columbia laid claim to an identity as manly, tough, and experienced miners was through the deliberate cultivation of facial hair. This was more revolutionary than might be immediately evident. Though little has been done on facial hair in the American context, research on Britain suggests that the growth of facial hair in mainstream society during the mid-nineteenth century was largely an attempt to embrace a natural manliness in response to the increasingly unnatural industrialized world.⁹ In Britain, however, the crucial change seems to have occurred after the suppression of the revolutions of 1848 ended the linkage between beards and radical ideology, making facial hair acceptable to the mainstream of British society. As such, the adoption of beards in Britain seems to date from the 1850s.¹⁰ However, facial hair in California dates from at least the earliest days of the rush in 1849 when, for example, Alonzo Rathburn sat for three photographs before he shaved and remarked that his "mustash come up to my eyes. My whiskers hung down on my breast."¹¹ Not only was facial hair common in California, but the special mention many miners made of their new growth in letters and pictures sent home testifies

⁸ Greenberg explored the idea of martial manliness in *Manifest Manhood*. For examples of criticism of guns that also suggests their ubiquity, see Howard Gardiner, *In Pursuit of the Golden Dream; Reminiscences of San Francisco and the Northern and Southern Mines, 1849 – 1857* (Stoughton, Mass: Western Hemisphere, 1970), p. 15; *San Francisco As It Is: Manuscript*, p. 288, folder 1, box 2140, California State Archive, Sacramento, California (hereafter State Archive). On British Columbia, see "The Gold Diggings on Fraser River," in *The Times [of London]*, 30 July, 1858; British Columbia, Attorney General, "Inquisitions, Vancouver Island (Colony), 1859 – Nov. 18, 1866," 11 August, 1864, Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria, British Columbia (hereafter BCARS); Chartres Brew to Colonial Secretary, 28 July 1868, Colonial Correspondence, file 197, B01311, BCARS.

⁹ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain" *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 1 (Autumn 2005): pp. 3 – 34.

¹⁰ Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," p. 10.

¹¹ Alonzo Rathburn, Alonzo W. Rathburn Diary 1849 – 1851, p. 183, BANC.

to its adoption in California in advance of mainstream adoption in either the United States or Britain.¹²

Early adoption suggests that facial hair had a special meaning in California, one tied to the act of gold mining that predated popular adoption and was subsequently carried over to British Columbia. Again, the British history of facial hair is suggestive. Some of the early adopters of facial hair had been British army, police, and naval officers, with civilians subsequently growing beards to lay claim to a marker of manly martial virtue as signified by these armed and bearded officers.¹³ As with the clothes that miners wore, Victorians believed that there was a practical rationale for growing beards. Commentators argued that beards provided protection for miners in harsh conditions of the mines, a justification that gave further meaning to the difference between the appearance of Victorian men in the gold mines and their counterparts in the East. By linking the different appearance, in both clothes and facial hair, of Victorian miners to the conditions of California and British Columbia, advocates of the miner's costume and facial hair suggested that the appearance of Victorian miners reflected a tough, martial manhood suited to the rough conditions of the gold fields.¹⁴ While the facial hair that gold rushers grew suggested a similar claim to martial manhood, their beards were generally unkempt and bushy, linking the beards and the beard-wearers with another group of icons of

¹² See, for example, Hinton Helper, *The Land of Gold. Reality Versus Fiction* (Baltimore: H. Taylor, 1855), p. 180; Mary Megquier, *Apron Full of Gold; The Letters of Mary Jane Megquier From San Francisco, 1849 – 1856* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1949), p. 37; S. S. L. to Sister Mary, 13 August 1858, Mss 2007 62, BANC; Mack to Sister, 20 August 1853. Though perhaps colored by the passage of time, the following article clearly argues for California's role as a trend-setter in the wearing of facial hair: "Wearing the Beard," in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 September, 1853.

¹³ On the British police and military's adoption of the beard, see Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," p. 13.

¹⁴ "Mustachios," in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 March, 1854; "Wearing the Beard," in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 September, 1853. On the larger contemporary argument for the health benefits of beards, see Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," p. 12.

martial manliness: frontiersmen and mountain men.¹⁵ By the mid-1850s, the linking of the bearded faces of miners with manly toughness and especially with the ability to cope with the rigors of gold mining was developed to the point that an article in the *Alta California* could contrast the “full manly growth of beard” with “faces made smooth and girl-like by the continued use of the razor.”¹⁶

By the time the gold rush in British Columbia started in 1858, not only had the wearing of facial hair become socially acceptable in Britain, but the precedent of California powerfully conditioned new and old gold rushers alike to link the wearing of facial hair to an identity as a tough, manly miner. As a result, there was far less commentary on the wearing of beards, though their ubiquity is attested to in the visual records of the gold rush.¹⁷ The prevalence of facial hair in the British Columbia gold rush speaks to the way the linkage between facial hair and tough, natural manliness had become thoroughly normalized by the 1860s in gold rush societies, even as facial hair continued to be a matter of some debate in the Atlantic world.¹⁸ In the mining societies of California and British Columbia, a mining costume, consisting of clothes, weapons, and facial hair, came to mark an individual as tough and experienced, the key traits that distinguished the manly miner from his opposite, the urbanized and effeminate dandy.

As the rugged miner’s character was reflected in his appearance, the dandy’s complete unsuitability for the mines was reflected in his. The dandy, with his

¹⁵ On the unusual nature of Californian beards, see Rathbun, *Diary*, p. 183; Helper, *The Land of Gold*, p. 180; J. H. Mankin, “Recollections of Early Days,” SMCII, folder 6, box 24, State Archive. On the linkage between gold miners, beards, and frontiersmen, see Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, p. 135.

¹⁶ “Wearing the Beard,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 September, 1853.

¹⁷ See, for example “Gold Escort Leaving Barkerville, 1865” A03148, BCARS; “Wedding of John A. Cameron, Also Known as Cariboo Cameron, 1860,” A01158, BCARS; Louis Blanc, “Tin Shop, Barkerville; Decorated for visit of Governor Anthony Musgrave, 1869” A03774, BCARS; Louis Blanc, “Firemen’s Arch; William’s Creek Fire Brigade Welcoming Governor Musgrave, Barkerville,” A03762, BCARS. See also Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest*, p. 39.

¹⁸ Oldstone-Moore, “The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain,” pp. 23 – 26. As Oldstone-Moore points out, beards were accepted in the military, but remained controversial in civilian society.

kid gloves that covered lily white hands, small walking stick, hair usually long, and soaped down until his head shines like a junk bottle, feet encased in patent leather boots, [and] speaking a sweet little language of his own...was never known to have done an hour's work in his life.¹⁹

The dandy's appearance reflected his weakness of character, specifically, his inability to suffer hardships and hard work in the pursuit of reward. Instead, the dandy "mincingly" picked his way through the mud, searching for "ah very rich hole, whah a gentlemen could procure an agreeable shade to work under."²⁰ Account after account described encounters with dandies, focused on their clothes and unrealistic expectations, and usually concluded by noting their ultimate failure.²¹

In many ways the figure of the dandy bore a marked resemblance to that of the gambler.²² Soft hands, fancy clothes, and a desire to reap rewards without having to work hard characterized both. Tellingly, both dandies and gamblers purportedly often lacked beards, although they might have moustaches.²³ But this facial hair did not bring with it connotations of rugged manliness, as it was ornamental and showy, not the "natural" beard of the miner.²⁴ Where the figures of the

¹⁹ James Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines: and a Description of the Great Tulare Valley* (Stockton, Calif.: Published to Accompany the Steamer Edition of the 'San Joaquin Republican,' 1852), p. 28.

²⁰ For the "mincing" comment, see William Ryan, *Personal Adventures in Upper and Lower California, in 1848 – 9* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 2: p. 173. For the mocking imitation of a Dandy's speech, see Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines*, pp. 27 – 28.

²¹ For examples of these sort of narratives in California, see Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines*, pp. 27 – 29; Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: p. 173; George Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Company, 1853), pp. 105 – 107. For examples of this narrative in British Columbia, see "Letter to Father," in *Abedare Times*, 6 December, 1862, in Welsh, Barkerville Files, Barkerville Archives; Tit for Tat, "The Mines – Loafers – Indian Mustering on the Sound," in *The Daily Alta California*, 22 June, 1858; "Our Return Miners," in *The British Columbian*, 5 July, 1862.

²² The figure of the Gambler is dealt with in detail in chapter 4.

²³ For gamblers see Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco, 1886), 6: p. 224; Alonzo Delano, *Pen Knife Sketches; Or, Chips Of The Old Block, A Series Of Original Illustrated Letters, Written By One Of California's Pioneer Miners* (Sacramento, Calif.: Published at The Union office, 1853), p. 31. For dandies, see Megquier, *Apron Full of Gold*, p. 37; Prentice Mulford, *Prentice Mulford's Story*, Frederic Remington, ed. (1889; Oakland, Calif: Biobooks, 1953), pp. 57 – 58.

²⁴ Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," p. 10.

dandy and the gambler diverged was in the threat they posed to white men. The gambler was a figure of corruption, luring foolish and gullible Victorian miners to waste their money, but the dandy posed no such threat. Indeed, the dandy was so effeminate, the only threat he posed was to himself as he proceeded, woefully unprepared, to the mines.²⁵

By the time of the British Columbia gold rush, the image of the dandy had faded in importance as something for white men to define themselves against. Instead, the dandy had been replaced by a more general concern about “persons of weak constitution, or feeble powers of endurance,” “city friends,” or “sons of independent gentlemen, attorneys and bankers’ clerks, doctors, chemists, drapers, grocers, notaries, lawyers, magistrates, officers of the army and navy, and many others of the same stamp” who would be unable to make it as gold miners as they were “incompetent to perform skilled labour.”²⁶ Belief in the weakness and unsuitability of the dandy lived on, transformed and generalized increasingly into a disdain for city professionals, part of the same reaction against the increasingly urbanized and industrialized world that gave gold mining so much of its symbolic meaning. Criticism of dandism also served to help justify the type of labor that Victorian men were engaged in in the mines. As we have seen, Victorian men went to great lengths to explain to audiences at home why they were doing manual labor and how it did not hurt their character, but rather strengthened it.²⁷ By defending this labor against the Dandy and his successors, these men underscored that not just anyone was suited to gold mining and only men with the right characters and bodies could make a go of it. The emphasis

²⁵ For examples of these sort of narratives in California, see Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines*, pp. 27 – 29; Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: p. 173; Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, pp. 105 – 107. For examples of this narrative in British Columbia, see “Letter to Father,” in *Abedare Times*, 6 December, 1862, in Welsh, Barkerville Files, Barkerville Archives; Tit for Tat, “The Mines – Loafers – Indian Mustering on the Sound,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 22 June, 1858; “Our Return Miners,” in *The British Columbian*, 5 July, 1862.

²⁶ The first two quotes are from W. Champness, *To Cariboo and Back* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1865), p. 259. The latter two quotes are from John Emmerson, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, p. 148.

²⁷ See, in particular, Chapter Four.

on “weak constitution[s]” and “feeble powers of endurance” speak to the increasing emphasis on the body in British Columbia as well. Gold mining was risky and only the proper type of men could ever hope to win the favor of Dame Fortune.

The dandy posed not only a gendered challenge, but also a racial challenge to white manliness. Though dandies were never discussed as having darker complexions themselves, their traits, and especially their love of ostentatious display that was pompous and inappropriate, linked them rhetorically to images of natives and blacks in California. Benjamin Wingate claimed that, having made a necklace out of buttons, some natives were “as much pleased with themselves as a New York dandy with his white kids and mustache,” while others noticed blacks “strutting along in a dandified manner.”²⁸ This identification is unsurprising as throughout the nineteenth century, both natives and blacks were the subject of rebuke and ridicule for attempting to dress like whites, and either getting it wrong and still being proud (as in the case of natives) or for being pretentious (as in the case of blacks). Of course, it was not that Victorians observers believed that non-whites were dandies or that dandies were non-white, but the similarities suggested the inappropriateness of the dandy’s dress and attitude. Linked to the behavior of non-whites, the behavior and dress of the dandy implied degradation and the way that that degradation could threaten the integrity of the division between white men and non-whites.

