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**Writing the Goldfields of Victoria and Otago, 1851-1871:
Australasian Narratives and Their Representations**

A thesis
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Abstract

This thesis examines thirteen published gold-rush narratives penned by authors who visited the goldfields of Victoria, Australia, and Otago, New Zealand, in the period 1851 to 1871. Through analysis of narrative representations and constructions, differences and similarities in the sources' presentation of selected phenomena are observed and explained. This thesis seeks to deconstruct meanings of trans-Tasman gold fever and how narrative authors perceived selected themes.

The chosen themes are divided by chapter. Chapter One considers narrative portrayals of success and failure on the goldfields. Chapter Two allows the narratives to define order and disorder, and places emphasis on concepts of behaviour and control. Chapter Three discusses minorities in gold-rush society and their treatment within goldfields narratives. These themes relate to specific colonial and metropole anxieties about wealth, social control, containment, ethnicity, and gender. Narrative analysis is divided by broad geographical location within each chapter and ordered chronologically: starting with Victoria, followed by Otago. This thesis confirms that gold-rush narratives, produced in colonial societies like Victoria and Otago, provided a vehicle for the reinforcement and exaggeration of anxieties and attitudes relevant to both the European metropole and the colonial society itself.

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Introduction

For thousands of years, gold has been a commodity that has held a glittering allure for many. The extraction of gold and its uses stands at the heart of many cultures and societies, from the Egyptians and the Romans to the Native Americans of Central America.¹ Throughout the nineteenth-century, the lure of this shiny, yellow metal mobilized men and women from across oceans to seek their fortunes and experience adventure. The gold-rushes of Victoria, Australia, from 1851, and Otago, New Zealand, from 1861, are part of this global story.

Gold-rushes appear to be a largely Western – or European – phenomenon. In British colonies, the tradition of imperial settlement encouraged the private ownership of mineral resources.² In other locations, these resources and their extraction were controlled by the state or local authorities. The Brazilian gold-rush in the 1690s was limited by governmental regulations, including a requirement to pay one-fifth of any mining profits to the Portuguese crown.³ In Russia, gold discovered in the 1740s was claimed by the state in accordance with the governmental monopoly on mineral production.⁴

Gold alone was not enough to incite fever. Many other sociological, technological, and economic factors were required, and it is where these characteristics converged that gold-rushes occurred.⁵ Freedom of movement and confidence in social mobility – the potential of a person to better their quality of life – were also important.⁶ In British colonies, the capacity to privately acquire natural resources provided settlers and

¹ Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves, 'Introduction', in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 1.

² McCalman, Cook and Reeves, 'Introduction', in *Gold*, p. 5.

³ David Goodman, 'The gold rushes of the 1850s', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, ed. by Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre, two volumes (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), I, p. 173.

⁴ Goodman, 'The gold rushes of the 1850s', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, p. 174.

⁵ Douglas Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*, revised edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 5.

⁶ Fetherling, p. 5.

sojourners with opportunities for personal economic gain. In colonial societies, the improvement of quality of life was often a direct result of this monetary gain.

The first 'great' gold-rush – “the first truly international one” – began in California in 1848.⁷ The Australian rushes of the 1850s were an extension of the American, and the New Zealand events of the early 1860s a continuation of both.⁸ The gold-rushes of Victoria and Otago are connected due to their temporal succession and the relative geographic proximity of the two colonies, despite being separated by the Tasman Sea. Many thousands of people migrated between Australia and New Zealand as a result of these gold discoveries. For example, 17 000 individuals arrived in Otago from the Australian colonies in 1861 alone.⁹ Vast amounts of knowledge and information accompanied these migrants. As well as capital, this also included technological expertise, political ideas, and other cultural practices.¹⁰ Gold-seekers were not the only immigrants, with many others migrating to both Victoria and Otago with intentions to “feed, launder, entertain and police” the miners.¹¹ Gold discoveries were significant in shaping frontier experiences in Victoria and Otago, and played important roles in the foundational histories of Australia and New Zealand.

The discovery of gold in Victoria and Otago were not accidental, and those who went searching for goldfields knew the potential significance of their findings. Following the Californian gold-rush, people who knew what they were looking for set out specifically to find gold in Pacific colonies.¹² For example, Gabriel Read, whose gold discovery in Otago in 1861 triggered the mad dash to the province, was born in Van Diemen's Land (later Tasmania). He learned his mining skill in California and his knowledge of those fields informed his consideration of the Otago landscape.

⁷ Fetherling, p. 4.

⁸ J. H. M. Salmon, *A History of Gold-Mining in New Zealand* (Wellington: R. E. Owen, 1963), p. 13.

⁹ Erik Olssen, 'Lands of Sheep and Gold: The Australian Dimension to the New Zealand Past, 1840-1900', in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. by Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), p. 41.

¹⁰ Salmon, pp. 18-19; Fetherling, pp. 3-4.

¹¹ Mark Peel and Christina Twomey, *A History of Australia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 73.

¹² Peel and Twomey, p. 72.

The Victoria and Otago discoveries were the first sustained gold-rushes in either country. Gold had been found in Australia and New Zealand prior to the rushes, but as small finds they provided short-lived ventures only. Especially in Victoria, gold finds in the years directly preceding the rushes often were deliberately concealed by authorities or settlers, who feared the influx of possibly disruptive and destructive male miners, as seen in California. In Victoria, gold was found in early 1849 at Glenmona Station. Shepherds and pastoral workers on the station kept the knowledge of gold a secret for two years.¹³ William Campbell, a businessman who later pursued a career in politics, discovered gold on his brother-in-law's station near Clunes in 1850. He did not announce his findings until 1851, when he attempted to claim the reward offered to whoever located Victoria's first goldfield. Campbell withheld his knowledge on the basis that goldmining would negatively affect the pastoral economy.¹⁴ Similar concerns pervaded the Otago response to potential gold discoveries in the province. Anxieties were heightened by the prospect of "thousands of footloose, single, drunken, whoring, gambling young men" pouring into Otago.¹⁵

In direct contrast with the attempts by some to conceal gold discoveries, local authorities often offered rewards to the first individual to locate a payable field. The Californian experience educated governments worldwide on the unfavourable components to a gold-rush, such as violence, lynch law, and social disruption, but also indicated that vast economic and demographic growth could be gained from such events. Goldfields rewards were intended to motivate colonial development. In 1851, authorities in Victoria announced an award of £200 to be paid for any gold found within 200 miles of Melbourne.¹⁶ This incentive was

¹³ Ian Clark and David 'Fred' Cahir, *Tanderrum 'Freedom of the Bush': The Djadjawurrung presence on the goldfields of Central Victoria* (Castlemaine: Friends of Mount Alexander Diggings, 2004), p. 11.

¹⁴ Frank Strahan, 'Campbell, William (1810–1896)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 1969 <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/campbell-william-3158/text4719>> [accessed 31 August 2015].

¹⁵ Erik Olssen, cited in Jim McAloon, 'The New Zealand Economy 1792-1914', in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. by Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 207.

¹⁶ Kathryn Wells, *The Australian Gold Rush*, 5 October 2007, <<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-gold-rush>> [accessed 6 February 2015].

considered necessary as recent gold discoveries in the neighbouring colony of New South Wales threatened to stall Victoria's economy and undermine its long-term prosperity. Victoria had only gained independence from New South Wales several months earlier and the population exodus to New South Wales endangered Victoria's future. In New Zealand, Otago officials proposed a gold-related reward as early as 1852, offering £500 to the first person to discover a goldfield in the province.¹⁷

The goldfields are, therefore, valuable subjects for the historical investigation of colonial societies. Gold-rushes created a "social melting-pot" where people from all classes, religions, and many different places lived and worked together, regardless of background.¹⁸ Historian James Belich described gold-rushes as important drivers of settler capitalism and colony growth.¹⁹ Gold and its associated promise of wealth possessed an extraordinary ability to motivate migration, and gold fever was so widespread in 'rushing' societies like Victoria and Otago that this simple mineral formed "the universal subject of conversation".²⁰ In addition, social dislocation was characteristic of gold-rush locations. Individuals were often highly mobile and their transiency conflicted with British imperial concepts of colonising and settling. The influx of population as a result of gold discoveries created issues with infrastructure, such as housing and roads, and placed demands on often limited supplies of food and other resources. Goldfields labour was also extremely male-dominated. Questions were raised about the social impacts of a society comprised of

¹⁷ Fetherling, p. 78.

¹⁸ Salmon, p. 15.

¹⁹ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 306-330.

²⁰ Vincent Pyke, *History of Early Gold Discoveries in Otago* (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times, 1962), p. 28. Note also, "The rage for gold here is not confined to the Diggings; it seems to pervade everybody and everything in the colony..." William Howitt, *Land, Labour and Gold*, facsimile edition (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972), p. 22; "Gold, gold, gold, nothing else is thought of..." Alexander Bathgate, *Colonial Experiences or Sketches of People and Places in the Province of Otago, New Zealand* (Glasgow: J Maclehorse, 1874), available at Early New Zealand Books Collection <http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docs/epub/colonial_experiences_or_sketches_of_people_and_places_in_the_province_of_otago_new_zealand-2804.epub>, p. 87; "Shops, stores, trades, all and everything was deserted; and the press very truly declared that 'Geelong was mad—stark, staring gold-mad.'" Mrs. Charles (Ellen) Clacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-53* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853), available at Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4054.epub.images?session_id=1beb9c48732a6cce9213fa15af68a91c1fa137ee>, p. 67.

men and men alone, while families deserted by their traditional breadwinner became a problem in urban areas. Thus, gold-rushes in colonies like Victoria and Otago intensified anxieties and attitudes specific to European societies at that time.²¹ These include the perceived racial superiority of white peoples, increased interest in the confinement of the disorderly and insane, and changing ideas relating to the significance of a woman's role in society. Goldfields provide both a physical and discursive space in which historians can examine these concerns.

To this end, this thesis seeks to analyse thirteen published narratives of the goldfields of Victoria and Otago and to examine the differences and similarities in the sources' presentation of selected phenomena. David Goodman highlighted the ability of gold-rush narratives to illustrate the "topography of colonial difference".²² As previously mentioned, the gold-rushes in Victoria and Otago occurred relatively close in time to one another, with less than ten years between the 'first' (most significant) discoveries in either location. Victoria and Otago were also "isolated outposts" of British settlement.²³ When compared with the distance between the Australasian colonies and Europe, Victoria and Otago were relatively close, and this was highlighted by the constant ebb and flow of migrants and other resources across the Tasman. For example, many of the first Otago goldminers were veterans of the fields in Victoria. By 1861, the beginning of the Otago rush, miners in Victoria were confronted with the choice of finding employment in industries outside gold or becoming "wage slaves" to the big mining companies that increasingly dominated the goldfields.²⁴ Instead, many took advantage of the opportunity to pursue their dreams of striking it rich on the diggings by moving to Otago.

The importance of this trans-Tasman world has often been taken for granted by historians.²⁵ Connections between eastern Australia and New

²¹ Angela Hawk, 'Going "Mad" in Gold Country: Migrant Populations and the Problem of Containment in Pacific Mining Regions', *Pacific Historical Review*, 80, 1 (2011), p. 68.

²² David Goodman, 'Reading Gold-Rush Travellers' Narratives', *Australian Cultural History*, 10 (1991), p. 99.

²³ Rollo Arnold, 'The Australasian Peoples and their World, 1888-1915', in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. by Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), p. 52.

²⁴ Fetherling, p. 78.

²⁵ Erik Olssen, 'Lands of Sheep and Gold', in *Tasman Relations*, p. 35.

Zealand have persisted since the colonisation of both places. While New Zealand and Australia have subsequently taken different paths, the foundations of the two countries grew contemporaneously, and New Zealand was administered for a short time by New South Wales. New Zealand was originally regarded as part of the Australian frontier by British settlers and the beginnings of a truly 'New Zealand' society was strongly influenced by the country's proximity to the Australian colonies.²⁶ Colonial Australasia was connected through similar social structures, economic ventures, and political institutions, as well as migration.²⁷

This thesis focuses on comparisons between Victoria and Otago as exemplified in published narratives, as a means of explaining how trans-Tasman gold fever was perceived. David Goodman has examined gold-rush narratives of Victoria, arguing that the stories contained in such narratives can be located in their contemporary context.²⁸ This thesis places emphasis on the experiences of the people who traversed these places and spaces, and the way in which they viewed their world, at a time when gold rush society was somewhat fractured from the European ideal. Trans-Tasman mobility in the gold-rush era contributed to the occurrence of 'explosive colonization', as described by James Belich. Explosive colonization was characterised by demographic 'booms', where cities and entire colonies doubled or trebled their populations in short periods of time.²⁹ Australasia as a whole increased its settler population from about 1.25 million people to close to 4 million between 1860 and 1890.³⁰ Individual cities such as Melbourne and Dunedin experienced rapid growth during the gold-rushes, too. Explosive colonization was also "a process of societal reproduction, territorial expansion, and the sweeping aside of precursors", all of which the gold-rushes in Victoria and Otago accomplished.³¹

²⁶ Erik Olssen, 'Lands of Sheep and Gold', in *Tasman Relations*, p. 36.

²⁷ Donald Denoon, Philippa Mein-Smith, and Marivic Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 32.

²⁸ David Goodman, 'Reading Gold-Rush Travellers' Narratives', p. 100.

²⁹ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 178.

³⁰ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 84.

³¹ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 179.