Another figure who closely resembled the dandy was the greenhorn, the newly arrived or inexperienced miner. Like the dandy, the greenhorn was often clothed in “city style, with sack

²⁸ “Kids” refers to kid gloves, made of goatskin. Benjamin Wingate, *Uncertain Country: The Wingate Letters, San Francisco, California – Meriden, New Hampshire, 1851 – 1854* Stephen Vincent, ed. (Berkeley, Calif.: The Friends of the Bancroft Library, 2000), p. 72; Stanton Coblenz, *Villains and Vigilantes; The Story of James King, of William, and Pioneer Justice in California* (New York: Wilson-Erickson, Inc., 1936), p. 12; Frank Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco; Containing a Summary of the History of.* (New York: Appleton, 1855), pp. 257 – 258; Timothy Coffin Osborn, *Timothy Coffin Osborn Journal: ms., 1850 June 14 – 1855 Jan. 1*, p. 131, Mss C-F 81, BANC.

coat, flashy vest, and pantaloons with straps on.”²⁹ Also, like the dandy, the greenhorn was the subject of derision by the experienced miner. As Charles Thompson remarked on his first encounter with miners in California, “they looked at our fine dresses, our delicate complexions, our verdant questions, and still more verdant plans as if they had a supreme contempt for us.”³⁰ Underscoring their unpreparedness for the gold fields, greenhorns were singled out as easy marks for gamblers and prostitutes.³¹ But the greenhorn differed from the dandy in one key way which served to emphasize the ideal traits of white manly miners. The greenhorn’s weakness was inexperience and unpreparedness, but unlike the dandy, the ideal greenhorn was prepared to work hard and to learn how to become a miner. Where the dandy became frustrated at the first disappointment and hard labor, the greenhorn persevered.³² Being a greenhorn was a transitional stage through which Victorians from the Atlantic world passed *en route* to becoming manly white miners. Unlike the dandy, whose character was reflected in the tenacity to which he clung to his foppish clothes and manner, the greenhorn’s latent manly character became manifest over time and with experience through a hardened body, lengthening facial hair, and the increasingly worn clothes of a miner.

The figure of the greenhorn appears only infrequently in accounts of the British Columbia gold rush, but this is not because it had ceased to have meaning. Instead, at least two trends discouraged its widespread usage. First, the percentage of inexperienced miners in British

²⁹ E. G. B., “From the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 May, 1849.

³⁰ Charles Thompson to Uncle, Sept. 10 1851, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:8, BANC.

³¹ For California, see Alonzo Delano’s play *A Live Woman in the Mines, or, Pike County Ahead!* [1857, purporting to represent 1850]: ProQuest Information and Learning Company; “Arrest of Mrs. Yates,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 September, 1851; “ABC Game,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 27 March, 1853. In British Columbia, see Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, p. 407. This fit with the broader cultural concern with inexperienced men in unfamiliar urban environments being easily misled. See Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*.

³² On the evolution of the Greenhorn into the miner, see Delano, *Pen Knife Sketches*, pp. 10 – 14. See also E. G. B., “From the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 May, 1849.

Columbia was far lower than it had been in California, especially in the first year of the rush when the vast majority of the migrants came from California or Australia. Additionally, a small, but still significant, number of newly-arrived miners, most notably the Welsh, were experienced miners from the Atlantic world.³³ Second, as a further discouragement, the term “greenhorn” was unfamiliar to most British subjects and highly unlikely to find its way into official correspondence.³⁴ Though the figure of the greenhorn appeared explicitly only very rarely in British Columbia, the meanings it had imparted to the act of mining and those who engaged in it continued to resonate.

In British Columbia, as in California, Victorian men believed the key to success would be perseverance, hard work, and a corresponding toughening of the body into the hardened miner’s physique, usually garbed in ragged and worn clothes. This trajectory was exemplified in W. Champness’s serialized account of his journey to and from the gold mines. Again and again, Champness described the rigors of the journey and his party’s perseverance in the face not only of natural obstacles, but also of the apparent failure of other men with their “pale, pinched faces and tattered rags.”³⁵ Though facing extreme challenges, new arrivals could learn to become miners if they had “physical strength, patience, and good temper.”³⁶ This last quotation suggests

³³ For the account by the leader of one of the largest groups of Welsh miners, see John Evans, “Diary of John Evans: The British Columbia Mining Adventure, 1862 – 1864,” ms. 2111, BCARS.

³⁴ John Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanisms: A Glossary of Words and Phrases Usually Regarded as Peculiar to the United States* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, and Co., 1859), p. 180. Bartlett identifies “green” as an Americanism and defines it as “uncouth, raw, inexperienced, applied to persons...it answers to the English use of the word *verdant*.” “Greenhorn” does make an appearance in Johnson’s 1827 dictionary, though it is noted as being “a low expression,” suggesting that it was not in common circulation in middle and upper-class Britain. See Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which Words are Deduced From Their Originals; and Illustrated in Their Different Significations, by Examples from the Best Writers: Together with a History of the Language, and an English Grammar*, vol. 2 (London: Printed for Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green [etc.], 1827), unpaginated. Indeed, in one of the few cases where the term Greenhorn is used in reference to British Columbia, it is in quotations. See Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, p. 407.

³⁵ Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, pp. 233, 249.

³⁶ Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, p. 259.

the increasing emphasis placed in British Columbia on physical strength, in addition to attitude and character, as a necessary prerequisite to success in the mines.³⁷ The increasing emphasis placed on the body, evident by the start of the British Columbia gold rush, had the effect of making it so that in British Columbia, you either arrived with the physical ability to succeed in the mines or you did not. In contrast, in California, your character enabled your body to develop to handle the labor of the mines. This is also partly why accounts in British Columbia de-emphasized the figure of the dandy and instead narrowed the category of the suitable to exclude an array of people who may have had fine characters but were physically unprepared for the labor of the mines.³⁸ This, in turn, is part of a larger cultural trend to emphasize the body that was ongoing throughout the middle of the nineteenth century.

A large part of what made these figures so important in the gold rushes was the way that gold rush society upset traditional ways of knowing a person's character. In California especially, most young Victorians arrived with only tenuous connections to their fellow gold rushers. The family and community social networks that had largely defined them in the East did not exist in California. Instead of family and social networks, Victorian men experienced a high degree of transitory relationships, forming and breaking partnerships and friendships with a speed and frequency that was virtually unheard of in the Atlantic world. Among other things, this situation encouraged the widespread use of nicknames. That the nicknames were of a limited variety, with "Pike" being one of the most common, only increased the anonymity of

³⁷ On this point see also Unknown Author, *Cariboo: The Newly Discovered Gold Fields of British Columbia* (Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 1975), pp. 3 – 5.

³⁸ The unknown author of *Cariboo: The Newly Discovered Gold Fields* disagreed with most of his contemporaries, "nine out of ten men have been well enough used by nature to become strong men" so long as they had a "stout" enough heart to keep at. In this way the author more clearly harkens back to a Californian-style emphasis on character, but in conjunction with a strong body. *Cariboo: The Newly Discovered Gold Fields*, pp. 3 – 5.

individuals.³⁹ Indeed, much as the rapidly growing urban areas of the East provided anonymity for individuals to recreate and redefine themselves, so too did the gold rush society of California provide an opportunity for men to assume a new identity.

For some commentators, this lack of restraint allowed a person's true character to be revealed. As John Borthwick noted, with the "outside pressure of society being removed, men assumed their natural shape, and showed what they really were, following their unchecked impulses and inclinations."⁴⁰ In this light, the costume of the dandy, gambler, or miner became an ostensible reflection of a person's true inner character. But for others, the same anonymity fostered not truth but deception. Mary Megquier, for instance, found California "a complete farce...the greatest dandies wear their beard long, their hair uncombed."⁴¹ To commentators like Megquier, a lack of social restraints allowed people to assume false appearances with relative ease. The tension between these two views of appearance in the gold rush would not, indeed, could not, be resolved, and these questions about the integrity of appearance were further challenged by the on-again, off-again relationship some miners had with the mining costume.

Victorian miners sometimes removed their mining costume by shaving their faces, washing their clothes, or even putting on a special suit. There were many reasons for this transformation. It often occurred on Sunday, and for some religious miners, the link between

³⁹ Henry Packer, Henry Billington Packer Letters, 1849 – 1858, 11 May 1852, Mss 84/90c, BANC. For the rare argument that a similar process occurred in British Columbia, see Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, p. 414.

⁴⁰ Borthwick, *The Gold Hunters*, pp. 74 – 75. See also Charles Parke, *Dreams to Dust: A Diary of the California Gold Rush, 1849 – 1850*, James Davis, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 101; Taylor, *Eldorado*, p. 32; Richard Hale, *The Log of a Forty-Niner; Journal of a Voyage from Newburyport to San Francisco in the Brig. Genl. Worth, Commanded by Samuel Walton* (Boston, Mass: B.J. Brimmer Co., 1923), p. 65.

⁴¹ Megquier, *Apron Full of Gold*, p. 37. For a claim that both traders and gamblers donned the miner's costume so as to mislead them, see Delano, *Pen Knife Sketches*, pp. 23, 31.

cleanliness and godliness may have been foremost in their minds.⁴² For others, dressing up in what Prentice Mulford tellingly called their “dandy outfit” had to do with a rare visit to a larger town or city.⁴³ Alternatively, miners might shave, wash, or change their clothes in the presence of white women, especially if they were bachelors and the women were single.⁴⁴ Undoubtedly too, miners returning to the East resumed wearing clothes more appropriate to that region shortly after their arrival. In each case, the change in appearance signaled that, to a certain degree, the mining costume, like that of the westerner or the pioneer, was both the vanguard for, and ultimately unsuited to, the white man’s “civilization.”⁴⁵ In this case, civilization was signified by the town or urban center, or by the presence of white women. This process has led at least one scholar to argue that middle-class Victorians were slumming when they went to California.⁴⁶ But there was more going on than a transitory embrace of a rough, martial manhood, as becomes apparent when tracking the shifting meanings of appearance between California and British Columbia.

In going to and from California, and at certain moments in California, Victorian miners moved between an appearance and identity as an urban denizen (whose clothes were rapidly becoming the marker of the emergent middle class) and as a gold miner on the edge of

⁴² For instance, Alfred Doten clearly established this link on his way to California. See Alfred Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten, 1849 – 1903*, ed. Walter Van Tilburg Clark (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), p. 6.

⁴³ Mulford, *Prentice Mulford’s Story*, pp. 57 – 58; Osborn, *Journal*, pp. 192 – 193.

⁴⁴ John Carr, *Pioneer Days in California: Historical and Personal Sketches* (Eureka, Calif.: Times Publishing Company, 1891), p. 279; Osborn, *Journal*, p. 203; Charles Bridgen to His Cousin, Mary A. Cushing, 11 March 1852, Mss C-B 547 100, BANC.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the westerner and the pioneer, see chapter 4.

⁴⁶ Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 219.

civilization.⁴⁷ In so doing, these men also moved between identities as restrained white men and martial white men.⁴⁸ But this was more than the simple transitory embrace of a “rough” white manliness characterized by the framework of slumming. Victorians celebrated becoming miners and looked back at their eastern counterparts with a fair degree of disdain, at the same time that they also envied aspects of the latter lifestyle, most notably access to women and families. Contrary to what the Brian Roberts’s theory of slumming would suggest, Victorians never fully rejected either the restrained, urban aspect of their manhood or the martial, frontier aspect. Instead, what we see in California is the first tentative steps toward reconciling standards of restrained and martial manhood into a new synthesis.

This process was far more pronounced by the time of the British Columbia gold rush, aided by two major cultural developments in the Victorian world. The first was the increasing traction of biological racism in general society. Biological racism encouraged Victorians to think of their bodies as fundamentally different from, and superior to, non-white bodies. Though Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* was not published until 1859, the idea that physical differences, such as skin pigmentation and other aspects of phenotype, explained seemingly innate differences between different groups of humans, had been growing in popularity since the early years of the century. Even before being linked to the scientific theory of evolution, biological racism was an increasingly popular way of understanding society, one that put a heavy emphasis on the immutability of bodies. As the body became more important for signifying

⁴⁷ On clothes and the emergent middle class, see Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility*, pp. 118 – 121; Michael Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy: A History of Men’s Dress in the American Republic, 1760 – 1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), esp. pp. 188 – 193, 203, 210.