This thesis spans the period from 1851 to 1871 by examining themes within goldfields narratives that discuss experiences and events of these two decades. While some of the primary sources utilised were published after the latter date, their content relates to the specified time period. The chronology begins in 1851 when gold was first discovered in Victoria, and continues through the early 1850s, with the selected narratives referring to places within the colony such as Melbourne, Ballarat, Bendigo, and Castlemaine. The Otago accounts commence in 1861 and persist into the late 1860s, navigating the province from Dunedin, Gabriel's Gully, Dunstan and beyond. Both sets of narratives examine inland and coastal areas, goldfields, and cities that traverse a variety of climates and topographies. This thesis uses secondary sources to assist in providing historical context and historiographical discussion in relation to narratives examining this twenty-year period. The chosen time period reflects the beginning of the gold-rush in Victoria and allows space to examine comments by authors on the later effects of gold fever on Otago. The true 'rush' had concluded in the province by the mid-1860s and was replaced by a more stable gold-mining industry whose workers earned weekly wages.³² This change was also reflected in the economy of the country overall. From 1862 to 1871, gold was New Zealand's main export earner.³³ Agricultural developments took prominence in the New Zealand economy after this time.

This thesis particularly focusses on narratives that explore the first few years of the gold-rushes of Victoria and Otago, as change, especially the social disruption distinctive of the goldfields, is most apparent in the early stages of a rush. The selected narratives fit within this timeframe and their content will be analysed within three themes divided into three chapters: success and failure (Chapter One), order and disorder (Chapter Two), and minorities (Chapter Three). These themes relate to specific colonial anxieties about wealth, social control, ethnicity, and gender. The narratives are divided by broad geographical location within each chapter

³² James Forrest, 'Population and Settlement on the Otago Goldfields, 1861-1870', *New Zealand Geographer*, 17, 1 (April 1961), p. 75.

³³ McAloon, 'The New Zealand Economy 1792-1914', in *New Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 207.

and analysis is ordered chronologically: starting with Victoria, followed by Otago. Particular goldfields within the colonies are referred to by name and the relevant subject matter from each narrative is discussed, compared, and placed within its wider contemporary cultural context.

Historiography - Victoria

Despite its profound effect on the colonies which would later become Australia, Victoria's gold-rush was "singularly neglected" by Australian historians until the mid-twentieth century.³⁴ This neglect was in inverse proportion to the importance of gold to Australia. Between 1851 and 1860, Australia produced 39 per cent of the world's gold, with most of it coming from Victoria.³⁵ Gold fever resulted in a population boom in both Victorian cities and the colony as a whole. Melbourne more than quadrupled its population in the ten years from 1851,³⁶ while the Australian settler population almost trebled.³⁷ Over 290 000 migrants arrived in Victoria from Britain and Ireland in the period from 1852 to 1860.³⁸ New towns and cities were founded on and near the goldfields to service miner needs. Several of these places remain today, such as Ballarat, Bendigo, and Castlemaine. As a result of mining, Victoria enjoyed general prosperity, with the majority of its mined ores exported to a gold-hungry Europe.³⁹ Yet, overcrowding in the cities and pastoral labour shortages plagued the colony. Not all men rushed to make their fortune on the fields – merchants scrambled to relieve commodity shortages and they reaped the benefits of a permanently enlarged market.⁴⁰ This trend is reflected in the number of people employed in trade-related occupations, which increased from 3,445

³⁴ Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), p. A2; Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p. v.

³⁵ Denoon, Mein-Smith, and Wyndham, p. 141.

³⁶ Graeme Davison, 'Gold-Rush Melbourne', in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 52.

³⁷ From 405,400 to 1,145,600: Denoon, Mein-Smith, and Wyndham, p. 142.

³⁸ Serle, p. 44.

³⁹ Serle, p. 42.

⁴⁰ Serle, p. 42.

in 1851 to 7,687 four years later.⁴¹ In 1988, Douglas Fetherling claimed that the gold-rushes in Victoria made Australia a nation long before federation occurred.⁴² Gold discoveries were significant in transforming the colony from one dominated by convicts to one dominated by settlers,⁴³ and twentieth-century Australian historians utilised Victoria's gold-rush experience to present an alternative narrative to the country's convict foundations.⁴⁴

Early studies of Victoria's goldfields tended to romanticise the period and view the gold-rushes as highly individualistic, gendered, and racially homogenous events. They emphasised the myth of the 'real Australian' and often attempted to stir nostalgia for the "happy days... the glorious freedom one enjoyed from all the restraints of home life".⁴⁵ Goldfields history provided an opportunity to create the foundations of a national identity prior to the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901. The tradition of the gold-digging Australian hero was reinforced following the establishment of Australia as a 'nation', and further strengthened through the use of the word 'digger' to describe Australian soldiers in the First World War.⁴⁶ In 1930, in his widely celebrated and cited work *Australia*, historian Keith Hancock famously declared miners to be "the Pilgrim fathers, the first authentic Australians".⁴⁷ Historians Vance Palmer in the 1930s and 1940s, and Russel Ward in the 1950s, further expanded on the idea of miners being the first true 'Australians'. According to their writing, the male gold digger – portrayed with the intentional use of gendered pronouns – was an individual who valued independence, ingenuity, enjoyed strong fraternity with those around him, and was committed to fairness and justice, the last perceived quality being immortalised by goldminer protests at Eureka in 1854 against the licence fee.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Davison, 'Gold-Rush Melbourne', in *Gold*, p. 55.

⁴² Fetherling, p. 43.

⁴³ McCalman, Cook, and Reeves, 'Introduction', in *Gold*, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Goodman, 'The gold rushes of the 1850s', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, p. 186.

⁴⁵ Serle, p. 93.

⁴⁶ McCalman, Cook and Reeves, 'Introduction', in *Gold*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ William Keith Hancock, *Australia* (London: Benn, 1945), p. 43.

⁴⁸ McCalman, Cook and Reeves, 'Introduction', in *Gold*, p. 5.

The extended body of historiography that emerged in the mid-twentieth century concerning the goldfields of Victoria focussed on the economic and political effects of the rushes, while still maintaining the idea of the goldfields' male as the cornerstone of Australian society, although in a less individualistic fashion. In 1963, Geoffrey Serle discussed at great length the economic impacts of the emergence of the Victorian gold industry, and the legislative and policy responses to the population boom and new-found employment.⁴⁹ He acknowledged the diversity present on the fields rather than seeking to solely portray the 'digger' icon. To this end, Serle examined the role of the Chinese on the goldfields, but his analysis of them is cursory.

In goldfields literature, there remained two further absences alongside the somewhat cursory treatment of Chinese. While there are several scattered references to Aborigines and women, no comprehensive study of the places and spaces they inhabited during the rush was attempted in the post-war historiography. Moreover, the writing of goldfields history was conducted by white males and any examination of women or indigenous people simply portrays them as ancillary, rather than of significant consequence on their own. For example, Geoffrey Blainey's 1964 *The Rush That Never Ended* follows similar themes to Serle's work, but his contribution differs slightly in that Blainey was the first to make important connections between the timing of gold discoveries in Victoria and the state of the colony's economy.⁵⁰

More recent studies, however, have contributed to analysis of the three disregarded groups. David Goodman's 1994 comparative study of the Victorian and California goldfields primarily discussed the economic and political elements of the two gold-rushes.⁵¹ Although writing little about Aboriginal people, Goodman included a chapter – titled 'Domesticity' – which considers the role of women in the context of a 'home and house' environment. He places significance on the role of women as

⁴⁹ Serle.

⁵⁰ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*; McCalman, Cook, and Reeves, 'Introduction', in *Gold*, p. 6.

⁵¹ David Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

homemakers, as bringers of order to the wild, carefree life of a digger, and of providing a humanising gentleness to the harshness and brutality of life on the fields.⁵² While at first glance, this may seem like compensatory history, he is explained that in this period a nation of men alone was to be feared. Women and their domestic harmonies were “what prevented life from being totally absorbed by the utilitarian ethic of the market place”.⁵³ Authorities in nineteenth-century Victoria believed that family life would bring much needed stability to the colony, although historical analysis of this concept with regards to the gold-rush had to wait until the later twentieth-century.

The 2001 multi-authored text *Gold*, discusses both indigenous histories of goldmining and provides an extended focus on the roles of women on and around the goldfields.⁵⁴ The work’s authors still consider women mainly within the sphere of domestic life and present highly individualised experiences with specific examples cited, but the importance of women is neither dismissed nor discounted. It is explained, however, that actual gold digging was an exclusively male affair as there is apparently “no record of a goldmine worked by women”.⁵⁵ Instead, women typically assisted by washing gold dirt. Other occupations pursued by women on the goldfields included shop keeping, bartending, singing, acting, and of course, prostitution.⁵⁶

One of the first dedicated studies of Aboriginal people on the goldfields of Victoria was produced by Fred Cahir in 2012.⁵⁷ *Black Gold* questions many of the previously-held beliefs about the roles of indigenous people on the fields and in particular, their reactions to the gold rush. Cahir concedes that Aborigines did not appear to place any great significance on gold as a commodity or in aesthetic terms, but provides countless

⁵² Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 153.

⁵³ Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 154.

⁵⁴ *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵⁵ Margaret Anderson, ‘Mrs Charles Clacy, Lola Montez and Poll the Grogseller: Glimpses of Women on the Goldfields’, in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 234.

⁵⁶ Anderson, ‘Glimpses of Women on the Goldfields,’ in *Gold*, pp. 234-235.

⁵⁷ Fred Cahir, *Black Gold: Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850-1870* (ANU E Press, 2012), available at <press.anu.edu.au/?p=198511>.

examples from settler and digger accounts of Aboriginal police officers, guides, escorts, prostitutes, trackers, child minders, merchants, entertainers, and prison guards on the goldfields.⁵⁸ Despite these recorded inclusions of Aboriginal people in goldfields life, scholars have largely ignored this element of Victoria's history, instead preferring to frame the experience of indigenous people in the context of first contact and frontier violence. While the disregard of Aboriginal histories may be justified to an extent because of a lack of primary evidence available for study – for example, no gold-rush narratives penned by indigenous authors were uncovered for use in this thesis – a more overtly political reason for the omission of Aboriginal voices in history has been proposed. In 2001, David Goodman suggested that the exclusion of Aborigines from goldfields history is closely related to the aversion to discuss other indigenous histories such as colonial land acquisition, the Black War, and child-removal:

the vigorous, masculine, democratic politics of the 1850s gold-rush period, with its insistent calls for the land to be distributed amongst 'the people', [are] part of the same story as the taking of Aboriginal land and the breaking up of Aboriginal families and communities⁵⁹

This historical xenophobia is also apparent when considering the scholarly treatment of Chinese goldminers. Australian historians avoided a comprehensive analysis of Victoria's Chinese goldminers for many years. Kathryn Cronin's 1982 *Colonial Casualties* has been described as the "pinnacle of [descriptions of] Chinese on Victoria's goldfields".⁶⁰ However, Cronin's study is hampered by restrictive primary sources, which were often authored by Europeans and solely focussed on the 'extreme' rather than the mainstream Chinese experience. In response to Cronin's self-expressed difficulties with the topic, Jennifer Cushman's 1984 article criticised the tendency of historians to focus on Chinese as the main target

⁵⁸ Cahir, *Black Gold*, pp. 2, 7.

⁵⁹ David Goodman, 'Making an Edgier History of Gold', in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 32.

⁶⁰ Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial Casualties* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982); Valerie Lovejoy, *Fortune Seekers of Dai Gum San: First Generation Chinese on the Bendigo Goldfield, 1854-1882* (unpublished PhD thesis: La Trobe University, 2009), p. 9.

of European hatred and prejudice.⁶¹ She implored Australian scholars to consider Chinese as central subjects of their own history, and in the decades since her comments, there has been a slow shift in the portrayal of the Chinese community in Australian history. Gaps in this history still remain, particularly with regards to nineteenth-century events such as Victoria's gold-rush, as Chinese-voiced sources from this period are either non-existent or buried under years of European suppression. Cronin's work remains a significant contribution to the examination of Chinese on the goldfields of Victoria, despite the source-based bias towards mining 'elites'.

Historiography - Otago

New Zealand historians, too, shied away from examination of the Otago goldfields, but for different reasons than their Australian counterparts. Gold mining has been considered to conflict with the image of pastoral New Zealand. One of the reasons put forward for this neglect is the belief that the miner left behind rusting machinery, heaped tailings, and networks of tunnels and shafts below the earth's surface, while the farmer actively increased the fertility of the soil.⁶² The agricultural 'hero' upheld a romantic image of colonial New Zealand: of virgin bush giving way to rolling farmland, of a wild landscape successfully tamed by the hard-working pioneer. When historians have considered New Zealand goldfields they have often focussed on the early prospectors, as their alluvial mining techniques were considered less "perverse and destructive" when compared with their successors,⁶³ and therefore more compatible with colonial New Zealand's pastoral ideal.

Arguably, the Otago gold-rushes did not contribute as significantly to the development of the nation as the fields in Victoria did. Gold was New Zealand's main export earner from 1862 to 1871, but agricultural

⁶¹ Jennifer Cushman, 'A "colonial casualty": The Chinese Community in Australian Historiography', *ASAA Review*, 7, 3 (1984), pp. 100-103.

⁶² Salmon, p. 12.

⁶³ Salmon, p. 12.

developments provided the cornerstone of the economy both before and after this time.⁶⁴ The Otago rush was somewhat overshadowed, as some historians see it, by the “nation-shaping importance” of other events, like the Land Wars.⁶⁵ The Otago gold-rush also occupied a relatively short span of time in New Zealand’s history. James Belich described these events as “a tidal wave that came and went quickly”.⁶⁶ However, the Otago events did contribute to the economic and social development of New Zealand. The search for gold motivated men to explore and settle remote areas of the South Island, and gold-mining provided employment and exports earnings, and reinvigorated internal trade.⁶⁷ The gold-rush population boom also contributed to the dissolution of the provincial government system in 1876.⁶⁸ Otago became prosperous as a result of gold discoveries. Gold made Otago “the richest and most populous province” in New Zealand, and by 1870, it supplied one-third of the country’s exports and boasted one-quarter of its European population.⁶⁹

For these reasons, the Otago gold-rush has been discussed largely within the sphere of national history or specific regional history. Few dedicated studies have been attempted. In 1957, “no complete history of Otago’s goldfields [had] ever been written”.⁷⁰ Instead, it often simply sat within the pages of the story of New Zealand alongside its chronological equals, such as the Land Wars and Julius Vogel’s schemes of public works, railway construction, and assisted immigration. Despite the peripheral placement of gold in New Zealand history, in his 1984 study of Otago, Erik Olssen asserted the importance of mining, particularly its regional significance. It “transformed” Otago and Dunedin by making the province the wealthiest in the country.⁷¹

⁶⁴ McAloon, ‘The New Zealand Economy 1792-1914’, in *New Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 207.

⁶⁵ Fetherling, p. 78.

⁶⁶ James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 346.

⁶⁷ Salmon, p. 12.

⁶⁸ Salmon, p. 12.

⁶⁹ McAloon, ‘The New Zealand Economy 1792-1914’, in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 207.

⁷⁰ H. A. Glasson, *The Golden Cobweb: A Saga of the Otago Goldfields, 1861-64* (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers: 1957), p. 5.

⁷¹ Erik Olssen, *A History of Otago* (Dunedin: John McIndoe Limited, 1984), p. 56.

Some texts that more directly consider the Otago gold-rush have been produced from the second-half of the twentieth-century. J. H. M. Salmon's 1963 work, *A History of Gold-mining in New Zealand*, was commissioned by the Mines Department to "place on record the development of an industry that was for so long a vital part of the national economy".⁷² Salmon stated that the reluctance to write about the New Zealand goldfields due to their perceived incompatibility with our agricultural industry is misplaced. He explains that the farmer exploited and continues to exploit the land just as much as the miner ever did.⁷³ Salmon's work focused mainly on facts and figures, places and mobility, and the vast majority of the individuals named are male. He briefly discusses the presence of Chinese on the Otago goldfield, but tends to emphasise their contribution in terms of demographics.⁷⁴ Women are all but absent from Salmon's account.

H. A. Glasson's earlier work of 1957 contains similar themes, although he does dedicate two (brief) paragraphs to women on the goldfields. He explained that women were "non-existent" during the initial stages of the rush but later, as mining settlements became permanent, wives followed gold-hungry husbands.⁷⁵ Interestingly, Glasson also introduced a small section on Chinese miners with the acknowledgement that "no summary of the Otago goldfields... would be complete without reference to the many Chinese".⁷⁶ He appears quite sympathetic towards Chinese gold seekers but does not discuss any instances of racial disharmony on the goldfields.

There have been, however, well-documented cases of prejudice against Chinese gold miners, from the general xenophobia of the gold fields, to specific legislation enacted by the New Zealand government to restrict Chinese immigration in 1881. Racial hostility was "an integral part of the colonial nationalism" that emerged in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-

⁷² Salmon, 'Author's Note and Acknowledgements', no page.

⁷³ Salmon, p. 12.

⁷⁴ Salmon, p. 112.

⁷⁵ Glasson, p. 86.

⁷⁶ Glasson, p. 146.

century New Zealand.⁷⁷ According to Brian Moloughney and John Stenhouse, an aversion to discussing the contribution Chinese miners made to the Otago gold rush is a direct precursor to this ‘colonial nationalism’. New Zealand historians instead preferred to focus on Māori-Pākehā relations as it allowed the self-creation of a “world exemplar of racial enlightenment”.⁷⁸ It was not until the 1990s, when James Ng published his multi-volume work on Chinese in New Zealand, that the contributions of the Chinese to the country were asserted and that they too deserved a place in our history books.⁷⁹ Ng’s four volume *Windows on a Chinese Past* (1993-1999) explored the experiences of the Chinese in Otago and New Zealand, with an especial focus on the social and cultural life of the Chinese on the goldfields. In particular, Ng discussed the problem of racial prejudice in New Zealand, but also gave many examples of co-operation. His work is a remarkable, and thus far unprecedented, examination of the social history of Chinese in a settler colony and has rightly received praise.⁸⁰ Another set of recent works by James Beattie have focussed on the contribution of Chinese to colonial development, goldfields technology, and market gardening within the context of environmental history.⁸¹

Women began to be included in Otago goldfields histories in the 1980s and early 1990s, reflective of the general growth of women’s history within New Zealand. Biographical compilations, such as *Petticoat Pioneers*,

⁷⁷ Brian Moloughney and John Stenhouse, “Drug-besotten, sin-begotten fiends of filth”: New Zealanders and the Oriental Other, 1850-1920’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 33, 1 (1999), p. 44.

⁷⁸ Moloughney and Stenhouse, p. 45.

⁷⁹ James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, four volumes (Dunedin: Otago Heritage Books, 1993-1999).

⁸⁰ In 2001, Australian historian Henry Chan described Ng’s *Windows* as “well documented” and that it contained conclusions that can be “critically assessed” due to the accessible nature of the sources utilised. Chan considered *Windows* to be a leading source on Chinese in Australasia, and expected the book series to retain this position for many years to come: Henry Chan, ‘Becoming Australian but Remaining Chinese’, in *The Overseas Chinese in Australia*, ed. by Henry Chan, Nora Chiang, and Ann Curthoys (Taipei and Canberra: National Taiwan University and Australian National University, 2001), pp. 5, 3.

⁸¹ James Beattie, “Hungry dragons”: Expanding the Horizons of Chinese Environmental History: Cantonese gold-miners in colonial New Zealand, 1860s-1920s’, *International Review of Environmental History*, 1 (2015), pp. 103-145; James Beattie, ‘Eco-cultural networks in southern China and colonial New Zealand, 1860s-1910s’, in *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire: New Views on Environmental History*, ed. by James Beattie, Edward Melillo, and Emily O’Gorman (New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 151-179.

Women in History, and *The Book of New Zealand Women*, provide countless examples of women on and around the goldfields of Otago.⁸² Many of these entries debunk the long-held myth that the only women on the goldfields were prostitutes. Stevan Eldred-Grigg explained that there were some female diggers, but generally goldfields women were “camp followers”, seeking to make money from the miners in a variety of ways.⁸³ While these methods did include prostitution, women were not limited to this profession alone. They also found work as hotelkeepers, barmaids, domestic servants, and entertainers.

Eldred-Grigg’s 2008 study of New Zealand gold-rushes, *Diggers, Hatters and Whores*, considered the New Zealand goldmining experience from the 1850s to the 1870s. *Diggers, Hatters and Whores* was the first comprehensive account of New Zealand goldfields since Salmon’s 1963 work and, in the words of one reviewer, “promised to fill something of a void” in New Zealand history.⁸⁴ It has, however, been criticised for the superficial nature of its analysis. In his review of the book in 2009, historical geographer Terry Hearn disapproved of Eldred-Grigg’s emphasis on the tendency of goldminers to rush onwards, which disregarded the reverse migration that accompanied less successful goldfields experiences.⁸⁵ Hearn also pointed out that some of Eldred-Grigg’s thematic considerations were repeated from his earlier publications and therefore do not represent the development of new questions, new themes, or rich archival sources that have been offered in the “intervening 30 years or so”.⁸⁶

⁸² Barbara Harper and Miriam Redwood, *Petticoat Pioneers: South Island Women of the Colonial Era, Book Three* (Wellington: Reed, 1980); Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald, and Margaret Tennant, *Women In History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1986); Charlotte Macdonald, Bridget Williams, Merimeri Penfold, *The Book of New Zealand Women: Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991).

⁸³ Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *Diggers, Hatters and Whores: The Story of the New Zealand Gold Rushes* (Auckland: Random House, 2011), p. 370.

⁸⁴ Terry Hearn, review of Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *Diggers, Hatters and Whores: The Story of the New Zealand Gold Rushes*, in *New Zealand Journal of History*, 43, 1 (2009), p. 77.

⁸⁵ Hearn, p. 77.

⁸⁶ Hearn, p. 78.

Colonial Print Cultures

In its analysis of the selected published narratives, this thesis engages with the print cultures that existed in Victoria and Otago during the gold-rush periods and beyond. Print culture centres around ‘texts’, whether newspapers, novels, government documents, or other forms of literature. Print culture permeates each stage of the textual process: writing, reading, printing, circulating, and responding. Through creating, distributing, and reacting to texts of all kinds, people are able to communicate, express ideas, and store information. The production and very existence of texts has political, economic, and social significance.⁸⁷ Representations in published narratives are infused with meanings about gender, class, and race. Gold-rush narratives in particular are part of a wider context of colonial writing, where experiences in Australia and New Zealand were classified, mythologised, and gendered.⁸⁸

Although colonial readers in Victoria and Otago consumed many different kinds of texts simultaneously, newspapers dominated the printed world. Newspapers were particularly popular in New Zealand because imported books could be expensive.⁸⁹ It was said of the time that a man who did not read a newspaper was “only partially alive”.⁹⁰ Newspapers possessed great value in the colonies for a number of reasons, including that they helped to maintain links to ‘home’ (usually Europe) and shaped ideas about the frontier in both New Zealand and Australia.⁹¹ Connections to people and places were particularly important in nineteenth-century society, as mobility characterised this colonial period.⁹² Gold-rushes exaggerated this sense of isolation and detachment through the natural

⁸⁷ Keith Maslen, Ross Harvey, and Penny Griffith, ‘Introduction’, in *Book & Print in New Zealand: A Guide to Print Culture in Aotearoa*, ed. by Keith Maslen, Ross Harvey, and Penny Griffith (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997), p. 11.

⁸⁸ Peter Gibbons, ‘Non-fiction’, in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, ed. by Terry Sturm, 2nd edition (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 33.

⁸⁹ Tony Ballantyne, ‘Reading the Newspaper in Colonial Otago’, *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, 12 (2011), p. 58.

⁹⁰ Archibald Fletcher, quoted in Ballantyne, ‘Reading the Newspaper in Colonial Otago’, p. 48.

⁹¹ Ballantyne, ‘Reading the Newspaper in Colonial Otago’, p. 48.

⁹² Catharine Coleborne, ‘Regulating ‘Mobility’ and Masculinity through Institutions in Colonial Victoria, 1870s-1890s’, *Law Text Culture*, 15 (2012), p. 45.

transiency of goldmining as employment: “the gold-rush made placelessness a way of life”.⁹³

Goldfields newspapers could benefit their goldmining audience in particular ways. Newspapers based in mining towns in Victoria and Otago could inflate a miner’s “sense of their own importance” as newspaper editors reassured them that they were valuable to colonial society.⁹⁴ For example, in 1854, the *Gold-Diggers Advocate* was founded in Melbourne. Its owner and editor intended the newspaper to serve as a forum for debate and wanted readers to feel like they ‘owned’ the newspaper. Columns such as ‘The Diggers Speak for Themselves’ sought to achieve this connection.⁹⁵ Newspapers also provided goldminers with a platform for political expression, a vehicle for announcing new gold discoveries, and a means of transmitting news between geographically distinct goldfields.

The supremacy of newspapers questions authors’ motives for pursuing the publication of a narrative of their experiences in the colonies – or on the goldfields. Publishing, after all, can be broadly defined as “uttering to the public”.⁹⁶ Many of the authors of the narratives used in this thesis claim necessity for writing and publishing their texts, particularly those published very soon after their creation. For example, William Howitt, an author who decided before he had even left home to write a book of his goldfields’ experiences, intended to pen an account that would be “trustworthy and informing” for potential migrants.⁹⁷ He saw it as his duty to provide an honest description of social and political life in Victoria.⁹⁸ Charles Rudston Read, whose narrative of the goldfields of Victoria was written in 1853 and published that same year, expressed his reasons for the publication of his text:

⁹³ Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History*, three volumes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), II, p. 247.

⁹⁴ Atkinson, pp. 238-239.

⁹⁵ Atkinson, p. 235.

⁹⁶ Maslen, Harvey, and Griffith, ‘Introduction’, in *Book & Print in New Zealand*, p. 14.

⁹⁷ Howitt, p. 10.

⁹⁸ William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton, and Barry Andrews, ‘Howitt, William (1792-1879)’, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, 2nd edition, 1994
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/10.1093/acref/9780195533811.001.0001/acref-9780195533811-e-1643?rskey=gkSVOX&result=1644>> [accessed 5 February 2015]; Howitt, p. viii.

First, the desire to convey correct information on many points of interest; secondly, to offer what I consider useful advice with regard to the inconsiderate emigration... towards Australian shores.⁹⁹

Read's language indicates that he believed incorrect information was being provided and this misinformation was informing impulsive migration to the colonies. Guidebooks like Read's relied on the author's eyewitness accounts to provide legitimacy to the information they delivered. Guidebooks in the colony provided important sources of information for intending migrants, especially in the early years of settlement, when information about a particular location was often scarce. Most colonial narratives intended to provide "insight into colonial life".¹⁰⁰

These various references to a 'need' to share are perhaps an implicit response to the subjective nature of newspapers. Colonial newspapers were "assemblages" where economics, politics, technology, and culture collided.¹⁰¹ The newspaper editor performed a significant role in selecting content and shaping the depiction of that content. A sensible editor would be "anxious to promote the good name of those around him" and would strive to "elevate them physically, mentally, and morally".¹⁰² It is important to reflect on these assertions with an understanding that many newspaper editors in the colonies were also businessmen or had political aspirations. In 1861, The *Otago Daily Times* was co-founded by Julius Vogel, who had unsuccessfully pursued a political career in Victoria.¹⁰³ He was elected to the Otago Provincial Council in 1863, later became a Member of Parliament for Dunedin North, and was Premier of New Zealand during the mid-1870s.¹⁰⁴ Vogel's colleague at the *Otago Daily Times*, William Henry Cutten, also held positions in the Otago Provincial Council and the New Zealand Parliament in later life. Vogel himself had previously worked as

⁹⁹ C. Rudston Read, *What I Heard, Saw, and Did at the Australian Gold Fields* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1853), p. iii.

¹⁰⁰ Gibbons, 'Non-fiction', in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, p. 48.

¹⁰¹ Ballantyne, 'Reading the Newspaper in Colonial Otago', p. 49.