⁴⁸ On martial and restrained manhood, see Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, pp. 11 – 13.

identity, Victorians also perceived it as being more stable than it had been in the past.⁴⁹ As just one example of this trend, theories of environmentalism, which posited that the body changed to reflect its environment, fell out of favor.⁵⁰ In their place was a growing conviction among Victorians that distinct races had inherent and essential characteristics – characteristics that were supposedly identifiable from the study of the body and behavior of individuals.

The second trend that promoted the reconciliation of restrained and martial manliness was the widespread acceptance of facial hair in British and American society.⁵¹ As a result of this second trend, Victorians in British Columbia could change their clothes without quite the same effect on their sense of identity. This is nicely demonstrated in the photographs of the Cariboo gold rush. These photographs show that when they were mining, Victorian men wore a mining costume, and when they were in the towns or at a social event, they wore dressier, more urban clothes. Crucially, they wore their beards in both circumstances.⁵² One can presume that these same bearded Victorian men made up the membership in three organizations symbolizing restrained manliness – the Burrard Inlet Mechanic’s Institute’s Reading Room, Barkerville’s Cariboo Library, and the YMCA in Victoria.⁵³ This is indicative of a growing degree of

⁴⁹ On the increasing importance of biological racism in the mid-nineteenth-century, see Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800 – 1960* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982), pp. 20 – 82; Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978), pp. 55 – 61.

⁵⁰ Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science*, pp. 36 – 39, 45 – 46. On the lingering impact of environmentalism, see Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁵¹ Oldstone-Moore, “The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain.”

⁵² See, for example “Gold Escort Leaving Barkerville, 1865” A03148, BCARS; “Wedding of John A. Cameron, Also Known as Cariboo Cameron, 1860,” A01158, BCARS; Louis Blanc, “Tin Shop, Barkerville; Decorated for visit of Governor Anthony Musgrave, 1869” A03774, BCARS; Louis Blanc, “Firemen’s Arch; William’s Creek Fire Brigade Welcoming Governor Musgrave, Barkerville,” A03762, BCARS.

⁵³ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849 – 1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 79 – 83; Burrard Inlet Mechanic’s Institute, Minute Book, September 17 1868 to April 12, 1884, Mss E/C/B94, BCARS; Alexander Allan to Thomas Dearberg, 2 January 1868, Alexander Allan Letterbook, Barkerville Archives.

Victorian comfort with combining aspects of martial and restrained manhood into a new synthesis, a synthesis reflected in their appearance where the natural manliness of the beard could co-exist with the cultivated and civilized manliness of the suit.

But while Victorian men came to celebrate a changing approach to appearance that affirmed a practical, natural manliness, they remained ambivalent or hostile when men or women crossed gender lines. Gender lines blurred with surprising frequency in California and British Columbia. For example, the extreme dearth of white women sometimes presented Victorian men with little choice but to dance with each other. While Victorian men sometimes wore a cloth patch or other symbol of their being the “ladies” for the dance, it was understood that this was a temporary measure to deal with the lack of white women.⁵⁴ Although some of the individuals playing the part of women may have enjoyed the transgressive and homoerotic aspects of the act, there is no indication that the majority of Victorian men thought of these men as effeminate. The act was not transgressive to most Victorians because it appeared to be clearly justified and temporary.

A man actually donning the clothes of white women appears to have been a far rarer occurrence, but two instances are suggestive of broader attitudes. The first occurred in July, 1855 when, after losing a court case and perhaps a little drunk, Charles DeLong and Gus Lewis “dressed up in woman’s clothes and cut a swell, rode through town [near Camptonville, California] and fooled all the boys.”⁵⁵ The second was in November, 1857 when two police officers arrested Thomas Brady, a black man, for “parading about the street” “dressed like a

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, p. 173; Clare Sears, “All That Glitters: Trans-ing California’s Gold Rush Migrations,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, nos. 2–3, (2008): pp. 387–388. It is not known if similar events occurred in British Columbia, but given the isolation of the mining camps and a similar dearth of white women, it certainly seems probable.

⁵⁵ Charles DeLong, Diary 1856, 10 July 1856, box 212, folder 5, State Archive.

woman.”⁵⁶ Though Brady claimed that he had been attending an all-male, or “stag,” dance and had only stepped out to get some crackers and cheese, the officers asserted that “for the last five or six years, the negro has been in the habit of dressing like a man in the day time and like a woman at night.”⁵⁷ As long as the cross-dressing was temporary, as for a stag dance or joke, it was acceptable, but when the wearing of women’s clothes became more permanent, it suggested deviancy of the sort that needed to be regulated and evoked a broader social disgust with men who appeared overly feminine.⁵⁸ That Brady was a black man certainly did not help his claim that he was not being transgressive.

Women dressing as men could raise similar concerns about gender roles, permanence, and behavior. George Payson echoed these sentiments when he noticed “a handsome young man...drest in the height of the fashion, with a superabundance of jewelry, and a pair of the very smallest boots, which I thought partially accounted for his peculiar mincing gait.” Payson soon found the sight of the man aroused in him feelings of “painful aversion.” But when the “handsome young man” was revealed to be a woman, “her mincing gait became a swimming walk – her love of ornament, her little simpering ways, her downcast lids, were her hereditary, inalienable right, with which I had no more reason nor inclination to find fault than with her slight figure and delicate complexion.”⁵⁹ A surprising number of women passing as men were “discovered” in the gold rushes of California and British Columbia. Sometimes, men like David

⁵⁶ “Both Sides,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 4 November, 1857.

⁵⁷ “Both Sides,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 4 November, 1857.

⁵⁸ For criticisms of effeminate men, see the discourse surrounding the dandy, Carson, *Early Recollections of the Mines*, pp. 27 – 28; Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: p. 173. See also Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility*, pp. 118 – 121; Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy*, pp. 192 – 203.

⁵⁹ Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, pp. 271 – 272.

Higgins “felt strongly and unaccountably drawn” towards the disguised female, moved by “a strange emotion.”⁶⁰

The cases where men admitted to being attracted to women in disguise share a key similarity: the woman’s disguise was temporary, often motivated by a desire not to draw attention from the overwhelmingly male population of the gold fields. As Madame Gregoire, one of two women in disguise Ramón Navarro encountered in California, put it, “Sometimes it is necessary for someone like me to disguise myself as a boy and to trick men, despite all of my good intentions. That is the way things are here in California.” Even more importantly, these women did not relish wearing men’s clothes, nor did they make any claim that men’s clothes represented their true selves. Gregoire referred to herself in women’s clothes as “myself...as I really am, as Madame Gregoire,” while Madame Gremiere, another cross-dressing Frenchwoman, “turned bright red” when her disguise was publically revealed.⁶¹ The wearing of male clothes by these women was acceptable because it was a disguise, a disguise used to protect them from the overwhelmingly male population of the mines. Just what threat these women were protecting themselves against is unclear, but the general implication is that the women worried either about the actual threat of sexual assault or about the appearance of impropriety of

⁶⁰ I use the term “disguised female” to signify the juxtaposition of costume and what the observers would have understood as the person’s “true” sex. I am not making a claim as to the gender identity of the subject. The quote is from David Higgins, *The Mystic Spring: And Other Tales of Western Life* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1904), p. 35. For an example of a man feeling confused by his attraction to a woman in disguise in California, see Ramón Navarro, *The Gold Rush Diary of Ramón Gil Navarro*, eds. Maria del Carmen Ferreyra and David Sven Reher (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 83.

⁶¹ Navarro, *Gold Rush Diary*, pp. 83, 103. Higgins recorded much the same attitudes in British Columbia, where the woman had not wanted to dress as a man, but felt compelled to do so to escape an evil stepmother and to find her husband in the gold fields. See Higgins, *The Mystic Spring*, pp. 35 – 40. See also Mary Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 18; Taylor, *Eldorado*, p. 27; “Female Labor in the Mines,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 14 December, 1850.

being among so many men. Though some women undoubtedly mined, probably with their families, there is no record of a woman ever cross-dressing in order to mine.⁶²

But when Victorian women adorned themselves with men's clothes as an assertion of alternative forms of femininity, the reaction by most Victorian men ranged from skepticism to antipathy. And no article of women's clothing caused more debate than the Bloomer.⁶³ The Bloomer first achieved prominence in 1851 in New York and emerged out of a trans-Atlantic movement for women's rights and private experimentation with dress reform. Bloomers, also called the Turkish Costume, among many other names, were baggy pants worn under a knee- or calf-length skirt. Though bloomers initially met with widespread acclaim, public opinion began to harden against them within a matter of months.⁶⁴ Among gold rushers, debate over the wearing of Bloomers appeared only in California, which is unsurprising given that Bloomers were first introduced to the United States in the 1850s and had largely disappeared from the streets and public debate by the time of the British Columbia gold rush.⁶⁵ To its California promoters, the Bloomer represented a return to a more natural form, with corresponding benefits for mobility, decency (as Bloomers would not ride up to expose skin), cleanliness, and health.⁶⁶

⁶² Indeed, women mining without their families ("independently" in the language of the day), were so rare as to be the subject of considerable controversy over whether they, in fact, existed. See "Lady Miners in California" in *The Daily Alta California*, 12 April, 1850.

⁶³ For the Bloomer costume in public debate, see "[Illegible] and Bloomer Fashions," in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 July, 1851; "Female Costume," in *The Daily Alta California*, 5 August, 1851; A Reformer, "Female Costume – A Lady's Opinion," in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 August, 1851; A Conservative, "A New Costume – A Lady's Opinion," in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 August, 1851; A Reformer, "The New Costume – A Reply to 'Conservative,'" in *The Daily Alta California*, 11 August, 1851; "More 'Bloomers,'" in *The Daily Alta California*, 17 August, 1851; E. C. S., "A Spirited Bloomer," in *The Daily Alta California*, 16 September, 1851.

⁶⁴ For a history of dress reform in the nineteenth-century, see Gayle Fischer, *Pantaloon and Power: Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University, 2001), pp. 80 – 109 and Carol Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), pp. 40 – 81.

⁶⁵ Fischer, *Pantaloon and Power*, p. 102.

⁶⁶ A Reformer, "Female Costume – A Lady's Opinion," in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 August, 1851.

To its detractors, however, not only were most of these supposed benefits a sham, but the Bloomer represented a dangerous move toward social and political equality with men.⁶⁷

In the middle years of the nineteenth century, men's clothes were mass-produced and functional ("natural" in the language of the time), in other words, suited to participation in an active and democratic public world. In contrast, women's clothes were customized and deliberately ornate, reflecting women's disconnection from the public, democratic world of the market, and their proper location in the private and domestic world.⁶⁸ Even though Bloomer promoters rarely made an explicit case that the Bloomer could lead to greater equality, its popularity among, and promotion by, early suffragists was telling.⁶⁹ Critics, including the famous "Dame Shirley" of California, ridiculed the Bloomer because it represented a substantial movement away not only from traditional female dress but also from traditional female roles and behaviors.⁷⁰ Ironically, the half-dress of the Bloomer constituted a greater threat than cross-dressing women to the integrity of the relationship between male clothes and male roles in the gold fields.

The gender threat of the Bloomer was reflected in the apolitical figure of the prostitute and it was here that the threat of the cross-dressing woman would achieve its greatest longevity in the gold fields, persisting throughout the California and British Columbia gold rushes.⁷¹ The

⁶⁷ A Conservative, "A New Costume – A Lady's Opinion," in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 August, 1851; Louise Amelia Knapp Clappe, *California in 1851: The Letters of Dame Shirley*, ed. Carl Wheat (San Francisco: The Grabhorn Press, 1933), 114 – 116.

⁶⁸ Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy*, pp. 7, 187 – 188, 200 – 203.

⁶⁹ Fischer, *Pantaloons and Power*, p. 91; Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy*, pp. 200 – 203; Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress*.

⁷⁰ Clappe, *The Letters of Dame Shirley*, pp. 114 – 116; A Conservative, "A New Costume – A Lady's Opinion," in *The Daily Alta California*, 10 August, 1851.

⁷¹ On the link between cross-dressing and prostitution in California, see Friedrich Gerstäcker, *Scenes of Life in California* (1856; San Francisco: J. Howell, 1942), p. 38. For British Columbia, see George Blair, *Diary of George Blair: Feb. 17 1862 – Dec. 29 1863*, p. 65, Mss 0186, BCARS; "News From Williams Creek," in *Daily British Colonist*, 10 September, 1862.

imagined link between prostitution and male attire was a class-based assumption imported from the Atlantic world where lower-class working women, more likely to wear pants, were presumed to be sexually available for cash.⁷² As the political threat of the Bloomer faded, the figure of the pants-wearing prostitute continued to represent not only a physical danger (they were often described as armed or violent) but also a threat to the morality of Victorian men. Instead of taking up with pants-wearing prostitutes, respectable men should seek unions with proper women, whose appropriate clothing reflected their commitment to maintaining the gender division upon which white male privilege rested. The wearing of pants in this case symbolized these women's participation in the masculine world of the market and the commodification of their sexuality for that market.

In California, however, the wearing of pants or Bloomers threatened more than just gender boundaries. It also threatened claims to white racial superiority. In the nineteenth century, the supposed superiority of white women played a key role in justifying colonial domination of off- and non-white others, and one of the key markers of that superiority was white women's dress.⁷³ The *Daily Alta California* believed that the seeming collapsing or inverting of gender divisions represented by the Bloomers was mirrored in the clothing of the Chinese. As the newspaper argued on 7 July 1851, Californians did not have to go all the way to Turkey to acquire a Bloomer costume; instead, "our neighbors of...Celestial birth, can furnish

⁷² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 132 – 177; Catherine Smith and Cynthia Greig, *Women in Pants: Manly Maidens, Cowgirls, and Other Renegades* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 2003), pp. 10 – 11, 44 – 51; Gerstacker, *Scenes of Life in California*, p. 38.

⁷³ The literature on the critical role of white women in colonialism is vast, but see, for example Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 139 – 193; Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). On the particular importance of white women's clothes, see Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, p. 10.

the fashions...and show us how they are worn, virtually 'setting the fashions.' We saw one a day or two since....It was worn by a young Chinese girl who resides here."⁷⁴ Indeed, a lack of clear gender divisions was one of the most common critiques of Chinese society, with Hinton Helper claiming that "you would be puzzled to distinguish the women from the men, so inconsiderable are the differences in dress and figure."⁷⁵ Both the clothes and the bodies of the Chinese suggested a lack of gender divisions that reinforced Victorian perceptions that Chinese men were weak and Chinese women unattractive.⁷⁶ In much the same way, Bloomers raised the possibility that the erasure of gender divisions would result in the emasculation of white men and the degradation of white women. By seeming to break down the division between male and female, between white and non-white, Bloomers represented a threat to the logic of difference that underscored the claims of Victorian men to superiority and rightful dominance in colonial society.

The clothing and appearance of non-whites were also important for defining who was a white man and for affirming the superiority of those bodies and the clothes they wore in the colonial contexts of California and British Columbia. The Chinese and native populations were particularly important to this process. The importance of these two groups derived not only from their numbers, but also for the way that both (though in different ways) fell well outside what most Victorians would consider the bounds of whiteness. While the status of Irish, German, Spanish, or even Mexican and Chilean peoples was debated within colonial societies on the West

⁷⁴ "[Illegible] and Bloomer Fashions," in *The Daily Alta California*, 7 July, 1851

⁷⁵ Helper, *The Land of Gold*, pp. 86, 88, 89. See also Carr, *Pioneer Days in California*, pp. 69 – 70; Elisha Capron, *History of California, From Its Discovery to the Present Time: Comprising also a Full Description of its Climate, Surface, Soil, Rivers, Towns... Agriculture, Commerce, Mines, Mining, & c., with a Journal of the Voyage from New York, via Nicaragua, to San Francisco, and back, via Panama* (Boston, Mass.: J.P. Jewett & Company, 1854), pp. 152 – 153.

⁷⁶ Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 368 – 369, 378 – 379, 384 – 386; Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, p. 237; Capron, *History Of California*, p. 152. Similar attitudes prevailed in British Columbia. See J. Monroe Thointon, *The Cariboo Journal of John Macoun*, p. 202, Barkerville Archives.

Coast, comparatively rare were voices that believed that natives and Chinese could ever become full participants in colonial society. In colonial societies filled with eye-catching foreigners, the Chinese and natives were the two most remarked upon groups, and their ubiquitousness in the historical record speaks to their importance as a referent for ideas of white manliness.

Descriptions of natives in California were particularly negative. The label applied by Victorians to California natives, “digger,” was more than just an echo of “nigger”; instead it reflected the strong parallels Victorians drew between California natives and blacks. As William Ryan put it, California natives were

very dark, indeed I may almost say black, with a slight tinge of copper colour; the features are, in all other respects, as purely African in their cast, the nose being large and flat, the cheek-bones salient, the lips thick and wide and the forehead as low as is consistent with a faint supposition of the existence of a brain, to which their pretensions are miserably small.⁷⁷

For Theodore Johnson, the “complexion” of California natives was “a dark mahogany, or often nearly black, their faces round or square, with features approximating nearer to the African than the Indian.”⁷⁸ Nor were Ryan and Johnson the only commentators to see a link between the facial features and skin color of California natives and blacks.⁷⁹ The skin color and shape of California natives suggested to some Victorians that California natives shared traits with blacks, namely submissiveness, laziness, degradation, and suitability to coerced labor. In some ways,

⁷⁷ Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 1: pp. 92 – 93.

⁷⁸ Theodore Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region, and Scenes by the Way* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), pp. 155 – 156.

⁷⁹ Lucius A. Edelblute, *A True Story of the Adventures of Cariboo Ed in the Far West* (Bountiful, Utah: Family History Publishers, 1998), p. 15; Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water*, pp. 130 -131, 150 – 151, 166; Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, pp. 207 – 208; Helper, *The Land of Gold*, pp. 270 – 271; Frank Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills; or, Recollections of a Burnt Journal* (1855; Philadelphia, Pa.: Lippincott, 1962), pp. 41 – 42; Albert Benard de Russailh, *Last Adventure: San Francisco in 1851; translated from the Original Journal of Albert Benard de Russailh by Clarkson Crane*, Clarkson Crane, trans. (San Francisco: Westgate Press, 1931), pp. 90 – 91; William Shaw, *Golden Dreams and Waking Realities: Being the Adventures of a Gold-Seeker in California and the Pacific Islands* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1851), pp. 15 – 16, 108; Edwin Waite, “Reminiscences,” pp. 76 – 77, State Archive; Capron, *History Of California*, pp. 19 – 20.

this link is surprising, given that for much of American history, natives were considered separate from, and superior to, blacks.⁸⁰ The widespread understanding of California natives as similar to blacks may have helped to justify in California what was considered unsuitable for natives in the American south: slavery. Seeing natives as black might have been a crucial component in justifying a peculiarly Californian version of slavery.

This negative perception of California natives seems to have been influenced by three main factors. First, as Albert Hurtado has detailed, many California natives were held by the Spanish and Mexicans in slavery in all but name, a practice continued under American control. In terms of society, California natives occupied a place very similar to that of blacks in the contemporary American South.⁸¹ Second, because California natives ate berries, bugs, and roots, and did not ride horses or hunt big game as did the Plains natives, and because they had lived under Spanish and Mexican colonialism for so long, many Victorians wrongly assumed that they did not know how to fight, and that they were naturally submissive and degraded.⁸² These two factors, in turn, influenced the third. Victorians, particularly those who had crossed the Plains, drew an unflattering comparison between California natives and the Sioux (who had already emerged as the iconic natives) or with natives of story and memory.⁸³ While other natives were supposedly honorable, physically imposing, and imbued with a savage manhood, the natives of California were degraded, physically weak, and naturally cowardly and submissive. These traits,

⁸⁰ Allan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670 – 1717* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 47, 312 – 313; Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550 – 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 89 – 91.

⁸¹ Albert Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 5.

⁸² Shaw, *Golden Dreams*, pp. 15 – 16; Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water*, p. 166; Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, pp. 41 – 42; Capron, *History Of California*, pp. 19 – 20.

⁸³ Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, p. 207; Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water*, pp. 150 – 151; Helper, *The Land of Gold*, p. 268; Osborn, *Journal*, p. 131; Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region*, pp. 155 – 156; Charles Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner, The Adventures of Charles Edward Pancoast on the American Frontier* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), p. 342; Capron, *History of California*, pp. 19 – 20.

when contrasted against the traits of white men, especially the manly traits ascribed to Victorian miners, justified Victorian domination as white men of colonial society.

A decade later, Victorians did not generally draw the same parallels between natives in British Columbia and blacks. Occasionally, a commentator would directly liken natives to blacks or describe their facial features in a manner reminiscent of blacks, but these were the rare exceptions.⁸⁴ Instead, Victorians fixated on what they saw as the misshapen bodies of the natives of British Columbia. On the one hand, Victorians focused considerable attention on the practice of head-flattening, seeing in it, as one scholar has noted, “a grotesque foil for Western ideals of womanhood.”⁸⁵ In the eyes of Victorians, head-flattening was linked to decreased intelligence and degraded sexual practices such as polygamy, in direct contrast to the purity of white women.⁸⁶ Victorians also criticized both male and female natives for having “stunted and mis-shapen” lower limbs, supposedly from spending so much of their time in canoes.⁸⁷ In both cases, Victorians saw these distorted bodies as the result of the lifestyle choices of the natives, a fact reinforced when the coastal natives, or “*fishing tribes*,” were compared with the “*hunting tribes* of the interior.”⁸⁸ To some Victorians, the natives of the interior were “physically and morally, vastly superior to the tribes of the coast” which was “attributable in no slight degree to

⁸⁴ Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest*, p. 12; Attorney General of British Columbia, “Assault on Shaynuk,” 10 June, 1864, file 1864/36, box 4, GR-0419, BCARS; M. Stannard, *Memoirs of a Professional Lady Nurse* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1873), p. 186.

⁸⁵ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 52 – 53.

⁸⁶ Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed*, p. 84; John Domer, *New British Gold Fields: A Guide to British Columbia and Vancouver with Coloured Map Showing the Gold and Coal Fields, Constructed from Authentic Sources* (London: Hugh Barclay, 1858), p. 24. On attitudes toward white women in British Columbia, see Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 125 – 193.

⁸⁷ Domer, *New British Gold Fields*, p. 24. See also Richard Mayne, *Four Years in British Columbia and Vancouver Island: An Account of Their Forests, Rivers, Coasts, Gold Fields and Resources for Colonisation* (London: John Murray, 1862), pp. 242 – 243.

⁸⁸ Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed*, p. 86, quote is from p. 428, emphasis original. See also Mayne, *Four Years in British Columbia*, pp. 242 – 243.

the difference of their lives, the athletic pursuits and sports of the Indians of the interior tending much more to healthy physical development than the life of the Coast Indian.”⁸⁹ Again, as in California, the appearance (and hence lifestyles and character) of natives was being judged against two different metrics. The first was against standards of whiteness and the second was against an idealized representation of what Indians should be like. In both cases, most natives in British Columbia, but especially the coastal natives, were deemed to be inferior, and as in California, this had the practical effect of further justifying the colonial project in British Columbia. Unlike California, however, the colonial project in British Columbia did not involve the enslavement of the native population, so there was far less incentive to link the appearance of natives to that of blacks, especially so because the treatment of blacks was a marker of supposedly superior British social principles.

Besides justifying the colonial project in both California and British Columbia, Victorians also used the appearance of natives as a short-hand way to articulate and understand the meaning of whiteness in the gold rushes. One way that they did this was by spending considerable time focusing on the features and characteristics of native women. In doing so, Victorians relied heavily on the image of the princess and her “darker twin,” the squaw, so adroitly analyzed by Rayna Green.⁹⁰ Green argues that Victorians understood native women through twinned figures, the princess and the squaw. Where the princess was lighter skinned with European features and civilized despite her savage surroundings, the squaw was “too fat, and unlike their Princess sisters, dark and possessed of cruder, more Indian features.” While the princess lived in the untouched wilderness, the squaw lived near the white man’s settlements,

⁸⁹ Mayne, *Four Years in British Columbia*, pp. 242 – 243.