¹⁰² Ballantyne, 'Reading the Newspaper in Colonial Otago', p. 48.

¹⁰³ Raewyn Dalziel, *Julius Vogel: Business Politician* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986), p. 30-31.

¹⁰⁴ Raewyn Dalziel, *Vogel, Julius – Biography – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 30 October 2012 <<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1v4/vogel-julius>> [accessed 10 April 2014].

editor for the *Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser* during his time in Victoria during the 1850s.¹⁰⁵ Jabez Banfield of the *Ararat Advertiser* and John Paten of the *Avoca Mail* also used their respective publications to assist in their “pursuit of civil appointments” in gold-rush Victoria.¹⁰⁶

Newspaper editors were, therefore, often personally invested in the ‘social health’ of their readers. They wished to see their part of the colony grow and improve, with a hope that perhaps some of the credit would be imparted to their textual influence on that success. Newspapers were not simply vehicles for the communication of opinions and beliefs, however. They also shaped and influenced those beliefs through the very act of recording and through the ways in which content was both recorded and expressed.¹⁰⁷ The cyclical pattern of text consumption, response and reworking was an integral part of colonial print culture.

Gold-rush narratives, considered within the wider frame of colonial narratives, conform to this pattern of consumption and response. The perceived necessity for publicly available travel narratives and guidebooks regarding the goldfields of Victoria and Otago either existed as an antithesis to the colonial newspaper, or as a complimentary form of reading intended to provide a reader with an extended supply of knowledge. The latter seems more likely as the writing of goldfields correspondents was sometimes serialised in newspapers, and several of these correspondents went on to publish their periodical work in its entirety. Sigismund Wekey is one such author specifically referenced in this thesis. During 1862, he was a writer for the *Otago Daily Times*, where his comments on the Otago goldfields were published under the title, ‘Rambles Through the Gold-fields’. His columns were published in book form soon after, with some additions, in order to share his experiences with a wider audience.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Dalziel, *Business Politician*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁶ Sue Hughes, Dirk H.R. Spennemann, and Ross Harvey, ‘Tracing the Material Culture of the Goldfields’ Press in Colonial Victoria’, *Media History*, 10, 2 (2004), p. 89.

¹⁰⁷ Tony Ballantyne, ‘Reading the Newspaper in Colonial Otago’, p. 49.

¹⁰⁸ Sigismund Wekey, *Otago: Its Goldfields and Resources* (Melbourne: W. H. Williams, 1862), preface, no page.

David Goodman has asserted that narratives were “*the* major form of book publishing” in the gold-rush period (emphasis in original). He explained that the distinction between guidebooks and ‘traveller’s books’ was unclear at this time due to intensifying global mobility.¹⁰⁹ For example, nineteenth-century Australian society was characterised by a “travelled aspect”:

there are mingled through [Australian society] men who have seen much of the world, and have also been more or less forced to use their minds. This gives an unusually diversified and manly tone to conversation...¹¹⁰

The popularity of travel narratives in the nineteenth-century, therefore, reflects the general experience of travel that was common to many. Gold-rush narratives specifically existed to inform. They assisted emigration decisions, or entertained by providing a “horizon of interest and engagement”.¹¹¹

This thesis also considers one further form of gold-rush narrative: the memoir or reminiscence. These books were published later in the life of the author, often many years after their goldfields experiences. In the construction of its content, gold-rush memoirs relied upon memory or diaries and other correspondence. G. O. Preshaw’s narrative was published in 1888 and was based upon the author’s diaries and his father’s notebooks, which both recorded events from Victoria’s goldfields from 1852 to 1860.¹¹² Charles Ferguson, however, claimed to have never kept a diary and instead wrote his narrative from memory, also in 1888.

Consideration of ‘improvement writing’ is necessary to investigate the effect of print culture on gold-rush reminiscences and memoirs. Improvement was a “colonial keyword” and seemed to be the collective goal of colonial societies. Just as landscapes and culture could be improved, so could the individual – everything from reading and morality to lifestyle and fortune. Encouragement of self-improvement was often used

¹⁰⁹ David Goodman, ‘Reading Gold-Rush Travellers’ Narratives’, p. 99.

¹¹⁰ John Fitzgerald Leslie Foster, quoted in Goodman, ‘Reading Gold-Rush Travellers’ Narratives, p. 100.

¹¹¹ Goodman, ‘Reading Gold-Rush Travellers’ Narratives, p. 100.

¹¹² G. O. Preshaw, *Banking Under Difficulties or Life on the Goldfields* (Christchurch: Capper Press, 1971), pp. vii, viii.

as a means to motivate action and the perceived necessity for improvement was utilised as a justification for the act of colonization.¹¹³ Authors of memoirs published years after the peak of the gold-rush period in Victoria and Otago highlight this interest in improvement through their comparisons to the past. Vincent Pyke, whose 1862 experiences were published in 1867, described the gold-fever gradually fading away, to be replaced “now” with a “steady, plodding [gold] industry”.¹¹⁴ This stability is in direct contrast to the excitement and social disruption that was visible on the Otago goldfields in the early 1860s. This retrospection visible in memoirs and reminiscences is linked to the validation of colonial society.

The creation and publication of texts is only one element of print culture, however. Unfortunately, an in-depth analysis of readership and responses to the selected narratives employed by this thesis is not possible. Little-to-no primary source material has been uncovered relating to the reception of these narratives and while secondary sources refer to readership claims with no indication of their origin. Assertions that Ellen Clacy’s travel narrative was an “instantaneous success” and that Charles Ferguson’s memoir “sold out three editions, ten thousand copies, at five dollars each” are challenging to verify.¹¹⁵

Methodology

This thesis primarily interprets published narratives that discuss life on the goldfields of Victoria, Australia, and Otago, New Zealand, in order to analyse how trans-Tasman gold-rushes were perceived and presented by contemporary narrative authors. Narratives are valuable sources for historical enquiry, because as humans, we intuitively create and consume

¹¹³ Tony Ballantyne, ‘Culture and Colonization: Revisiting the Place of Writing in Colonial New Zealand’, *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, 9 (2010), p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Pyke, p. 91.

¹¹⁵ William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton, and Barry Andrews, ‘Clacy, Ellen (1830-?)’, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, 2nd edition, 1994
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/10.1093/acref/9780195533811.001.0001/acref-9780195533811-e-735?rskey=mWJv4P&result=736>> [accessed 5 February 2015]; Charles D. Ferguson, *Experiences of a Forty-niner in Australia and New Zealand* (Melbourne: Gaston Renard, 1979), p. xxv.

narratives. We exist as story tellers in a world of narrative making.¹¹⁶ We not only narrate our personal experiences, but we are also immersed in narratives produced by others. Narratives are present in our daily lives; in our education, our careers, and the media. The desire for humans to narrate is so instinctive that it has been suggested that “narrative construction is the dominant process the human brain uses to represent reality”.¹¹⁷

It can be difficult to precisely define the term ‘narrative’, however. Broadly, a narrative consists of two components: story and discourse. Story refers to the actual content of the narrative, such as characters, location, context, and events.¹¹⁸ Discourses are “practises which systematically form the objects of which they speak”.¹¹⁹ These practises relate to the way in which the narrative content is expressed, and can include focalisation, expression, inclusion (and exclusion), emplotment, and positioning. Through these methods, narratives interpret events and shape personal identities.¹²⁰ Therefore, due to the interpretive nature of narratives, they are representations. They are “the construction of meaning through signs and concepts”.¹²¹ Just as representations can differ between individuals, narrative content and tone can too.

Closely linked to the construction of narrative is memory. Memory informs the manufacture of narrative and in turn, narrative helps to organise memories into some form of coherent, comprehensible system. Remembering is a kind of *narrating* – an act that produces the narrative or discourse.¹²² Memory is an important consideration in this thesis as several of the selected narratives were written years after the end of the gold-rushes. These memoirs and reminisces rely on the author’s memory

¹¹⁶ Frank Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 245.

¹¹⁷ Alun Munslow, *Narrative and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 16; Hayden White, ‘The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality’, *Critical Inquiry*, 7, 1 (1980), p. 5.

¹¹⁸ Munslow, p. 20.

¹¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 54.

¹²⁰ Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis* (Newbury Park: Sage Publication, 1993), p. 2.

¹²¹ Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory*, 3rd edition (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 239.

¹²² Munslow, *Narrative and History*, p. 22.

to recount events and experiences of this gold-rush time. To fully investigate representations produced by the narrative, it is necessary to consider the ways in which the author's memories may have been influenced by events or experiences in the intervening time. For example, attitudes towards Chinese goldminers may have been overwhelming negative at the height of gold fever, but as the gold ran out and Chinese returned to China or moved on to other industries, sentiments may have softened as the perceived threat posed by Chinese diminished. A narrative author reminiscing about the goldfields in later years may be influenced by hindsight; in retrospect, perhaps Chinese goldminers were not such a menace after all.

Historians have only begun to consider the importance of memory and ways of remembering in more recent years, but it has arguably become significant as a part of cultural history methodologies.¹²³ Memory and remembering are “central to our sense of self as human beings” and provide useful indications of how individuals and groups construct their sense of the past.¹²⁴ Our memories are inextricably bundled with our own opinions, beliefs, and interpretations:

we do not store judgement-free snapshots of our past experiences but rather hold on to the meaning, sense, and emotions these experiences provided us.¹²⁵

The act of remembering involves actively representing and constructing people, places, and events in order to create narratives. These narratives are created with the assistance of linguistic tools and are influenced by the social and cultural context within which the narrative is shared.¹²⁶ Memory is instrumental in producing discourse, one of the two main components of narrative construction.

¹²³ Alon Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method', *The American Historical Review*, 102, 5 (1997), p. 1386.

¹²⁴ Anna Green, *Cultural History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 83; Confino, p. 1386.

¹²⁵ Daniel L. Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), p. 5.

¹²⁶ Green, p. 95.

Discourse has been described as any communication between a writer (or speaker) and an audience, with intention – on the part of the producer – to influence the consumer.¹²⁷ Published narratives fit this classification. Such narratives are of particular interest to this thesis as their content was created for the express purpose of sharing. Nineteenth-century goldfields narratives were written at a time when mobility across oceans was becoming quicker, easier, and more accessible to all classes of society. Narratives borne from the rushes in Victoria and Otago may have influenced decisions to immigrate to the colonies, for gold or otherwise. As David Goodman has highlighted, emigration was one of the most important global questions of the nineteenth-century.¹²⁸

While diaries and journals may have existed purely for memory recording, publishing a book of memoirs provided a vehicle for sharing a narrative. The scope of this one-way communication is extensive when compared to the influence of personal correspondence. While letters, too, may have encouraged movement of people, their intended audience was often small – a friend or a family member – and their content was likely to be specifically relevant to the recipient. Published texts, on the other hand, provided an opportunity for wider consumption of narrative content based on general information and personal observations.

This thesis is concerned with textual representations of particular themes within the selected published narratives. Textual analysis is a useful for historical examinations of narratives, particularly in those studies that consider binaries. The very ‘deconstruction’ of narratives aims to critique assumed binary oppositions.¹²⁹ Narrative analysis is also complementary to the examination of bias, prejudice, and imagination.¹³⁰ This thesis will focus on three dichotomies under the more general thematic headings of success and failure, order and disorder, and race and gender minorities. A textual, narrative-based approach was selected for this thesis on its ability to examine the aforementioned themes and place their content in

¹²⁷ Green, p. 72.

¹²⁸ Goodman, ‘Reading Gold-Rush Travellers’ Narratives, p. 99.

¹²⁹ Green, p. 76.

¹³⁰ Riessman, p. 5.

the relative colonial contexts, while considering the wider implications of representations found in the selected narratives.

Analysis of these themes within the narratives will consider “the ways in which people make and use stories to interpret the world”.¹³¹ This methodology has been widely utilised. It is an inherently interdisciplinary approach and does not belong to any single scholarly subject or field.¹³² Its introduction into history specifically can be traced to the popularisation of cultural history visible throughout the mid- to late-twentieth century. This movement occurred because it was believed that “a coherent scientific explanation of change in the past” was not possible, and instead descriptions of the past depended on an individual’s “imaginative interpretation” of that past.¹³³

Interpretations are never objective and therefore narratives reflect the social and cultural world in which the narrative author inhabits.¹³⁴ By studying representations found in particular narratives, this thesis aims to construct a view of gold-rush Victoria and Otago based on the personal experiences of the narrative authors. Hayden White, the main proponent of the linguistic turn in the discipline of history, asserted that narratives do not *reproduce* the events they describe. Instead, narrative “calls to mind” images of what it speaks.¹³⁵ Narrative is not a neutral structure into which content is placed via narration, but is actually “ideologically freighted”.¹³⁶ Narratives are significantly bound to concepts of power and powerlessness. Power shapes and is shaped by discourse.¹³⁷ Therefore, narratives are both interpretive and demand interpretation, and can provide a meaningful platform for historical investigation.

¹³¹ Steph Lawler, ‘Narrative in Social Research’, in *Qualitative Research in Action*, ed. by Tim May (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), p. 242.

¹³² Riessman, p. 1.

¹³³ Lawrence Stone, ‘The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History’, *Past and Present*, 85 (1979), p. 19; Adam Budd, ‘Introduction to Part 10’, in *The Modern Historiography Reader: Western Sources*, ed. by Adam Budd (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 345.

¹³⁴ Riessman, p. 5.

¹³⁵ Hayden White, ‘The Historical Text as Literary Artifact’, in *The Modern Historiography Reader: Western Sources*, ed. by Adam Budd (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 358.

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, M.A; London: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 86.

¹³⁷ Michelle M. Lazar and Cheris Kramarae, ‘Gender and Power in Discourse’, in *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, ed. by Teun A. van Dijk, 2nd edition (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), p. 217.

This thesis examines thirteen published narratives, written by nineteenth-century authors who visited the goldfields of Victoria or Otago. Most were travellers, who recorded their experiences with the intention of returning 'home' after a period, but some – like Alexander Bathgate and John Rochfort – eventually settled in the Australasian colonies.