⁹⁰ Rayna Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture,” *The Massachusetts Review* 16, no. 4 (Autumn, 1975): pp. 698 – 714.

where she, like her male counterparts, became degraded through contact with “civilization.”⁹¹ In both California and British Columbia, the image of the squaw overwhelmingly predominated in accounts of native women, with descriptions focusing on native women’s distorted and dark features, their lack of “proper” clothes, and their perceived sexual availability.⁹²

But whereas native women (and, for that matter men) became degraded through contact with civilization, white women flourished in it. Indeed, the link between white women and the idea of civilization was such that white women were often used as the metric for measuring an area’s “advancement,” along with the market economy and Christianity.⁹³ As the *Alta* put it in 1851, “it looks civilized and christianlike to see ladies daily passing along our streets, amusing themselves in that never-tiring occupation of shopping.”⁹⁴ “Dame Shirley” believed that the “sweet restraining influences of pure womanhood” could cause even the roughest miners to act in a dignified and proper manner. In her eyes, part of the reason why the gold fields were so rough was because the women who were there were uneducated, coarse, and manly. In other words, to “Dame Shirley” most of the women in the mines did little to improve society because their backgrounds and behaviors suggested they lacked the proper delicacy, manners, and

⁹¹ Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex,” pp. 704 – 711.

⁹² For California, see Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water*, pp. 152 – 153; Joseph Goldsborough Bruff, *Gold Rush: The Journals, Drawings and Other Papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff, Captain, Washington City and California Mining Association, April 2, 1849 – July 20, 1851*, eds. Georgia Willis Read, Ruth Louise Gaines, and Frederick Webb Hodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 78, 83; E. Gould Buffum, *Six Months in the Gold Mines* (1850; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 43; Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten*, pp. 125 – 126; Osborn, *Journal*, pp. 57 – 58, 101 – 102, 121 – 122. In the British Columbia context, the imagery of native women has been given considerable attention by Perry in *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 49 – 74. See also Blair, *Diary*, p. 17 – 18; Emerson, “British Columbia and Vancouver Island,” pp. 49 – 50; Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, p. 248.

⁹³ Frank [Pearl] to [his sister Theresa], 8 July 1850, Mss C-B 547:21, BANC; Charles T. Brigden to his Cousin, Mary A. Cushing, 11 March 1852, Mss C-B 547:100, BANC; “Ladies in San Francisco,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 4 February, 1851; “Arrival of Ladies,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 17 October, 1853; “Cheering News From Cariboo,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 10 June, 1861; “Columbian Immigration Society,” in *The British Columbian*, 21 June, 1862; Roberts, *American Alchemy*, pp. 219 – 229; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 139 – 146.

⁹⁴ “Ladies in San Francisco,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 4 February, 1851.

attitudes of respectable Victorian women. For her, at least part of the explanation for the unwomanly behavior of the women she encountered seemed to stem from their origins on the frontier and their too-eager adaptation to the rough society of the gold mines.⁹⁵ In California and British Columbia, as in other colonial projects throughout the globe in the mid-nineteenth-century, Christianity, capitalism, and white women made up three inter-locking aspects of Victorian colonial domination, but the white women had to behave in a proper manner. If degraded Victorian men could retard the development of “civilization,” so too could the presence of degraded Victorian women.⁹⁶

Native women attempting to pass as white would not suffice and this was reflected in Victorian men’s perceptions of native women’s dress. In California, native women seemed incapable of dressing like white women, while in British Columbia, where many native women, at least near white settlements, wore the clothes of white women, Victorians saw their dress as akin to putting on airs.⁹⁷ To Victorians, native women could never be ladies because they could never completely shed their association with the image of the squaw.⁹⁸ The presence of squaws, especially those attempting to dress like white women, justified the colonial project and served as a visible reminder of the advantages of white women.

Victorians also understood the Chinese as remarkably visually different from themselves in both dress and body. The way they perceived these differences, and their reactions to them, underscore how they thought about white manliness in the gold fields. As they did with all

⁹⁵ Clappe, *The Letters of Dame Shirley*, pp. 31 – 34.

⁹⁶ See, for example Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics*; Chaudhuri and Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism*; Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*.

⁹⁷ Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water*, pp. 154 – 156; Buffum, *Six Months in the Gold Mines*, p. 43; Philip Hankin, *Memoirs*, pp. 53 – 54, E-B-H19A, BCARS; “Arrest of Street Walkers,” in *The British Colonist*, 8 May, 1860.

⁹⁸ One of the few exceptions would be Arthur Bushby who was smitten with one of James Douglas’s half-breed daughters. See Arthur Bushby, “The Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby, 1858 – 1859,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 21 (1957 – 58): p. 122.

groups, Victorians measured Chinese men and women against a standard of beauty that saw any deviation from the ideal of whiteness as degradation. To Victorians in California, the “portentous ugliness” of the Chinese suggested their “lying, knavery, and natural cowardice,” while in British Columbia the “odd-looking, almond-eyed” Chinese were “a disagreeable, thievish lot.”⁹⁹ By extension, only Victorian men and women had the appearance of proper members of each colonial society. Where Chinese faces and bodies suggested criminality and cowardice, Victorian faces and bodies (when properly attired) suggested honesty and bravery.

There was one aspect of Chinese appearance that drew more commentary and reaction from Victorians than any other, and that was Chinese men’s practice of shaving the front of their head while wearing the rest in a long braid or queue. The queue had its origins as a method of social control introduced by the Manchu in 1644 when they took over the government of China. The queue served as a public marker of loyalty and subservience, while cutting it off was an act of rebellion against Manchu rule.¹⁰⁰ Few Victorians were aware of this, however, and only saw in the queue a strange and anachronistic sign of China’s backwardness.¹⁰¹ The perceived unwillingness of the Chinese to adapt to North American styles and culture underscored the importance of the queue to Victorians. While a few pro-Chinese voices argued that the Chinese would make ideal citizens and were fast adapting to American ways, even the most optimistic of these noted, as did an article in the *Alta California* in 1851, that there seemed to be distinct

⁹⁹ The first quote is from Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, p. 237. The second is from Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, p. 378. The British Columbia quote is from W. M. Mark, *Cariboo: A True and Correct Narrative*, (Stockton, Eng: W. M. Wright, 1863), p. 16.

¹⁰⁰ Weikun Cheng, “Politics of the Queue: Agitation and Resistance in the Beginning and End of Qing China,” in *Hair: Its Power and Meanings in Asian Cultures* eds. Alf Hildebeitel and Barbara D. Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 123 – 138; Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 221; Jonathan Spence, *The Search For Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), pp. 28, 38 – 39, 50 – 53.

¹⁰¹ One of the few commentators to note that the queue was of central importance to Chinese belonging was from Mark, *Cariboo*, p. 17. On the history of the queue, see Cheng, “Politics of the Queue,” pp. 123 – 128; Ebrey, *History of China*, p. 221.

limitations on their assimilation, foremost among which were the Chinese “language and costume,” particularly the queue.¹⁰² Most Victorians saw in the queue the manifestation of Chinese resistance to assimilation to Anglo-normativity. Given this, it is not surprising that Chinese queues sometimes came in for special and often violent attention. In several instances in California and British Columbia, Victorian men either dragged Chinese men by their queues or cut off their queues.¹⁰³ The attacks were a way to force the Chinese to conform to Victorian norms, while simultaneously underscoring that Chinese men were weak and effeminate and would never actually be the same as Victorian men. By regulating the appearance of Chinese men, Victorian men demonstrated that colonial society demanded conformity from, while denying belonging to, non-whites.

The native and Chinese population shared another key characteristic in the eyes of Victorians in California and British Columbia: both were allegedly reservoirs of disease. In California, attention soon came to focus on the Chinese population, and specifically upon Chinatown, as a source of possible contagion. In British Columbia, the focus was more on natives, particularly native villages located near white settlements, especially Victoria. In both cases, Victorians were concerned about non-whites as a source of disease, but these concerns focused on non-whites whose population concentrations directly abutted significant concentrations of Victorians. Ultimately, Victorian concerns about non-white health were actually concerns for Victorian health. At the same time, constructing non-white spaces as

¹⁰² “Foreign Miners,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 May, 1851.

¹⁰³ DeLong, Diary 1855, 23 October 1855; “Cutting Off a Tail,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 25 May, 1851; Police and Prisons Department Esquimalt, Charge Book, 15 April, 1863 – 23 December, 1864, 2 July 1863, vol. 2, GR-0428, BCARS; British Columbia Attorney General, Indecent Assault, 16, 25 July 1866, file 1866, box 4, BCARS.

sources of contagion that could impact white spaces suggested that disease in non-white bodies was a normative condition, while for whites disease was an abnormal status.

Sickness and Death in the Gold Mines

Disease and health were of paramount concern to Victorians in both gold rushes. Victorians recognized the hardships and dangers involved in mining, but they also believed that their experiences in the gold mines would toughen them and make them stronger.¹⁰⁴ Sickness threatened to undercut all of that, revealing the weakness of their bodies and, what was possibly worse, denying them what Drew Gilpin Faust has called the “good death,” surrounded by loved ones.¹⁰⁵ As William Taylor put it, with “no kind sister’s hand to wipe the death-sweat from the brow; nor affectionate wife to impress on the pallid cheek the parting kiss...no gathering of the children around the departing father to receive his last, solemn charge, catch his last smile and lingering look,” “death...seemed clothed with extraordinary terrors.”¹⁰⁶

Victorians believed that both the environment and a person’s habits could cause sickness by disrupting the delicate balance inside the body. Disease and ill-health therefore had two interlocking causes. Men got sick because of the environment and/or they got sick because

¹⁰⁴ Jacob Fisher to Frederick Fisher, Sept. 21 1850, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:11, BANC; David Dustin to John K. Dustin, Aug. 14 1850, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:40, BANC; Champness, “To Cariboo and Back,” p. 259; Ayers, *Gold and Sunshine*, p. 34; James Duffy to Jenny, June 20 1853, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547: 128, BANC; Fisher to Fisher, Sept. 21 1850, Gold Rush Letters, BANC; Thomass Nosseter to John Bell, Dec. 20 1849, Gold Rush Letters, Mss C-B 547:115, BANC.

¹⁰⁵ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), pp. 6 – 17.

¹⁰⁶ William Taylor, *California Life Illustrated* (New York: Pub. for the Author, by Carlton & Porter, 1860), p. 143. For similar sentiments in California, see Stephen Davis, *California Gold Rush Merchant; The Journal of Stephen Chapin Davis* (San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library, 1956), p. 16; Shaw, *Golden Dreams*, pp. 95, 99; Anonymous, “Journal of a Voyage from New Bedford to San Francisco,” in *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850* William Benemann, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 30; Anne Wilson Booth, “Journal,” in *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850* William Benemann, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 93. For British Columbia, see Thomas Mitchell to Parents, 7 October 1862, Mss 0838, BCARS.

something in their characters or bodies made them susceptible.¹⁰⁷ It was this second understanding that had particular bearing on Victorian understandings of white manliness in the gold rushes. To some commentators, it seemed as if disease among Victorians was almost wholly attributable to moral failings. For example, in British Columbia Matthew Macfie claimed that “most of the diseases I have witnessed have been brought on by imprudence in the way of exposure or excess,” while Thomas Allsop asserted that “the greatest cause of illness here [in California] is, excessive drinking....Of the deaths here, three out of four are directly owing to drunkenness and its consequences.”¹⁰⁸ But most Victorians shied away from identifying moral failings as the cause of so much disease among Victorians and instead preferred to blame “the sickly season” and other environmental causes, thereby removing their own morality from the discussion.¹⁰⁹ In stark contrast, Victorian discussions about disease among non-whites almost exclusively focused on moral failings as the causative, or decisive, factor. Of special concern was the perceived propensity of non-whites, and especially the Chinese and native populations, to live in filth. The mid-nineteenth century saw the earliest rumblings of the sanitation concerns that would come to be omnipresent during the latter part of the century and would provide a key justification for imperialism.¹¹⁰ During the California and British Columbia gold rushes, concerns over non-white filth and disease could become almost hysterical.

Though the understanding that non-whites living in concentrations near whites were dirty and possible sources of contagion was widespread in the mid- and late nineteenth century, it was

¹⁰⁷ Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies*, pp. 13 – 14, 18 – 29, 38 – 40.

¹⁰⁸ Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, p. 181; Thomas Allsop, *California and its Gold Mines: Being a Series of Recent Communications from the Mining Districts, upon the Present Condition and Future Prospects of Quartz Mining; with an Account of the Richer Deposits, and Incidental Notices of the Climate, Scenery, and Mode of Life in California* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1853), pp. 73 – 74.

¹⁰⁹ Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, p. 211.

¹¹⁰ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 207 – 231.

the newspapers in California and British Columbia that played the key role in disseminating an understanding of non-white spaces as diseased.¹¹¹ Under the heading “Still the Celestials Come,” the *Alta California* reported in 1854 that “it is a notorious fact that the domicils of this singular race, are generally filthy beyond all description,” and that it was “exceedingly probable that San Francisco will not be exempted from the scourge [cholera]” unless “some prompt measures [are] adopted to make them keep their habitations in a cleanly state.”¹¹² However, dire warnings such as these from California newspapers paled in comparison to the dozens of articles printed in British Columbia papers warning of the threat posed by native populations. As the *British Columbian* claimed in 1862, “that the filthy habits of these Indians engenders contagion, and that generally of the most fatal type, is sufficiently known by everybody” and with the advent of smallpox among the natives, “the immediate removal of the poor creatures... admits of neither argument or delay.”¹¹³ These reports reinforced already-common notions that non-white bodies and the spaces they occupied were inherently dirty and diseased, while at the same time constructing white bodies and spaces as normally clean and healthy.

Fear about preserving the health of white bodies and spaces led to sometimes drastic actions. In California, fire hoses were turned on Chinatowns throughout the state. Though weakly condemned as “savor[ing] somewhat of rowdyism,” the action was generally applauded for both washing out the “notoriously filthy” Chinese residences and for encouraging the Chinese to relocate to a safe distance.¹¹⁴ In British Columbia, a long-standing push by some

¹¹¹ See, for example Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), esp. pp. 20 – 44; Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896 – 1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 168 – 173; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, pp. 110 – 123.

¹¹² “Still the Celestials Come,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 19 August, 1854.

¹¹³ “The Indian Question Again,” in *The British Columbian*, 3 May, 1862.

¹¹⁴ “[Untitled Editorial],” in *The Daily Alta California*, 22 August, 1854.

Victorians to relocate native populations away from towns such as Victoria and New Westminster found new traction in the context of the smallpox epidemic of 1862.¹¹⁵ To Victorians in British Columbia, it was unsurprising that smallpox would spread rapidly in the “nest[s] of filth and crime” that were native settlements. The solution was simple: “The entire Indian population should be removed from the reservation to a place remote from communication with the whites; whilst the infected houses with all their trumpery should be burned to ashes.”¹¹⁶ By mid-May, this policy was being put in place near Victoria, with the police burning over one hundred native homes and forcing the natives to leave.¹¹⁷ These actions had a disastrous effect on the native population, spreading smallpox throughout the colony and precipitating a massive demographic decline among natives.¹¹⁸ Though some Victorians expressed concern for sick Chinese or natives, most commentators seemed content to preserve the health of white bodies and spaces from the effects of filthy and contaminated racialized others. By locating disease in non-white spaces, Victorians asserted not only the unsuitability of those people to govern themselves, but also the necessity for the colonial government to take ever-more invasive measures to regulate and control non-whites and their living areas.

¹¹⁵ See, for example “Small Pox Amongst the Indians,” in *The British Columbian*, 30 April, 1862; “The Small Pox Among the Indians,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 28 April, 1862; “How to Get Rid of a Troublesome Question,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 29 May, 1862.

¹¹⁶ “The Small Pox Among the Indians,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 28 April, 1862.

¹¹⁷ “The Small Pox,” *The Daily British Colonist*, 14 May, 1862.

¹¹⁸ For some indications of the effect of the small pox epidemic on British Columbia’s native population, see “Small Pox,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 5 January, 1863; “British Columbia – Latest News,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 17 January, 1863; “Latest From British Columbia,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 23 January, 1863; “Important From Cariboo,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 30 January, 1863; “Important From Cariboo,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 25 February, 1863; “News From Cariboo!,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 27 February, 1863; “Important From Cariboo!,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 12 March, 1863; “Lightning Creek,” in *The Daily British Colonist*, 28 March, 1863; “The Interior,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 31 January, 1863; “Latest From Richfield,” in *The Daily British Columbian*, 21 February, 1863; “Lillooet,” *The Daily British Columbian*, 25 February, 1863.

Medical examinations also emerged as a particularly powerful way of knowing the meaning of white, off-white, and non-white bodies. Medical examinations of non-whites confirmed for some Victorians that non- and off-whites were physically inferior to whites. Even if the results of these medical examinations were not widely distributed, they are important as manifestations of popular attitudes.¹¹⁹ One of the most startling cases was in California where, in the *California State Medical Journal*, R. Bell presented his 1855 autopsy on a young male native body. Diagnosing death from intussusception (where part of the intestine collapses in on the other), Bell went on to draw far-reaching conclusions about the nature of native bodies. “Indulg[ing] in the luxuries enjoyed by civilized people,” according to Bell, caused obesity, laziness, vascular and lymphatic disorders, and fatty disease in the brain. On the nature of the native brain Bell spent considerable time, detailing not only its allegedly inferior size, but also its “deficiency of the superior, or intellectual portions” that could be found in white brains.¹²⁰ Like Bell, many Victorians in California and British Columbia drew inspiration from thinkers like Samuel Morton and Josiah Nott and concluded that mankind existed in a biologically-determined hierarchy in which Victorians occupied the very peak, and people such as the natives and Chinese, the very bottom.¹²¹

Medical examinations not only confirmed Victorian perceptions that non- and off-whites were inferior to whites, they also confirmed the nature of that inferiority. For instance, medical testimony in British Columbia held that mixed-race girls developed sexually earlier than their white counterparts, helping to confirm the image of native and other non-white women as

¹¹⁹ On the way that science, particularly race science, has been influenced by pre-existing cultural beliefs, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), especially 30 – 72.

¹²⁰ R. Bell, “A Case of Intussusception, with Remarks,” *California State Medical Journal* (1856): pp. 203 – 210.

¹²¹ Bell, “A Case of Intussusception,” p. 210; Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, pp. 379 – 383.

lascivious and sexually available.¹²² In another instance, during a trial where two white men stood accused of getting a young native woman, Sophie, drunk before raping and killing her, David Brown, the coroner, was compelled under questioning from the court to admit that “if [the body was of] a white girl of the same age [I] would say she had been raped[,] but [I] could not say in the case of an Indian girl.” The two men were eventually found guilty only of supplying her with the liquor that led to her death.¹²³ Medical testimony seemed to offer objective evidence that non-white women were more sexual than their white counterparts. This, in turn, limited the chance that white men could be found guilty of sexual assault and rape against these women, while also setting white women apart as sacrosanct.

Physical examinations of bodies could also provide proof of the natural character of non- and off-whites in other ways. Diseases, and especially sexually-transmitted diseases, were used on several occasions to prove the degraded and criminal nature of Italian, Chinese, and native men charged with felonies.¹²⁴ In each of these cases, the alleged presence of sexually-transmitted disease in the victim was enough to convict the men. The case of a native man named Kar-lee, also known as “Charley,” is illustrative of this point and deserves further consideration. On the last day of 1862, Kar-lee was arraigned on charges of having either drugged or physically assaulted a young white child, Caroline Estol, and then having sexually assaulted her near Esquimalt, on Vancouver Island. Despite Kar-lee’s testimony that the girl had choked on a nut and passed out and the testimony of the woman who employed him that she

¹²² Vancouver Island, Supreme Court of Civil Justice, “Ah Yan Carnally Abusing a Child Under 10 yrs of Age,” 2 August 1866, B09802(1), BCARS.

¹²³ Henry Crease, British Columbia, District of Quesnelmouth, 11th March 1865, file 1, box 3, Mss 0054, BCARS.

¹²⁴ “Outrage Upon a Child,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 13 October, 1855; British Columbia, Attorney General, 31 Dec. 1862, file 1862, box 2, GR-0419, BCARS; Vancouver Island, Supreme Court of Civil Justice, Ah Yan Carnally Abusing a Child Under 10 yrs of Age, 2 August 1866, B09802(1), BCARS; British Columbia Attorney General, Indecent Assault, 16, 25 July 1866, file 1866, box 4, BCARS.

continued to trust him with her own daughter, the case quickly came to focus on the child's apparent suffering from gonorrhoea. If Kar-lee could be proven to have gonorrhoea, this would seem to be enough evidence for a conviction. However, a dispute soon arose between the various doctors as to whether or not Kar-lee did, in fact, have gonorrhoea. Joseph Haggin found signs of gonorrhoea on his first inspection, but failed to do so on his second, while James Dickson was unsure whether it was gonorrhoea at all, and John Helmcken failed to find any symptoms of the disease whatsoever. Alleging that Kar-lee must have wiped away the discharged pus, Haggin and Dickson ordered the guard to keep Kar-lee standing in the court yard for four hours. They then returned and squeezed his genitals to produce pus, proving to their satisfaction, if not to Helmcken's, that Kar-lee was in fact diseased.¹²⁵ More than just the assumption that the presence of gonorrhoea would prove guilt, this episode reveals the degree to which Victorian men felt both the need, and the authority, to probe non- and off-white bodies in order to know their true character. Tellingly, although there are multiple cases of white men committing sexual assault and rape, sexually transmitted diseases do not appear to have been at issue in those cases.¹²⁶ Once again, the discourse surrounding disease served to establish non-white bodies as threatening and different, a difference that required colonial authorities to observe not only the behavior, but the bodies of non-white colonial subjects.

For Victorians, medical examinations were one way of confirming appearances, but there was another, far more public way. This was the observation of death and of rituals of grieving.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Victorians believed that death was a crucial moment in a man's

¹²⁵ British Columbia, Attorney General, 31 Dec. 1862, file 1862, box 2, GR-0419, BCARS.

¹²⁶ See, for example "Rape," in *The Daily Alta California*, 4 February, 1851; "Outrageous," in *The Daily Alta California*, 25 February, 1851; "Rape," in *The Daily Alta California*, 2 April, 1852; British Columbia Attorney General, Indecent Assault 3 April 1865, file 1865/21, box 4, GR0419, BCARS; British Columbia Attorney General, Rape of Esther Meiss, 31 May 1864, file 1864/38, box4, GR0419, BCARS; British Columbia Attorney General, Rape, 25 September 1866, file 1866/28, box 6, GR0419, BCARS.

life, as it revealed what sort of a man he was and his course through the afterlife.¹²⁷ Maintaining control during, and sometimes over, his death marked a Victorian man as a proper, respectable white man.¹²⁸ It was also crucial that he be surrounded by loved ones as he died so that the family could “assess the state of the dying person’s soul” and “evaluate the family’s chances for a reunion in heaven.”¹²⁹ A good death was one in which the man, surrounded by family, met death quietly but bravely, showing neither fear nor unbecoming levity. At the same time, the behavior of the griever also reflected on their own characters, and the entire nexus of practices surrounding death and grieving could be juxtaposed against the practices of non-whites to show the superiority of Victorians.

In California and British Columbia, of course, the man who had family, let alone friends, to surround him and witness his death was rare indeed. As it would during the American Civil War, the prospect of dying away from home raised profound concerns for many Victorian men in the gold fields.¹³⁰ Most Victorian men who died in both California and British Columbia died due to sickness or disease exacerbated by poor diets and hard working conditions. The fear of dying alone was such that many men, fearing that they were near death or that they would die if

¹²⁷ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, p. 8.

¹²⁸ Though Greenberg was referring specifically to Southern ideas of manhood, these ideas were linked to a broader martial manhood that has resonance throughout the Victorian world. See Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing As a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 87 – 114.

¹²⁹ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, p. 10.

¹³⁰ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, p. 10; Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, p. 143; Davis, *California Gold Rush Merchant*, p. 16; Shaw, *Golden Dreams*, pp. 95, 99; Anonymous, “Journal of a Voyage from New Bedford to San Francisco,” in *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850* William Benemann, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 30; Anne Wilson Booth, “Journal,” in *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850* William Benemann, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 93. For British Columbia, see Thomas Mitchell to Parents, 7 October 1862, Mss 0838, BCARS.

they stayed, returned home to be with loved ones.¹³¹ Even more common were the lamentations for men who were dying, or who had died alone.¹³² Though the prospect of being denied a good death was profoundly disturbing, most Victorian men did not seem to dwell on it, believing, in the time-honored tradition of young men everywhere, that it was not going to happen to them. Only when they were directly confronted with their or another's mortality did these concerns rise to the surface.