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 display the narratives examined by this thesis.

Table 1.1

Narratives of Victoria's goldfields

Author	Title	Year visited	Year published	Type of narrative
David Mackenzie	<i>The Gold Digger: A Visit to the Goldfields of Australia</i>	1852	1852	Guidebook
Ellen Clacy	<i>A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-53</i>	1852-1853	1853	Travel writing
William Howitt	<i>Land, Labour and Gold</i>	1852-1854	1855	Travel writing
G. O. Preshaw	<i>Banking Under Difficulties or Life on the Goldfields</i>	1852-1860	1888	Memoir/reminisce
Charles Ferguson	<i>Experiences of a Forty Niner in Australia and New Zealand</i>	1852-1861	1888	Memoir/reminisce
C. Rudston Read	<i>What I Heard, Saw and Did at the Australian Gold Diggings</i>	-1853	1853	Travel writing/guidebook
John Rochfort	<i>The Adventures of a Surveyor in New Zealand and the Australian Gold Diggings</i>	-1853	1853	Travel writing

Table 1.2

Narratives of Otago's goldfields

Author	Title	Years visited	Year published	Type of narrative
Robert Booth	<i>Five Years in New Zealand 1859-1864</i>	1859-1864	1912	Memoir/reminisce
Mr. Wheeler	<i>The New Zealand Goldfields, 1861: A Series of Letters Reprinted from the Melbourne Argus</i>	1861	1861	Travel writing/guidebook
Vincent Pyke	<i>History of the Early Gold Discoveries in Otago</i>	1862	1887	Memoir/reminisce
Sigusmund Wekey	<i>Otago: Its Goldfields and Resources</i>	1862	1852	Guidebook
Charles Money	<i>Knocking About in New Zealand</i>	1862	1853	Travel writing
Alexander Bathgate	<i>Colonial Experiences or Sketches of People and Places in the Province of Otago, New Zealand</i>	1863+	1874	Memoir/reminisce

The selected narratives were chosen for use in this thesis for several reasons. First, they were selected for their geographical and temporal relevance. The narrative was required to record experiences in Victoria or Otago or both, although no suitable narratives pertaining to both locations were found for this thesis. It was also necessary that the narrative discussed gold-rush experiences in the 1850s (Victoria) or 1860s (Otago). Second, they were selected for their accessibility for historians and other researchers. The examined narratives are readily available in university and public libraries, and many are also available for free digital download online.¹³⁸ The ease by which these sources can be obtained provides an opportunity for this thesis to exist as a foundation for future investigation into the subject of goldfields representations. Third, they were selected for the depth and breadth of their content. Narratives were chosen on their ability to portray several of the themes relevant to this thesis.¹³⁹ Length of the narrative was also considered to ensure detail presented was sufficient for a textual analysis methodology. Lastly, narratives were compared to each other to guarantee some variance in the author's nationality, their economic and social background, and the type of account written. It is important to note, however, that authors of travel writing were generally white, European men (and occasionally women) who enjoyed significant levels of social and economic privilege.¹⁴⁰ The stories they have created are shaped by their world views and it is the intention of this thesis to dissect the representations produced by these authors in the Australasian gold-rush context.

¹³⁸ The Early New Zealand Books Collection, curated by staff at the University of Auckland, is a particularly useful resource for nineteenth- and twentieth-century books relating to New Zealand: <<http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/>>.

¹³⁹ For example, Richard Burgess wrote his gold-rush memoir *Guilty Wretch That I Am: Echoes of Australian Bushrangers* while awaiting execution in 1866. Due to the nature of his occupation as a criminal, his narrative focuses solely on experiences related to the 'order and disorder' theme of this thesis. He does not, however, discuss the goldfields in detail; the gold-rush is somewhat ancillary to his story. Furthermore, his exclusion of concepts of success, failure, or 'the other' eliminated the use of this narrative in this thesis.

¹⁴⁰ Helen Gilbert and Anna Johnston, 'Introduction', in *In Transit: Travel, Text, Empire*, ed. by Helen Gilbert and Anna Johnston (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 3.

Chapter One – Boom and Bust: Success and Failure

Throughout the nineteenth-century, gold-rushes in locations such as Canada, America, Australia, and New Zealand, provoked the movement of thousands of people in search of wealth and fortune. Not all who followed this dream were able to make it a reality to that degree, however. Few found prosperity, but many made a small amount of money.¹ This chapter will discuss the theme of success and failure on the goldfields of Victoria and Otago by unpicking what these terms meant to narrative writers in the contemporary gold-rush context. This chapter draws upon a variety of goldfields narratives produced by authors with experiences in either of these two locations, as defined in table 1.1 and 1.2 earlier in this thesis.

This chapter begins each geographically defined section by considering how colonial writers formed their definitions of success. Varying measures of success and failure will be discussed, including comparisons between different groups represented in the narratives. For example, a main point of contrast between Chinese and European miners is that Chinese gold seekers were generally sojourners and their gold-related goals reflected this transiency.² Further examination of the selected narratives will emphasise what the authors believed affected an individual's digging prospects either positively or negatively. This chapter will conclude by reflecting on similarities and differences in the conceptualisation of success and failure existed in narratives of the Victoria and Otago, and changes over time between the two locations.

¹ Mark Peel and Christina Twomey, *A History of Australia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 75.

² James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, four volumes (Dunedin: Otago Heritage Books, 1993), I, p. 85.

Victoria

Despite the collective aspirations of colonial settler society, the narratives examined suggest that success on Victoria's goldfields was generally defined by individuals. Authorities in Victoria also portrayed an image of a successful digger, however. Some individuals decided upon a monetary goal, at the achievement of which they would return 'home'. For example, Charles Ferguson, an American who spent time on the Californian goldfields in the early 1850s, arrived in Melbourne in 1852 to try his hand at prospecting. By recounting a conversation with a fellow digger, Ferguson revealed that he hoped to return home – to Ohio – when he had made one thousand pounds.³ His choice of words is particularly interesting. Ferguson specifically states *when*, rather than *if*, which implies that he expected to reach his goal with relative ease. Others set themselves investment goals, such as the man who wished to earn enough through gold-digging to purchase land and stock for a sheep-run.⁴ Generally, diggers themselves considered success to be earning at least a pound per day.⁵ Digging was often considered a "stepping-stone to independence elsewhere".⁶ This sentiment is reflected in migration figures. Of the 290 000 migrants who arrived in Victoria from Britain and Ireland in the period from 1852 to 1860, Victoria only retained two-thirds of this number. Many returned to Europe or moved on to other colonies.⁷ Goldmining was a transient occupation and many intended to leave Victoria once they had amassed their wealth. Nineteenth-century Chinese gold seekers were particularly known for their sojournism.

Victorian authorities also helped to establish a definition of a successful digger. In 1852, William Howitt, an English pharmacist-turned-author,

³ Charles D. Ferguson, *Experiences of a Forty-niner in Australia and New Zealand* (Melbourne: Gaston Renard, 1979), p. 35.

⁴ Mrs. Charles (Ellen) Clacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-53* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853), available at Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4054.epub.images?session_id=1beb9c48732a6cce9213fa15af68a91c1fa137ee>, p. 36.

⁵ C. Rudston Read, *What I Heard, Saw and Did at the Australian Gold Diggings* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1853), p. 208.

⁶ Clacy, p. 32.

⁷ Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), p. 44.

accused the “Melbournians” of portraying a fable, where one could visit the goldfields, easily dig several bags of gold, and return home again.⁸ Howitt writes of meeting some of his former shipmates on their way back from the Ovens Diggings. They condemned claims by various local government figures that digging for gold was “pretty much like digging potatoes”.⁹ However, claims that success for some was achieved as easily as these comments described still persisted in some narratives. Ferguson declared that a digging party who found a seventy-two pound nugget at the Ballarat goldfield in 1853 returned to England in the same ship they came in, less than six weeks after their initial arrival.¹⁰ There is perhaps an element of myth to Ferguson’s story, as his narrative was written and published more than 35 years after his visit to Victoria’s goldfields. By this time, gold fever had declined into stable mining industries in locations with resources to sustain production past the gold-rush days. Ferguson’s book was a memoir of those days and his memory of events may be influenced by an element of nostalgia.

Often a successful digger could be recognized by his spending habits in towns and cities near the goldfields. Any degree of mining success was sufficient; due to the rough and ready nature of the goldfields any success was reason to celebrate. A favourite way to splurge goldfields earnings was on alcohol. Drinking was prohibited on the goldfields, although many sly-grog shops persisted despite the risk of fines, claim confiscation, and imprisonment. Howitt referred to the activity of going to town to drink as a ‘spree’.¹¹ The diggers amused themselves in Melbourne by making rounds of many of the public-houses, as they claimed there was nothing else to do in the town during the daytime.¹² It appears that the allure of alcohol was increased due to its restriction on the goldfields themselves.

Patterns of consumption were on display during social events such as weddings. Digger weddings were also a common occurrence among the

⁸ William Howitt, *Land, Labour and Gold* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972), p. 169.

⁹ Howitt, p. 147.

¹⁰ Ferguson, p. 42.

¹¹ Ferguson, p. 21.

¹² John Rochfort, *The Adventures of a Surveyor in New Zealand and the Australian Gold Diggings* (London: David Bogue, 1853), p. 62.

successful and narrative authors took particular notice of this custom. Howitt wrote that “lots of diggers” married when they went to Melbourne to spend their money.¹³ The weddings themselves seem to have been largely without ceremony or tradition, but instead involved plenty of alcohol and jubilation:

Sometimes a jovial wedding-party comes dashing through the streets; there they go, the bridegroom with one arm round his lady's waist, the other raising a champagne-bottle to his lips; the gay vehicles that follow contain company even more unrestrained, and from them noisier demonstrations of merriment may be heard. These diggers' weddings are all the rage...¹⁴

Ellen Clacy, who visited the Victorian goldfields with her brother in 1852 and 1853, wrote of several successful diggers she witnessed in Melbourne shops. Their conduct undoubtedly made them conspicuous to an author's eye. The first was a man who insisted on purchasing the most expensive satin a dress-maker sold, and the second, wanted to buy the largest wedding cake a pastry-cook could make.¹⁵ In a colonial society, wealth meant social mobility, and successful diggers sought to make their change in circumstances known through their purchases. A satin dress contrasted starkly against the cotton the diggers' wife had worn at their wedding, and a wedding cake was a vast improvement on the standard goldfields fare of damper and meat.¹⁶

Many factors could influence a digger's chance of success. The most significant was luck. The story above about the digging party finding the large gold nugget was explained by Ferguson as being “luck, indeed”.¹⁷ Early alluvial mining techniques did not require specific education or knowledge to obtain gold, hence its initial attraction as an activity requiring little expertise or capital. The main opportunity for success derived from perseverance for that elusive stroke of luck. Different goldfields required different mining techniques. As time went on, skill and experience became more useful, especially when easily-obtainable gold became especially

¹³ Howitt, p. 170.

¹⁴ Clacy, p. 14.

¹⁵ Clacy, p. 93.

¹⁶ Clacy, p. 93.

¹⁷ Ferguson, p. 42.

scarce. 'Wet' goldfields in particular, such as Reid's Creek, made it "impossible for inexperienced miners to work the ground thoroughly".¹⁸ Abandoning a claim that had not been worked fully could mean abandoning gold to a more experienced digger – also known as being 'jumped'. These wet goldfields required claims to be worked day and night in order to keep the water levels low, and the earth sides of the shaft demanded the construction of timber casing to prevent the sides collapsing on the diggers inside.¹⁹ If a digging party wanted to make a concerted attempt at prospecting on a wet goldfield, they needed knowledge of the best ways to obtain gold in such conditions.

Networking was also important to success on Victoria's goldfields. Friends made and acquaintances met could change the course of a digger's career. There was preference for word-of-mouth information regarding new gold discoveries, before it was published widely in newspapers, to ensure prime position on a relatively empty goldfield. Rumours alone were often enough to persuade diggers to pack up their tents without a second thought and go in search of their next, hopefully wildly successful, claim. Some preferred more reliable evidence, however. In 1852, Ferguson was reluctant to abandon his claim at Bendigo despite receiving a letter from friends stating that they had found gold in Spring Creek, New South Wales.²⁰ Howitt delayed his party's journey to the Ovens Diggings so that they could gather more information about the goldfield. He placed importance on private sources, but seemed more satisfied with its veracity when the evidence provided matched that published in newspapers later.²¹ While not all digging successes relied upon being one of the first to the field, being able to investigate and select the best location for a claim certainly helped. Claims were of a limited size, so it was not feasible to assert ownership over an entire goldfield for your party alone once others arrived. Howitt and his companions believed they would go home "laden

¹⁸ Ferguson, p. 42.

¹⁹ Howitt, p. 178.

²⁰ Ferguson, p. 26.

²¹ Howitt, p. 47.

like bees” – a phrase which captures the image of gold – if they were able to secure a few months of unmolested digging.²²

Individuals did not have to prospect for gold to be ‘successful’. Many found themselves the beneficiaries of a booming population which required food, supplies, and other infrastructure. The gold-rushes of Victoria significantly affected the hospitality industry in particular, as the number of travellers requiring food and accommodation increased dramatically.²³ A friend of Ferguson’s, who had travelled from America with him, found success as a baker.²⁴ Due to extraordinary high inflation on goods and the general shortage of food, hospitality was a thriving goldfields industry. In 1852 at the Beechworth diggings, a four pound loaf of bread sold for five shillings, the same cost as a bed for one night in Melbourne, which you had to share with two to three others who had also paid their five shillings.²⁵ Trade-based skills were also in intense demand in urban areas near goldfields, such as Melbourne, as a result of an ever-increasing population. Howitt claimed that joiners, bricklayers, tailors, gardeners, carpenters and others, made good wages and were “snapped up instantly” by employers.²⁶ It was understood that tradesmen were likely to make a fortune quicker than a digger could, and enjoyed more comfortable working conditions and less risk to their person.²⁷

The sale of alcohol on the goldfields could be a profitable venture, so long as an individual could remain undetected by authorities. It was illegal to sell liquor on the goldfields but many sly-grog shops persisted despite the ban. Following a long, debilitating illness, Ferguson sought a non-digging means of income. In 1853, he started a restaurant on the Ballarat goldfield, but his main money earner was actually as a sly-grog seller. After receiving information about an upcoming raid on his business, he

²² Howitt, p. 207.

²³ Ian Clark and David Cahir, ‘The Comfort of Strangers: Hospitality on the Victorian Goldfields, 1850-1860’, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 15 (2008), p. 2.

²⁴ Ferguson, p. 33.

²⁵ Ferguson, pp. 21, 33, 37.

²⁶ Howitt, p. 40.

²⁷ Clacy, p. 31.

sold up, avoided exposure of his activities, and rejoiced at his six hundred pound profit.²⁸

Success was present on the Victorian goldfields in many forms, yet so was its counterpart, failure. Most obviously, an individual could 'fail' on the goldfields by simply not finding any gold. If gold provided the main source of income, poverty and destitution could quickly catch up with the digger who did not secure a paying claim quickly. Clacy likened success on the goldfields to selecting lottery tickets: "the blanks far outnumber the prizes".²⁹ Some claims were simply not profitable. The diggers named these 'duffers'.³⁰ Much time could be spent 'shepherding' – where a digger would peg a claim based on where the gold lead was expected to run, and wait months or weeks before sinking his hole, all the while scrutinising the success or otherwise of those nearby – but the leads could take unexpected turns, leaving the digger with a claim unlikely to produce much gold.³¹ Ferguson dismissed the idea of good judgement affecting these outcomes – it was merely blind luck.³² Just as bad luck could play a part in failure, other unfortunate events could also result in disaster. Some individuals experienced hardship despite the profitability or otherwise of their claim as a result of sickness or unsuitability to the demands of goldfields labour.

The physically demanding work of goldmining took its toll on diggers' bodies and minds. Physical conditions were worsened by harsh climate conditions, and this resulted in the abandonment of many gold-digging dreams. Mackenzie referenced hundreds of diggers returning from the goldfields with "broken hearts and broken constitutions" after discovering that they were unable to maintain the high levels of energy required to work a claim.³³ The increased transiency experienced by goldminers also took a toll on their sanity. Their perceived need to travel to goldfield after goldfield in search of their lucky break made it difficult to foster long-lasting

²⁸ Ferguson, p. 44.

²⁹ Clacy, p. 33.

³⁰ Ferguson, p. 49.

³¹ Ferguson, p. 48.

³² Ferguson, p. 50.

³³ David Mackenzie, *The Gold Digger: A Visit to the Gold Fields of Australia* (London: WM. S Orr, 1852), p. 56.

mateship connections. For example, 'bush mania', a form of colonial-specific madness, was believed to be created by isolation and desolation.³⁴ Historian Stephen Garton concluded that "the maniacal labourer", such as the digger who mined claim after claim at high risk to his person, was the "typical Australian lunatic".³⁵

Howitt asserted that many of the disappointed who returned from Mount Alexander were simply unfit for the labour and had exhausted themselves in their journey to the diggings.³⁶ Travelling to the goldfields was a difficulty of its own. In 1852, Howitt lamented the neglect of road links to the goldfields:

There is scarcely a wooden bridge over a gully; and there is not a dangerous piece of hill-side... where the Government spade or pick has left its trace... Their carts and drays are dashed to pieces; their goods are shattered and damaged; their horses and bullocks are injured, and even killed, by scores, on roads, so called ...³⁷

Labour on the diggings themselves was also brutal and unrelenting. Many had immigrated with the idea that obtaining gold was as easy as picking up nuggets which "lie upon the ground at their feet".³⁸ An expectation existed that on arrival in Melbourne, interested individuals could easily find gold and then decide whether to remain in the colony or return home.³⁹ With the circulation of such myths, it is no surprise that many arrived ill-prepared for the labour expected of them and consequently did not succeed on the goldfields. Several of the authors examined in this thesis did their best to dissuade potential gold-seekers from believing these fables. Howitt suggested working at a coal-pit and a stone-quarry, as well as digging a fifty foot well in a very wet location, in order to gain a sense of

³⁴ Catharine Coleborne, 'Making 'mad' Populations in Settler Colonies: the work of law and medicine in the creation of the colonial asylum', in *Law, History, Colonialism: The Reach of Empire*, ed. by Diane Kirkby and Catharine Coleborne (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 112.

³⁵ Stephen Garton, 'The Dimensions of Dementia', in *Constructing a Culture: A People's History of Australia Since 1788*, ed. by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988), p. 67.

³⁶ Howitt, p. 48.

³⁷ Howitt, pp. 139-140.

³⁸ Clacy, p. 95.

³⁹ Read, p. 322.

what the Australian diggings were truly like.⁴⁰ David Mackenzie, a clergyman who visited Australia twice in his lifetime, in 1835 and 1848, suggested that only physically fit men able to tolerate intense labour should consider the goldfields – and even then, such men were not guaranteed success.⁴¹ Charles Rudston Read recommended that a digger should possess the “constitution of a lion”.⁴² Howitt, Mackenzie, and Read all published their narratives soon after their respective visits to Victoria’s goldfields with the intent of providing information to potential gold seekers. Their inclusion of warnings about the harsh physical conditions are consistent with the intention of such guidebooks to provide accurate, reliable information about life in the new colonies.

Sickness and disease were common problems on the goldfields, particularly dysentery and eye complaints. According to David Mackenzie, throughout the summer of 1851, four out of five individuals at the Victorian diggings suffered from one or both of these illnesses.⁴³ Dysentery was prevalent due to the scarcity of clean water. In 1853, John Rochfort, a surveyor-engineer who spent time in both Australia and New Zealand, explained that the eagerness of the digger to find gold leads him to use any and all water for washing dirt, which leaves nothing clean for him to drink.⁴⁴ Due to the harsh physical conditions of goldfields life, including the inadequate diet, diggers’ bodies were not capable of fighting disease and infection effectively. Food on the goldfields was generally limited to beef or mutton, and damper.⁴⁵ Vegetables were a rarity.

Dysentery was common and incapacitating, and could prevent individuals from working a claim for many days. Howitt suffered with the illness for seventeen days, and did not even possess the strength to continue writing his observations over this time.⁴⁶ A new kind of illness, specific to the goldfields, also emerged. Its symptoms and cause baffled doctors. Known as ‘colonial fever’, it was a haemorrhagic fever that presented similar to

⁴⁰ Howitt, p. 179.

⁴¹ Mackenzie, p. 56.

⁴² Read, p. 208.

⁴³ Mackenzie, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Rochfort, p. 69.

⁴⁵ G. O. Preshaw, *Banking Under Difficulties or Life on the Goldfields* (Christchurch: Capper Press, 1971), p. 42.

⁴⁶ Howitt, p. 125.

typhoid at first but soon assumed characteristics of typhus, too.⁴⁷ Ferguson's young friend Walter was unwell for three weeks with this colonial fever before his condition began to improve.⁴⁸ He was lucky to survive as the ailment generally resulted in death.⁴⁹ The treatment of sicknesses was difficult. There were no hospitals on the goldfields and doctors charged a large sum to see unwell individuals. A consultation at a doctor's tent could cost ten shillings; a visit to the tent of the sick, from one to ten pounds, depending on the distance required to travel.⁵⁰ There was little a doctor could do for a digger suffering with dysentery, however. All the gold in the world could do little to cure this affliction.⁵¹

Eye inflammations, or ophthalmia, were also common on the goldfields. There were several reasons for this. The winds would often stir up much dirt and dust and drive it into the eyes of any unprotected digger.⁵² The high number of flies present on the goldfields was also a factor. They were particularly attracted to the diggings due to the large amounts of rotting meat scattered about. These flies would "stick to your eyes, enter your nose, and frequently go down your throat", with the worst outcome being that one (or more) would lay an egg inside the eyelid.⁵³ This caused the eyelid to swell, and Rochfort knew several men who lost their sight from this occurrence.⁵⁴ Dysentery and eye inflammation could persist for long periods of time, particularly if untreated, as was often the case on the goldfields. Inability to work affected a digger's productivity. If a digger was not working a claim, he could not possibly expect to find his fortune in gold.

The most poignant of all goldfields failures was that of the dead digger. Death affected wives and families left behind in cities like Melbourne, or back at home across oceans. The fortunate families had their husbands and fathers return wealthy, while the unlucky brought home nothing but

⁴⁷ Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 22.

⁴⁸ Ferguson, p. 45.

⁴⁹ Anderson, p. 22.

⁵⁰ Clacy, p. 32.

⁵¹ Preshaw, p. 42.

⁵² Clacy, p. 33.

⁵³ Mackenzie, p. 55.

⁵⁴ Rochfort, p. 64.

failure, and the wretched did not return at all.⁵⁵ Death on the goldfields was a very real possibility, not only due to sickness. Accidents were common, particularly men falling down mining holes, or earth walls collapsing in on workers. Rochfort lamented the death of one fellow digger who, in his haste to investigate his claim, neglected to employ supports on the sides of his mine.⁵⁶ Ferguson described the Bendigo's cemetery looking like a "plowed field" during the summer of 1852, as a result of the constant burials taking place.⁵⁷ Some diggers were unwilling to give up their dreams of fortune, despite adversity becoming their constant companion. They could not resist the attraction of fabled prosperous diggings which relentlessly plagued their thoughts.⁵⁸ They would, often, literally dig until they died:

"Dig till he dies." Fit motto of many a disappointed gold-seeker, the finale of many a broken up, desolated home, the last dying words of many a husband, far away from wife or kindred, with no loved ones near to soothe his departing moments—no better burial place than the very hole, perchance, in which his last earthly labours were spent. ⁵⁹

Analysis of the selected narratives has provided a definition for success on Victoria's goldfields. While both European and Chinese miners were ephemeral migrants to Victoria, Chinese gold seekers were particularly transitory, with their goal often being to return to China once they had earned enough money. Victorian authorities portrayed goldfields labour as being effortless, possibly in an effort to encourage immigration to the colony. The surveyed narratives offered measures for goldfields success, including the increased consumption of alcohol, 'digger weddings', and other extravagant purchases visible in the towns and cities nearby. Several factors that could affect mining success were suggested by the narratives. Individuals did not need to be diggers to be successful, however, and the narrative authors proposed related industries that were

⁵⁵ Margaret Anderson, 'Mrs Charles Clacy, Lola Montez and Poll the Grogseller: Glimpses of Women on the Goldfields', in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 231.

⁵⁶ Rochfort, p. 65.

⁵⁷ Ferguson, p. 28.

⁵⁸ Howitt, pp. 225-226.

⁵⁹ Clacy, p. 52.

also 'booming' thanks to the gold-rush. Lastly, failure was defined and its implications in gold-rush society revealed. Goldminers could fail in varying ways: by not locating a payable claim, by not being capable of working a claim due to bodily or mental frailty, sickness, or disease, and through death.

Otago

Authors of narratives of the Otago goldfields defined success modestly, as 'getting by'. Ideas of the gold-rush providing grand wealth and fortune, as seen in Victoria, were replaced in Otago by realistic goals. Robert Booth explained that many diggers simply worked for wages, rather than believe they could strike it lucky.⁶⁰ Diggers often found themselves in this situation as a result of their own claims being unsuccessful. With no money, returning to Dunedin was problematic, so many took up employment under those who had discovered paying claims, even if the wages did no more than pay for their food.⁶¹ However, some individuals did define their own success in the form of grand goals. It was thought that Chinese miners generally had a specific monetary goal in mind, and they often intended to leave the colony once this was achieved, hence their sojourner label. European narrative authors recorded the general desire of Chinese gold seekers to return to their homeland. Alexander Bathgate, a Scottish-born lawyer and author, suggested that Chinese diggers aimed to accumulate two or three hundred pounds, at which point they would return to China, to "pass the rest of their lives in peace and plenty".⁶² European narrative authors fail to discuss 'repeat migration' by Chinese goldminers, however. Bathgate's comments presume that on arrival in China, a returning miner would remain there. Repeat migration was common amongst sojourner

⁶⁰ Robert B. Booth, *Five Years in New Zealand 1859-1864* (London, J. G. Hammond & Co, 1912), p. 72.

⁶¹ Booth, p. 72.

⁶² Alexander Bathgate, *Colonial Experiences or Sketches of People and Places in the Province of Otago, New Zealand* (Glasgow: J Maclehose, 1874), available at Early New Zealand Books Collection
<http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docs/epub/colonial_experiences_or_sketches_of_people_and_places_in_the_province_of_otago_new_zealand-2804.epub>, p. 171.

movements, and was particularly prevalent amongst Chinese gold seekers worldwide.⁶³

Bathgate also shared the story of a European man who found wealth on the goldfields and returned home to start a business, and later became a lawyer.⁶⁴ The general consensus in Otago was that success involved pragmatically ‘bettering oneself’ – that is, to earn enough money from digging to be able to change circumstances, whether that be housing, employment, or otherwise. Successful diggers were most often encountered in towns and cities near to the goldfields, such as Dunedin, either spending their nearly earned wealth or looking for passage out of the province. A prosperous digger was generally seen as one who had money to spend in town. Mr Wheeler, whose notes on the goldfields were initially serialised in the *Melbourne Argus* in 1861 and later published in their entirety, described meeting successful parties of diggers in Dunedin who had made £300 to £400 per mate.⁶⁵

As in Victoria, luck played a large part in success on the Otago goldfields. The good fortune of others motivated diggers to persevere with their own claims. In 1861, Charles Ferguson followed the news of gold discoveries in Otago and arrived in Gabriel’s Gully from Melbourne. He described the addicting nature of gold digging and explained that one never heard the stories of the unlucky, only of those who had made “wonderful strikes and sudden fortunes”.⁶⁶ The constant tales of sudden success served as a reminder that luck could change. Mr Wheeler pointed out, however, that such instances of luck were not common.⁶⁷ Chances of success relied upon a digger’s ability to endure extreme hardship and arduous labour,⁶⁸ but even dogged persistence would not always guarantee a paying claim.