Care for the sick, dying, and dead was one way that Victorians were supposed to be able to demonstrate their supposed innate superiority over non- and off-white others. William Ryan observed one such scene in California as he watched a Mr. Larkins, rumored to have killed his wife, being tended on his deathbed by his young daughter. Despite the presumed guilt of the father, she cared for him with "the tenderness so peculiar to the female sex" and "gentle affection."¹³³ Larkins, as it turns out, was lucky. Most Victorian men who died in the gold rushes did not have family to care for them and died "poor and friendless... alone, without hope."¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the ideal remained, and in the gold rushes it often fell to white friends, often male but preferably female, to provide succor and comfort.¹³⁵ This ideal contrasted greatly with the perceived reaction of non-whites to death and suffering. To W. Champness, the reaction

¹³¹ Soulé, *The Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 631 – 632; Taylor, *Eldorado*, pp. 36 – 37; Robert Stevenson, *Diary and Memo Book 1863 – 76*, Mss 0315, BCARS; Cecil Williams Buckley, *Journal*, 12 July 1862, E/B/B85, BCARS.

¹³² Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, p. 143; Davis, *California Gold Rush Merchant*, p. 16; Shaw, *Golden Dreams*, pp. 95, 99; Anonymous, "Journal of a Voyage from New Bedford to San Francisco," in *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850*, William Benemann, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 30; Anne Wilson Booth, "Journal," in *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850*, William Benemann, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 93. For British Columbia, see Thomas Mitchell to Parents, 7 October 1862, Mss 0838, BCARS.

¹³³ Ryan, *Personal Adventures*, 2: pp. 134 – 136.

¹³⁴ "The Dying and the Dead," in *The Daily Alta California*, 29 September, 1856.

¹³⁵ Wingate, *Uncertain Country*, pp. 20 – 21; Anonymous, "Journal of a Voyage from New Bedford to San Francisco," in William Benneman, ed., *A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849 – 1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 30; Walter Colton, *Three Years in California, [1846-1849]* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co, 1850), pp. 360 – 361. On the unsuitability of non-whites to care for whites, see "Hospital," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 20 August, 1866; "Mining Board Meeting," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 27 August, 1866.

of non-whites to sickness and death presented a “beautiful contrast” with the “abundant instances where pestilence and death have been fearlessly braved even by tender and delicate Christian women.”¹³⁶ Natives came in for special condemnation on this point, being accused of abandoning their sick out of fear of becoming infected themselves.

Further separating non-whites from whites were the ways in which they mourned the dead. In both California and British Columbia, Victorians tended to express disgust, amusement, or annoyance at non-white burial and mourning practices. For instance, typical judgments from California contemptuously noted the “continuous howling” and the wearing of a mixture of pitch and charcoal to mark the period of mourning in native death and mourning rituals.¹³⁷ Typical too is the claim in the fictional biography of Alfred Jackson that the natives simply chose one woman to be the chief mourner, regardless of her relationship with the deceased.¹³⁸ Other non-whites, such as the Chinese, were also singled out for their unfamiliar practices, in particular, their funeral parades and preference for shipping the deceased back to China.¹³⁹ In each case, non-white practices surrounding illness, death, and grief were set apart as inferior and antithetical to the idealized qualities of white practices.

Less common, but more visible, was the behavior of individuals faced with execution. Public deaths provided a very visible way to judge an individual’s character. The behavior of the

¹³⁶ Champness, *To Cariboo and Back*, pp. 258 – 259.

¹³⁷ Ben Bowen, *Ben Bowen Diary and Notebook: Mss, 1854 – 1859*, pp. 50 – 51, Mss C-F 192, BANC; J. H. Mankin, *Recollections of Early Days*, pp. 2 – 7, folder 6, box 24, State Archive; “The Diggings-Indian Difficulties,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 25 May, 1850; “City Items,” in *The Daily Alta California*, 18 February, 1858. For British Columbia, see John Cowley, *Diary, 1862*, pp. 29, 33, E-B-C832, BCARS. Indeed, British Columbia passed a law to protect Indian graves from plundering by curiosity-seekers. See Great Britain Colonial Office, “An Ordinance to Prevent the Violation of Indian Graves,” 30 March, 1865 in “Preconfederation Statutes of British Columbia (V.I.) 1859 – 1871, D8, BCARS.

¹³⁸ Chauncey Canfield, *The Diary of a Forty-Niner* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920), pp. 10 – 11.

¹³⁹ See, for example California Legislature, Senate, “Speech of Hon. Wilson Flint, in the Senate of California, March 21, 1856: On the Bill to Reduce the Chinese Mining Tax,” p. 5, State Archive; and “A Chinese Washerman,” in *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 19 July, 1866.

condemned never solely reflected on the character of the individual, but instead had wider gender and racial repercussions. The simultaneous executions of Joseph Hetherington and Philander Brace demonstrate the difference between manly and unmanly ways to die. The *Alta California* reported minutely on the appearance and actions of Hetherington and Brace after their sentencing by the Vigilance Committee of 1856. Entering into Hetherington's cell, the *Alta* reporter found him "cool and collected" and "ready and prepared for the fate that awaited him." On the scaffold, Hetherington gave a speech claiming his innocence and that he was ready to meet his God. All in all, Hetherington acted with restraint, dignity, and a fitting degree of solemnity. The same could not be said for Brace, however. Entering his cell, the reporter found Brace manifested "no penitence or dread," and he treated the priest to "the most obscene and vulgar language" and threatened to kick him out. On the scaffold, Brace continually interrupted Hetherington's speech, referred to the crowd as "ignoramuses," and claimed he did not need religion as he was already drunk. Needless to say, in the eyes of respectable Victorians, while Hetherington met a manly death, the "wonderful and revolting performances" of Brace showed him to be unmanly.¹⁴⁰ Brace's behavior did more than simply identify him as unmanly, it also suggestively linked him racially to non-whites because of the way his behavior on the scaffold mirrored the lack of self-restraint and cowardice expected of condemned non-whites.

The twinned execution of James Barry, a white man, and Nikel Palsk, a native, in the Cariboo underscored the link between an individual's identity and their behavior on the scaffold. In 1867, Barry and Palsk hanged for separate acts of murder.¹⁴¹ During the trials, the *Cariboo Sentinel* drew an interesting distinction between the two men's actions. Palsk's act of murder was "less revolting to humanity" than Barry's because "the perpetrator was an unenlightened

¹⁴⁰ "Events of Yesterday," in *The Daily Alta California*, 30 July, 1856.

¹⁴¹ "Execution of the Murderers- James Barry and the Indian Nikel Palsk," *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 August, 1867.

savage” while Barry was a white man who could be found “in our midst.”¹⁴² Barry’s crime was more disturbing because it represented an aberration of the expected behavior of white men, while Palsk’s act was in keeping with Victorian perceptions of natives as inherently criminal and vicious. But while Barry’s racial identity made his act of murder more appalling, it also provided the means by which he, and white men in general, could ultimately be redeemed on the scaffold. Like Hetherington, during his execution Barry “betrayed no signs of trepidation, but sustained himself throughout the trying scene with the utmost fortitude and courage.” Palsk, on the other hand, struggled as he was led to the scaffold and once finally dragged up on the platform, “behaved in a very excited manner, and indulg[ed] in the most foul and blasphemous language...endeavouring all the while to extricate himself from his pinions.”¹⁴³ In their deaths both Hetherington and Barry demonstrated essential characteristics of white manliness. They were brave, stoic, solemn, and prepared. In life, the alleged criminal behavior of both men would probably have meant that respectable Victorians would have viewed them as off-white and unmanly men, but in the moments before their deaths, both men were able rehabilitate themselves somewhat and demonstrate that, whatever their flaws, they remained at the core white men. Brace rejected the opportunity to do this as well, but it was never an option for Palsk. Even if Palsk had met his death in keeping with Victorian ideals, this would likely have been attributed to savage nobility, admirable in its own way, but never the equal of white manliness.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² “Criminal Trials,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 4 July, 1867.

¹⁴³ “Execution of the Murderers- James Barry and the Indian Nickel Palsk,” *The Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 August, 1867.

¹⁴⁴ For an example of a native acting like the ideal white man, but still being seen as different, see “Trial of Antonio Garra, the Hostile Indian Chief,” in *The San Diego Herald*, 17 January, 1852 quoted in Clifford Trafzer and Joel Hyer, eds. *Exterminate Them: Written Accounts of the Murder, Rape, and Slavery of Native Americans During the California Gold Rush, 1848 – 1868* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), p. 111. For a contemporary example, see Greenberg’s comparison of the executions of Nat Turner and John Brown in Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery*, pp. 87 – 91, 99 – 107.

Conclusion

For Victorian men in California and British Columbia, appearance was one of the key ways they came to understand themselves, their neighbors, and the society they shared. In particular, Victorian men read dress and bodies to categorize their world. Victorian men's understandings of dress and bodies remained remarkably consistent between the two rushes. This is not, of course, to say that developments in each gold rush mirrored the other. As just one example, key figures such as the dandy and greenhorn ceased to be cultural touchstones while the ideas they represented were transmitted and transformed into a discourse about suitability for mining that placed a heavier emphasis on the body.

Ultimately, in both California and British Columbia, Victorians used their understanding of clothes and of bodies to justify and explain the dominance of white men over an array of non- and off-whites. While this overall logic remained consistent, the specific meanings attached to clothes and bodies shifted subtly but significantly from 1848 to 1871. In California, Victorian men relied on clothes to determine an individual's character more than they would in British Columbia. Part of the reason for this shift was the growing awareness that clothes could be worn as a disguise. Over time, Victorian miners became increasingly concerned both with disreputable whites passing themselves as respectable and with the challenge that non- and off-whites who dressed like Victorian miners posed. Additionally, the emphasis on clothes by Victorian miners in California reflected an understanding of their identity as contextual. In other words, Victorians in California believed that the way they acted and dressed in California reflected an aspect of their identity, one that might not be wholly appropriate in the Atlantic world they had left. By the time of the British Columbia rush, however, Victorian men saw their behavior and actions in the gold mines as an intensification of values that had been repressed in

the east and seem to have come to believe that the rush represented an opportunity to fully realize their true character. By the British Columbia rush, in other words, Victorian men generally felt little compulsion to switch back and forth between an appearance as a civilized urbanite and a rough miner, preferring to combine both into a new synthesis. Though they did not disregard clothing completely, this new synthesis encouraged Victorians to emphasize the body and as a result the ability of non-whites to claim a status as respectable members of gold rush society, regardless of their dress, became increasingly limited.

Epilogue

Endings and Beginnings

The gold rushes of California and British Columbia could not last. Eventually the gold ran out or remained only in deep veins that required machinery and capital to extract. Where mining continued it was done by large companies with men working for wages. Many of the miners stuck around, most now working in the cities and farms that came to dominate the landscape, but many more left, looking for fortune elsewhere or returning home. Behind them, they left radically altered landscapes consisting of silted rivers and bare, eroded hills. But as widespread and lasting as were these environmental consequences of the gold rushes, they paled in comparison to the impact of the social orders created by the gold miners, which persisted after the end of the gold rushes.

In both California and British Columbia, post-gold rush society was a direct legacy of the gold rush itself. Not only did the gold rushes provide the stimulus for an influx of an unprecedented number of settlers into both locations, it ensured that those settlers would originate from diverse locations around the world. These settlers, both during and after the gold rushes, killed, displaced, or confined the native population to reservations. In California, this action was concurrent with a movement to wrest control of the land away from the Mexican population as well, though in the case of the Mexican population litigation and legislation, not guns, were the weapons of choice. Nevertheless, the end result in California and British Columbia was the same: a colonial landscape in which self-professed white men tended to own the biggest and best parcels of land. Gold mining also stimulated the building of cities and the

farms with which to feed them.¹ But while mining camps and towns had provided the first major markets for the farms, the widespread use of hydraulic mining in the Sierra Nevada caused massive siltation and flooding in the downstream farmlands. In 1884, Judge Lorenzo Sawyer, a former miner who had stayed to practice law, ruled that mining companies were no longer allowed to discharge debris into the Yuba River, effectively ending hydraulic mining.² The way was now clear for agriculture to become the dominant industry in California.