Kinship or ‘mateship’, and hospitality could contribute to a digger’s success, as in Victoria. Miners often lived, worked, and travelled in groups

⁶³ Ng, *Windows*, I, p. 85.

⁶⁴ Bathgate, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Mr. Wheeler, *The New Zealand Goldfields, 1861: A Series of Letters Reprinted from the Melbourne Argus* (Dunedin: Hocken Library, 1976), p. 15.

⁶⁶ Ferguson, p. 157.

⁶⁷ Wheeler, p. 18.

⁶⁸ J. H. M. Salmon, *A History of Gold-Mining in New Zealand* (Wellington: R. E. Owen, 1963), p. 18.

comprised of party members from the same country. These groups varied in number from four to six men.⁶⁹ These groups helped to distribute the gruelling physical labour, but also created a means of deterring would-be robbers, especially while travelling between goldfields or towns, and served as a kind of mining 'family'. Chinese miners in particular formed strong social bonds with each other, although these connections often originated in China. Chinese culture placed great value on family relationships and county loyalties.⁷⁰ Bathgate noted that individuals claimed kinship with any other digger who hailed from the same locality as they did.⁷¹ This association with 'home' allowed diggers of all nationalities to find something recognisable in an unfamiliar land. Connection with other diggers was important in Otago due to the vastness of its landscape and relative isolation from the rest of the colony. Pyke woefully described the solitude as "painful".⁷² The uncomfortable harshness of the climate, from snowy winters to dry summers, exaggerated this melancholy. A sense of community among diggers helped to stave off feelings of disconnectedness and despondency.

Acceptance of, and involvement in, social norms such as the consumption of liquor were central to ideas of mateship and goldfields 'spirit'. Participation in these customs strengthened links between party members and provided a network of friendship and mutual support. Some diggers, however, refused to partake in these social events and elected to work alone, for various reasons. These men were vilified for their choice and marked as insane. They were known as hatters, a derogatory label derived from the phrase 'mad as a hatter', which referred to the mercury poisoning which affected hat-makers who worked with felt. This term was apt as hatters often went mad from the solitude and loneliness of working alone.⁷³ Bathgate explained that hatters were unsocial and "frequently... misanthropes".⁷⁴ After spending a night as the guest of a hatter, however,

⁶⁹ James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 430.

⁷⁰ Ng, *Windows*, I, p. 91.

⁷¹ Bathgate, p. 173.

⁷² Vincent Pyke, *History of Early Gold Discoveries in Otago* (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times, 1962), p. 21.

⁷³ Edward Wakefield, *New Zealand After 50 Years* (Melbourne: Cassel, 1889), p. 165.

⁷⁴ Bathgate, p. 138.

Bathgate discovered that this individual simply did not care for the standard digging life, and was frustrated with a succession of lazy party mates who were more interested in their next drink.⁷⁵ This rationalisation illustrates the contradictory nature of alcohol on the goldfields. While the consumption of liquor was closely related to the maintenance of mateship, over-indulgence could in fact limit productivity and restrict the potential for success.

In the early stages of the Otago gold rush, there were no roads to the diggings nor inns or taverns along the way to provide beds and meals. Mining parties relied on the generous hospitality of other settlers to feed and house them on their way to the goldfields. Most expected payment for their troubles, but this was well-received by the diggers and considered fair.⁷⁶ Interestingly, a digger travelling alone was never charged for such hospitality, and those without the means to pay were provided with food nonetheless.⁷⁷

The former appears to be an attempt to foster a positive social connection with such lone miners; a paying traveller was a customer, while a guest was a friend. Historian Miles Fairburn asserted that “bondlessness was central to colonial life” and that the typical New Zealand colonist was socially independent, by necessity.⁷⁸ This bondlessness could be combatted through shared associations with others, but Fairburn has stressed the inherent weakness of colonial New Zealand’s social organisation.⁷⁹ The absorption of lone diggers into some form of kinship network – by treating them as guests, rather than customers, and perhaps beginning a reciprocal exchange of some kind – can be seen as an attempt to prevent bondlessness. ‘Bondless atoms’ were viewed negatively within colonial New Zealand. These socially disconnected men often became criminals or engaged in destructive behaviour such as

⁷⁵ Bathgate, pp. 141-142.

⁷⁶ Booth, p. 65.

⁷⁷ Sigismund Wekey, *Otago: Its Goldfields and Resources* (Melbourne: W. H. Williams, 1862), p. 30; Booth, p. 66.

⁷⁸ Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989), pp. 11-12.

⁷⁹ Miles Fairburn, ‘Vagrants, ‘Folk Devils’ and Nineteenth-Century New Zealand as a Bondless Society’, *Historical Studies*, 21, 85 (October 1985), pp. 495-496.

heavy drinking and fighting.⁸⁰ It was in society's collective best interests to prevent bondlessness where possible, and the Otago gold-rush provided a platform for the creation of social networks and associations.

The kindness shown to these early miners, both alone and in groups, significantly aided their travels to the goldfields. Many were entirely unprepared for the journey and possessed nothing beyond the clothes on their back, a blanket, and a billy.⁸¹ To find such generosity no doubt prevented many from turning back, or worse, dying from starvation or exposure to the elements. A man could only succeed at digging if he arrived at the goldfields in the first place.

To dig for gold in Otago required capital to begin, but it was possible to be successful with little investment. After his arrival in New Zealand in 1861, Charles Money delayed his journey to Gabriel's Gully by one month as he required money sent from home to reach him before he could begin digging.⁸² In 1861, on his journey to Tuapeka, Mr. Wheeler encountered hundreds of diggers returning to Dunedin because they could not afford the capital required to commence mining.⁸³ Success on the diggings not only required finance but also involved selecting a goldfield that was suitable for the level of investment available. Sigismund Wekey, a Melbourne-settled Hungarian who visited New Zealand in 1862, referred to the goldfields that did not require much capital to work as "poor man's diggings".⁸⁴ These diggings provided shallow paying claims that needed only a cradle for washing pay dirt. Trying the diggings with no money was considered "madness", although many tried.⁸⁵ Many were not prepared for any kind of monetary outlay and were unable to even begin their digging careers, while others – perhaps those who had previous goldfields experience – arrived in the province with enough capital to follow their digging desires.

⁸⁰ Belich, *Making Peoples*, pp. 424-426.

⁸¹ Booth, p. 66.

⁸² Charles L. Money, *Knocking About in New Zealand* (Melbourne: Samuel Mullen, 1871), p. 6.

⁸³ Wheeler, p. 27.

⁸⁴ Wekey, p. 19.

⁸⁵ Wheeler, p. 19.

It was not essential, however, to dig for gold to be successful. Women were able to enjoy high wages as domestic servants. Bathgate claimed that a housemaid, even an incompetent one, could expect to earn £30 to £50 a year, and a sixteen-year-old girl providing child-minding services could earn 8s. to 10s. a week.⁸⁶ These high wages were in part due to the fact that women, married or otherwise, were rare in the province. In December 1861, census figures recorded the total population of Otago as 30,263, of which only 3346 were adult females.⁸⁷

Merchants and storekeepers also took advantage of the population boom and its related need for specific goods and services. At the Lindis diggings in 1861, Booth described a travelling merchant arriving at the goldfields alongside an alcohol vendor. The two sellers would not do business without the other; if a digger wished to purchase trousers or boots, he was also expected to purchase a glass of wine or spirits, and vice versa.⁸⁸ These merchants constructed a method of business which worked for both of them, and took advantage of the miner's need for clothing and want of booze.

Failure on the Otago goldfields could mean returning 'home' with no real gains. A high proportion of miners in Otago were from Australia, with 17 000 people arriving in the province from the Australian colonies in 1861.⁸⁹ Mr Wheeler claimed that, in 1861, the *Aldinga* sailed to Melbourne from Dunedin with sixty-one passengers, all of which were unsuccessful diggers returning to Australia.⁹⁰ Returning home, however, required money to pay for passage on a ship. Some found themselves stuck in Dunedin; they had no money to go to the diggings or to go home.⁹¹ Destitution and poverty were visible in the streets and the numbers of vagrants increased. The Otago Provincial Government took steps to address these problems. A "large shed" was to be built for those without tents, and temporary

⁸⁶ Bathgate, pp. 58-59.

⁸⁷ Wekey, p. 32.

⁸⁸ Booth, p. 73.

⁸⁹ Erik Olssen, 'Lands of Sheep and Gold: The Australian Dimension to the New Zealand Past, 1840-1900', in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. by Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), p. 41.

⁹⁰ Wheeler, p. 14.

⁹¹ Wheeler, p. 35.

employment was to be found for the poorest of the poor.⁹² Destitution could be considered a failure as it conflicts strongly with the majority of gold rush intentions – to gain wealth and fortune, or even simply to better one’s situation.

Diggers could fail on the goldfields by not finding a paying claim. Sometimes this was due to ignorance. According to Wekey, the first holders of claims at Gabriel’s Gully actually threw away much of the gold found because they lacked knowledge of proper mining techniques.⁹³ Previous experience could prove invaluable to a digger, and could be the difference between success and failure. Other disappointments were often a result of unforeseen bad luck, but in some situations, they occurred when dedication turned into unhealthy obsession. So consuming is the search for gold that Ferguson believed it to be impossible for one to “be cured of it or to keep out of it”.⁹⁴ Wekey pessimistically compares the lure of gold to a drunkard attempting to regain sobriety and laments his own “thirst for gold”.⁹⁵ Their metaphors mirror the implications of contemporary gold-rush language such as gold *fever*. It is the excitement for gold that motivated some diggers to constantly search for their ‘big break’. Even the most tenuous rumour of a new paying goldfield being discovered caused crowds to rush to the location, eager to stake their claim as soon as possible.⁹⁶ This keenness did not bring reward for some; rumours can conceal hoaxes, and the best claims are not always limited to the newest fields.

The Otago diggings were characterised by dry, hot summers, and extremely cold winters. Snow was common throughout the cooler months. Vincent Pyke was heavily involved in the organisation, regulation, and administration of the burgeoning Otago goldfields, following a successful career in politics on the Victorian diggings. After becoming a journalist, he wrote of his experiences in Otago. His narrative was published in 1887. He shares an extract from a digger’s memoirs regarding the winter of 1862,

⁹² Wheeler, p. 19.

⁹³ Wekey, p. 18.

⁹⁴ Ferguson, p. 157.

⁹⁵ Wekey, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Bathgate, p. 87.

where diggers had enough fuel for cooking only, not warmth, and snow did not thaw for weeks on end:

Tent life was miserable... Snow fell and lay on the ground, and the temperature went down to Arctic coldness. About the beginning of July a heavy fall of snow took place which lay until the second week of August. The cold was intense. Boots and clothes were frozen like boards in the night-time, and had to be taken under the blankets and thawed before being put on in the morning.⁹⁷

Alongside the bitter cold came health problems. As an appendix to his own experiences, Pyke included several accounts penned by others. Mr. Robinson, who held several administrative positions at various Otago goldfields, described the winter of 1864. Frostbite was not uncommon, and men lost portions of their feet.⁹⁸ Another health problem present on the Otago goldfields came in the form of dietary deficiencies. The main source of sustenance was meat, in the form of bacon and ham, and flour.⁹⁹ Meat could be scarce, however, and Booth claimed that, at times, for multiple days, they had none.¹⁰⁰ Diggers commonly suffered with scurvy due to a lack of fresh vegetables.¹⁰¹ Sickness and disability could affect a miner's capacity to work a claim, and a digger who cannot dig may be arguably considered a failure.

Winter also affected road links to the goldfields. Despite the Otago rush occurring as a continuation of the earlier events in California and Victoria, and Otago authorities offering rewards for the discovery of a payable goldfield in the province, the exact timing or location of the gold-rush was not predicted. Some roads in Otago, therefore, were hurriedly made when gold was discovered, and these roads did not endure the first winter. Rain, snow, and heavy traffic resulted in such poor conditions that many became impassable.¹⁰² Inadequate roads could affect diggers in two ways: first, it was difficult for necessary provisions to reach the goldfields, and second, due to decreased supply, provisions became much more

⁹⁷ John Mouat, quoted in Pyke, p. 64.

⁹⁸ H. W. Robinson, quoted in Pyke, p.106.

⁹⁹ Wekey, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ Booth, p. 74.

¹⁰¹ Pyke, p. 106.

¹⁰² Wekey, p. 15.

expensive to obtain. In 1864, 500 diggers were snowed in at the goldfield at Campbell's Gully. The remoteness of the location, coupled with the inaccessible roads, made reaching them difficult, and starvation was a very real possibility.¹⁰³ Without adequate supplies to continue mining operations, diggers could not efficiently and productively collect gold. Gold was their source of income; without it, they could not purchase food or other necessities, which were so scarce over the winter months that their prices increased dramatically. For these reasons, an unprepared digger could ruin himself on a goldfield over the winter, by running out of money or worse, dying from starvation or exposure.

Narrative authors who visited Otago generally defined success in more realistic terms than their counterparts on Victoria's goldfields. Luck was particularly emphasised as a vital component of goldfields success. The narratives analysed also suggested other contributing factors to the realization of mining dreams, such as kinship and hospitality. Individuals could find gold-rush success outside of digging, too, by catering to the needs and wants of an ever-increasing population. A glimpse into the life of the 'failed' digger is provided by the narratives in their references to destitution and vagrancy. The wide-ranging effects of the extreme Otago climate were also considered by the narrative authors as a factor in the failure of many.