In British Columbia a somewhat different transition occurred. British Columbia never saw the genocidal level of violence against natives that characterized the California experience. Nevertheless, in the decades following the gold rush, natives were forced out of a variety of industries and increasingly confined to poverty-stricken reservations.³ This freed up land for development by settlers, but unlike in California, only a fraction of the total economic activity in the post-gold rush period was from agriculture. Instead, fishing, logging, and coal mining quickly emerged after the end of the gold rush as the major industries in most areas of the province.⁴ At the same time, the political system of British Columbia continued a trend that had begun during the gold rush and became more representative before being incorporated into

¹ For a detailed discussion of the legacy of the California Gold Rush, and especially of the transition to agriculture, see Larry M. Dilsaver, "After the Gold Rush," *Geographical Review* 75, no. 1 (Jan., 1985): 1 – 18; Ralph Mann, *After the Gold Rush: Society in Grass Valley and Nevada City, California, 1849 – 1870* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1982).

² Robert Kelley, "The Mining Debris Controversy in the Sacramento Valley," *Pacific Historical Review* 25, no. 4 (Nov., 1956): 344 – 345.

³ For a discussion of the removal of natives from the fisheries, for example, see Diane Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). For an account that under-estimates native resistance, but nonetheless provides a good overview of native economic action in the post gold rush era, see Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774 – 1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), esp. pp. 146 – 211. The best study of the confinement of natives to reservations in British Columbia and the economic and social costs that move entailed is Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).

⁴ British Columbia joined Canadian confederation in 1871, becoming a province. On the economic and social development of British Columbia after the gold rush, see Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 114 – 128

Canadian confederation in 1871. In both California and British Columbia, therefore, the gold rushes dramatically reshaped the political, demographic, and environmental landscape.

But while gold mining faded from the landscape of California and British Columbia, the effects of gold rush society on ideas of white manliness persisted. Exploring white manliness in the context of the gold rushes of the West Coast is to do more than to interrogate two key interwoven normative identities of the mid-nineteenth-century; it is to trace how these identities were fundamentally bound up in the understanding and exercise of authority. Though it was never a given, strong cultural currents made it very likely that Victorian men from the eastern United States and Great Britain would define white manliness as the key identifier of who should rule in the colonial societies of California and British Columbia. But because gender and race are social constructions, the diverse and unruly social situations in both gold rushes, combined with political maneuverings among Victorians, meant that the boundaries of white manliness were never solidified, never fully agreed-upon, and instead were constantly being defined. Different groups of Victorians argued with each other over what constituted a white man, and therefore, who should benefit from colonial society and in what manner. Additionally, as the experience of the blacks in British Columbia demonstrates, non-white groups also challenged some of the basic assumptions of Victorians as to who should rule and why.

Despite these disagreements, a general trend is evident between 1848 and 1871 in how Victorians in the gold fields talked about white manliness. As we have seen, part of the appeal of the California gold rush was that it gave Victorian men a chance to articulate a reactionary form of white manliness that rejected many of the assumptions of then-dominant restrained manhood of the eastern United States and Great Britain. The conditions of mining and of gold field society reinforced these trends, encouraging Victorians to articulate understandings of white

manliness that differed in key ways from the ideas of white manliness in the contemporary eastern United States and Britain. At the same time, however, many of these men sought to establish a more “civilized” social order and worried about how friends and family in the East viewed them. As what had usually been intended to be short sojourns in the gold fields began to look more and more like permanent immigration, or at least long-term residence, Victorian men grew increasingly uncomfortable with some of the more radical rejections of eastern Victorian standards. At the same time, however, these same men had invested considerable time and energy to justify the new standards of white manliness they claimed were best suited to the gold rush societies of California and British Columbia, and they especially did not want to give up the claim that the new forms of white manliness in the West were distinct from, and in some ways superior to, older forms of white manliness in the East. They therefore began a process of reconciling the two forms of white manliness into something new, a process that continued in British Columbia. In British Columbia, Victorians generally stopped switching between behaviors and dress that marked them as either restrained or martial white men, and instead began combining the two into a nascent hybrid form of white manhood. This combination of martial and restrained manhood anticipated in many ways the development of white masculinity that Gail Bederman has identified as emerging in the late nineteenth century.

Bederman has argued that between 1880 and 1917, ideas of manliness and middle-class identity came under pressure originating from large-scale socio-economic changes that virtually eliminated “small-scale, competitive capitalism.”⁵ Bederman argues that these changing conditions encouraged middle-class men to articulate a new concept, “masculinity,” which emphasized the strength and authority of the white male body, but did so without the moral

⁵ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 5 – 12.

component that was such a prominent aspect of ideas of both martial and restrained manliness.⁶ Bederman argues that the development of masculinity encouraged middle-class men to see themselves as “a little bit ‘barbarous.’”⁷ In other words, masculinity encouraged middle-class men to see themselves as combining the strengths of civilization and savagery in one body.⁸

Victorian miners in California and British Columbia would never claim to be savage, but in their embrace of a blended martial and restrained white manhood, they were taking the first steps in that direction. That Victorians would blend ideas of martial and restrained white manhood in the gold fields should not be surprising. Functionally, both served the same goal. Whether they were martial or restrained, ideas of white manhood linked particular bodies and behaviors with a colonial arrangement of authority and power. Additionally, from the 1840s to the early 1870s, ideas of biological determinism became increasingly pronounced as modern forms of racist discourse emerged full-blown in the aftermath of Darwin’s publications, the American Civil War, and events like the Indian Rebellion in the British Empire. When these factors combined with the desire of Victorian miners to more closely conform to eastern standards of white manliness, while also maintaining their sense of difference, it was relatively easy for many Victorians in the West to blend ideas of martial and restrained manhood, and to do so in a way that increasingly stressed the supposed characteristics of their physical bodies.

This is not to say that the process was smooth or pre-determined, however. In California, republican ideas about the proper virtues necessary for citizenship and who could have those virtues framed the debate. As a result, the vast majority of Victorian men of European descent never seriously questioned that a colonial order should exist in which white men should rule.

⁶ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, pp. 18 – 19.

⁷ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, p. 74.

⁸ This process is best summed up in Bederman’s insightful discussion of Tarzan. Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, pp. 217 – 232.

The question then became what defined white manliness and who qualified as a white man in the California Gold Rush. In some instances, there was broad agreement among people of European descent: natives and the Chinese were too alien to be considered either white or manly. But there was greater debate about the status of African Americans and Latin Americans. In the tempestuous years leading to the Civil War, African Americans sometimes found their rights severely circumscribed and at other times staunchly defended by Victorians of European descent. Nor was the African American population silent about their treatment, and instead used the gold rush society to agitate against slavery and for more equitable treatment.⁹ At the same time, the Spanish heritage, light complexions, and the stipulations of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo opened up debate over whether Latin Americans could be citizens, a term that was synonymous with white manhood in gold rush California. Finally, the definition of what sort of behaviors marked an individual as a white man were contested between a rougher, more diverse segment of European society that grouped together under the banner of the “Law and Order faction,” or Democratic party, and the political and social opposition that came from the predominately middle-class merchants who made up the different Vigilante organizations. Out of this multi-way contest over the definition of white manliness in California, colonial authority, acting on various levels, gradually moved to support a rather narrow understanding of white manliness that was vested in ethnic origins from western and northern Europe and the values and behaviors emphasized by middle-class Victorians in California.

⁹ See, for example, the literature on the State Conventions of Colored Citizens. Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), pp. 91 – 92; Mifflin W. Gibbs, *Shadow and Light: An Autobiography* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1968), p. 15. See also: “State Convention of the Colored Citizens of California,” *The Pacific Appeal*, 12 April, 1862, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 2; “Proceedings of the California State Convention of Colored Citizens,” *The Elevator*, 3, 10, 17 November, 1865; vol.1, no., 31-33.

In British Columbia, as we have seen, the debate and trajectory was somewhat different, largely because of the persistence of British colonial authority which was primarily concerned in the early years of the rush with preserving its authority in the face of American influence. This led the colonial authorities to advocate a “colorblind” colonial policy, in which they claimed that nationality was the single most important defining characteristic. In theory, as long as an individual was a British subject, he was entitled to all the rights and privileges of any other British subject. In practice however, this “colorblind” colonial policy was far more contested and problematic. First, the British colonial elite never intended for an egalitarian society in British Columbia. At the core of their colonization project was the idea of a social hierarchy dominated by society’s betters, that is, by gentlemen. Though this term was never clearly defined by the colonial elite, in practice it tended to mean that the higher levels of colonial society were reserved for those individuals, usually of British descent, with elite British educations and connections or strong ties to the Scottish-dominated Hudson’s Bay Company, who also fancied themselves gentlemen. If the upper levels of the colonial administration are any indication, being a gentleman meant that an individual was usually of British descent and behaved in a particular manner identified with upper level British conceptions of manliness. Rather than fundamentally reshaping British Columbia society, the rhetoric of colorblindness served simply to obscure how race and gender actually functioned among the elite. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of colorblindness did create opportunities for non-Europeans, especially those of African descent, to participate more equally in colonial society. These limited gains were reliant on the continuing perception by the British colonial elites that the American population was the real threat, and when the apparent threat of the American population began to recede, the policy of colorblindness was quietly jettisoned in favor of a

growing belief that a common bond of whiteness tied together British and American men of European descent.

As important as the increasing belief in a common bond of white manliness between the British and American population was that this shared form of white manliness was one that combined aspects of restrained and martial manliness. In the early 1800s, both restrained and martial manhood relied heavily on appearance and behavior to signify whether an individual was, in fact, manly. But as ideas of biological difference hardened into modern conceptions of race over the middle decades of the 1800s, it became increasingly possible for Victorian men to reconcile the different behaviors attached to each form of manliness by insisting that while behaviors changed to suit the situation, their core identity as a white man was rooted in their bodies. This new form of white manliness allowed, for instance, Victorian miners in British Columbia to wear a beard and a suit at the same time without any cognitive dissonance.

Central to the emergence of this hybrid form of white manhood was the gold field system. The gold field system was how ideas, people, money, and goods travelled between gold rushes, leading to widely shared assumptions in the gold fields about how white men should act in, and react to, the conditions of a gold rush. As we have seen, this did not mean that gold rush societies were exact replicas of each other. The gold field system maintained not only the reality of actual connections between the gold rushes, but also the perception of Victorian men that gold rush society differed from the world they had left. It was only when Victorian men began to see their society as being incorporated into the larger Victorian society that the gold field system finally faded. Crucially, for many Victorian men the turning point was the arrival of significant numbers of Victorian women. The arrival of Victorian women did not stop mining, or change economic connections between mining areas, but it did mean that one of the main ways Victorian

men justified their difference from easterners (a lack of white women) became less believable. This, combined with the economic transformation of the surviving mines into wage labor, undercut the justifications used by Victorian men to explain why their society, and their white men, looked so different than their eastern counterparts.

With the collapse of the major factors that made the gold rush societies of the West distinct from eastern society, it was perhaps inevitable that much of the distinctiveness about ideas of white manliness would fade. But while the gold rush ended, both California and British Columbia retained the memory and legacy of that rush. Though it is beyond the scope of this present study, it seems likely that the memory of gold rush society, of California and British Columbia as lands of opportunity, but only to those with the strength of character and body to see it through, continued to inform a regional variant of white manliness long after the rush had passed. In the same vein, it must be left to speculation at this point how great of an impact the gold rushes of the Pacific slope had on ideas of white manliness in the east. Certainly, the ideas that emerged in California and British Columbia seem to anticipate, and may have helped shape, ideas of masculinity that emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

BA.	Barkerville Archives, Barkerville, British Columbia.
BANC.	Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.
BCARS.	British Columbia Archives, Victoria, British Columbia.
State Archive.	California State Archive, Sacramento, California.
UVIC.	University of Victoria Library, Victoria, British Columbia.

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