Summary

Narrative authors who visited goldfields in Victoria and Otago portrayed 'success' in slightly different ways. Generally, gold-rush success was entangled with concepts of wealth, improvement of quality of life, and achievement of social mobility, but varying degrees of this success is present in narratives of the two studied locations. In Victoria, emphasis was placed on the ability of gold to create wealth and fortunes, a sentiment visible through Ferguson's expectation to reach his goal of

¹⁰³ Pyke, p. 103.

earning one thousand pounds on the goldfields with relative ease.¹⁰⁴ Clacy highlighted one man's goldfields ambition to earn enough to purchase land in the Australian colonies.¹⁰⁵ Narrative authors who visited Otago were more likely to define success as 'getting by'. Booth explained that many diggers on the Lindis field removed the element of luck from their goldfields labour and instead chose to work for wages on a claim that had already proven to be auriferous.¹⁰⁶ Gold-mining was undertaken in both locations as a means of improving quality of life, but narratives based on experiences in Victoria highlight larger, grander dreams of personal development. Clacy expected that the man who intended to buy land in Victoria would be an "Australian millionaire" in time.¹⁰⁷

The difference in conceptions of success can perhaps be explained by the fact that Otago miners were often gold-rush veterans from Victoria. In 1861 alone, over 17 000 people arrived in Otago from the Australian colonies, and by 1866, half of the total goldminers in New Zealand overall were formerly from Victoria.¹⁰⁸ Simply by virtue of experience, many Otago goldminers realised the truth of finding a fortune on the goldfields. While the Californian gold-rush had preceded the gold discovery in Victoria in 1851, only three years had passed since the beginning of the Californian events in 1848. In contrast, there were ten years between the start of Victoria's gold-rush and the gold findings by Gabriel Read in Otago in 1861. This provided time enough for individuals to learn of the reality of goldfields wealth, even for those who were new to goldmining in Otago in the 1860s, as personal accounts had time to circulate through word-of-mouth or the media.

Despite European authorship, the selected narratives recorded Chinese miners' definitions of success on the goldfields of Otago. However, few references to Chinese diggers are found in the examined narratives of Victoria's goldfields. Secondary sources have confirmed the presence of

¹⁰⁴ Ferguson, p. 35.

¹⁰⁵ Clacy, p. 36.

¹⁰⁶ Booth, p. 72.

¹⁰⁷ Clacy, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ Olssen, 'Lands of Sheep and Gold', in *Tasman Relations*, p. 41; Geoffrey Blainey, 'The Momentous Gold Rushes', *Australian Economic History Review*, 50, 2 (July 2010), p. 214.

Chinese goldminers in Victoria through official records and other primary documents. For example, in 1854, Victoria was home to approximately 2000 Chinese gold seekers.¹⁰⁹ This general narrative exclusion is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three of this thesis. The discussion of Chinese conceptions of goldfields success in Otago-based narratives is one specific point of difference between the two locations. Bathgate explained that Chinese goldminers often aimed to save two or three hundred pounds, at which point they would return to China.¹¹⁰ While Bathgate's comments capture the common ambition of Chinese goldminers, he is ignorant of the event of repeat migration and subconsciously 'others' Chinese diggers through his implications that they were sojourners, not settlers. Bathgate's inclusion of a definition of success for Chinese miners, however, is important, and indicates an amplified awareness of the Chinese presence in Otago.

The role of luck in goldfields success permeates narratives from both Victoria and Otago. Ferguson's story about a group of men who found a seventy-two pound nugget at the Ballarat (Victoria) goldfield in 1853 was followed by a disclaimer which claimed such findings are "luck, indeed".¹¹¹ Clacy likened success on the goldfields to winning the lottery.¹¹² However, in Otago, Wheeler pointed out that luck was not as common as it seemed.¹¹³ During the gold-rushes, there was a tendency for individuals and newspapers to emphasise those who had made "wonderful strikes and sudden fortunes".¹¹⁴ This penchant for success stories reflects the excitement present in society at the time as a result of gold discoveries. As gold fever gripped Victoria and Otago, the glittering mineral became "the universal subject of conversation".¹¹⁵

Networking, kinship, and hospitality were also indicated by narrative authors as important contributions to success, particularly the advantage of mutually beneficial or reciprocal relationships. Life in the Australasian

¹⁰⁹ Serle, p. 321.

¹¹⁰ Bathgate, p. 171.

¹¹¹ Ferguson, p. 42.

¹¹² Clacy, p. 33.

¹¹³ Wheeler, p. 18.

¹¹⁴ Ferguson, p. 157.

¹¹⁵ Pyke, p. 28.

colonies could be lonely and isolated, and these feelings were exaggerated by the colonies' distance from Europe. Social associations with others were not only beneficial for mental health but could also affect the potential for success on the goldfields. Narratives of Victoria's goldfields highlighted connections between diggers that resulted in the sharing of information regarding new gold discoveries. Ferguson described receiving a letter from friends who claimed they had found gold in Spring Creek, New South Wales.¹¹⁶ By being provided with such information before the general population, a digger could ensure he was one of the first on a new goldfield, which allowed him the luxury of selecting the best (most likely to be auriferous) location for his claim.

Otago narrative authors also discussed connections between diggers and how these associations influenced success. Bathgate observed that that, in particular, Chinese diggers enjoyed strong kinship links with their countrymen.¹¹⁷ The highly successful collaborative mining techniques of Chinese goldminers in Otago harmonised with their networks of loyalty and social responsibility. Narratives also highlighted the importance of hospitality in conceptions of success. Many Otago goldminers were unprepared for the journey to the fields, and possessed nothing beyond the clothes on their back, a blanket, and a billy.¹¹⁸ Parties of 'mates' on their way to the goldfields often depended on the generous hospitality of Otago settlers to feed and house them on their journey. Settlers usually expected payment for their services, but most goldminers considered this a fair exchange.¹¹⁹ Hospitality could be viewed as an attempt to foster a reciprocity based on the potential for success: by providing a bed and food for a digger on his way to the goldfields, it may be hoped that a digger will remember the kindness afforded to him when he finally 'strikes it rich' and finds his fortune in gold.

To contrast with ideas of success, narrative authors also discussed 'failure'. Representations of failure in goldfields narratives of Victoria and Otago are similar. Failure on the goldfields could mean returning home

¹¹⁶ Ferguson, p. 26.

¹¹⁷ Bathgate, p. 173.

¹¹⁸ Booth, p. 66.

¹¹⁹ Booth, p. 65.

with little or no monetary gains after a disappointing attempt to find a payable claim. Wheeler noted that in 1861, the *Aldinga* sailed from Dunedin to Melbourne with sixty-one passengers, all of which he claimed were unsuccessful diggers returning to the Australian colonies.¹²⁰ Failure could also mean death, as a result of accidents on the goldfields or through disease. Diggers could fall into the holes of other miners at night, or as described by Rochfort, their own mines could collapse in as they worked, suffocating and crushing them.¹²¹ A kind of failure perceived by the narratives as being worse than death was that of incapacitation, most often through sickness, injury, or the extended physical exertion required of goldfields labour. Dysentery and ophthalmia were emphasised as the main types of illness on the goldfields of Victoria, while the harsh climate extremes were blamed for health problems in Otago.

Narratives from both locations highlighted the intense physical labour necessary to work a claim, and the long-term effects of this demanding work. Read suggested that anyone considering digging for gold in Victoria should possess the “constitution of a lion” as the energy required was both physically and mentally exhausting.¹²² For Wheeler, a digger’s chances of success depended upon his tolerance for adversity and gruelling labour.¹²³ Descriptions of the reality of goldfields work often reflected the nature of the narratives and their intentions for publication. Many of the selected narratives were guidebooks and were published for the purpose of providing an account that was both appropriate and accurate for potential migrants. Read particularly found issue with the “inconsiderate emigration... towards Australian shores”.¹²⁴

Such ‘inconsiderate emigration’ is visible within the surveyed goldfields narratives and their descriptions of failure. Many individuals followed the lure of gold to the Australasian colonies with little or no idea of what would be expected of them. Howitt explained that many of the diggers who returned from Mount Alexander in 1852 were simply unfit for the labour

¹²⁰ Wheeler, p. 14.

¹²¹ Rochfort, p. 65.

¹²² C. Rudston Read, *What I Heard, Saw, and Did at the Australian Gold Fields* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1853), p. 208.

¹²³ Salmon, p. 18.

¹²⁴ Read, p. iii.

required to work a claim.¹²⁵ In 1861, Wheeler encountered hundreds of goldminers returning to Dunedin from the Tuapeka field because they simply did not have enough money for the initial investment necessary to commence mining.¹²⁶

Representations of success differed slightly between goldfields narratives of Victoria and Otago. Authors in Victoria were more likely to define success in ambitious terms, while Otago narratives presented more pragmatic portrayals. Reasons for success, however, were similar across the Tasman, with authors suggesting luck as the most significant contribution to goldfields success. Hospitality, social connections, and kinship were also important influences. Narratives discussed concepts of failure and the ways in which an individual could 'fail' on the goldfields of Victoria and Otago. Disappointed goldminers could be forced to return home with no tangible gains from their time on the goldfields. Chances of success were affected by sickness, disease, harsh physical labour, or weather extremes, and at the very worst, these features of gold-rush life could kill a goldminer on his quest for success.

¹²⁵ Howitt, p. 48.

¹²⁶ Wheeler, p. 27.

Chapter Two – Order and Disorder: Behaviour and Control

Associated with gold-rush narrative representations of success and failure are nineteenth-century concepts of order and its antithesis, disorder. 'Order' has no universal meaning and no simple, generally applicable scale exists to measure it. In gold-rush society, it was a contested idea, with any definition provided being the subject of contemporary debate.¹ What one group of people considered 'orderly' may have been recognised as disorderly by another. This is reflected in the reactions of male, European narrative authors to the behaviour of others on the goldfields, particularly women and Chinese.

There are benefits in analysing varying perceptions of order. David Goodman has pointed out that dissecting ideas of order specific to a time or place can help us understand a society better.² Concepts of behaviour and control are particularly significant to gold-rush narratives, as day-to-day life on the goldfields could be disorderly and chaotic by its very nature. Gold-rush migrants generally experienced high levels of mobility as part of their daily lives.³ Rumours of a new gold discovery often persuaded diggers to pack up their tents without a second thought and go in search of their next, hopefully successful, claim.

This chapter examines constructs of order and disorder, and defines 'order' through laws, governance, and the processes of managing goldfields activities in Victoria and Otago. A range of representations of order and disorder found in narratives of the goldfields of these two locations are analysed. This chapter considers colonial expectations of order in both locations, and examines places and spaces of disorder, such as urban areas, diggings, and the journeys between the two. To conclude, a summary will compare and contrast the representation of success and

¹ David Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p. 65.

² Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 65.

³ Angela Hawk, 'Going "Mad" in Gold Country: Migrant Populations and the Problem of Containment in Pacific Mining Regions', *Pacific Historical Review*, 80, 1 (2011), p. 77.

failure present in the surveyed narratives. Changes over time between Victoria and Otago will also be highlighted.

Victoria

The goldfields narratives analysed by this thesis indicate that order was created and maintained on Victoria's goldfields through legislation, governance, and cultural expectations of behaviour. These forms of control were especially important because it could take some time for official administration to establish itself at the goldfields. Often a rush would take place before an adequate system of control and regulation was in place. For example, it took four weeks for government officials and police to reach the Ballarat goldfield soon after gold discoveries in 1851. In the intervening time, there had been "an impressive illustration of natural democracy".⁴ Several general meetings of diggers had decided disputes about claims and adapted rules of working.⁵ This impression of peaceful self-governance will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter to illustrate how diggers themselves defined and maintained collective expectations of order on the goldfields.

The Governor of Victoria, Charles La Trobe, issued a proclamation in September 1851 which followed the earlier New South Wales example. This proclamation claimed all mineral deposits in the colony as property of the Crown and asserted that subjects could retain their gold findings at the discretion of the Crown.⁶ These ideas were later supplemented by legislation, such as the Mining Acts of 1852 and 1853. The 1852 legislation codified pre-existing regulations. La Trobe's 1851 proclamation brought into effect a license fee policy which required payment for authorisation to dig for gold or carry on any other business on the goldfields. The fee was thirty shillings at Ballarat in 1852, when Ferguson and his party arrived to try their luck, and licenses were valid for one

⁴ Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), p. 20.

⁵ Serle, p. 20.

⁶ Serle, p.19.

month.⁷ A license provided a digger with a claim of eight foot square.⁸ It was hoped that the price of the license would be enough to prevent overcrowding on the goldfields.⁹ By limiting digger numbers, order could be more easily maintained. It is generally easier to regulate the behaviour of a smaller group than it is to control a large population.

Alongside the introduction of the license fee came the creation of a system of goldfields commissioners. While these commissioners possess a peripheral role in the narratives examined, a brief explanation of the organisation of authority on the goldfields is necessary to understand how digger behaviour was controlled. A Chief Commissioner of the Goldfields supervised numerous Resident Commissioners, who were appointed at each goldfield in the district. These Resident Commissioners were responsible for providing licenses for digging, collecting the associated fee, policing those working on the goldfields without a license, and punishing those found to be violating the rules of holding such a license. The Commissioners were also expected to enforce other relevant laws and arbitrate disputes between diggers – essentially, they were given the power to maintain order on their appointed goldfield as they saw necessary.

The license fee was the same price for all goldminers. Similar facilities and protection were expected by all on the goldfields, regardless of their success, and the license fee was a tax levied to pay for those services.¹⁰ The transference of money for the right to mine was a contract of sorts, which gave the Commissioners “moral oversight” with the ability to regulate behaviour on the goldfields.¹¹ This regulation of behaviour often sought to maintain order. The license fee system was reinforced by license checks and punishment of those caught without a current license. Working on the goldfields without a license was a transgression treated seriously. In 1852, Ferguson explained that a person caught on the goldfields without a license was brought before the Commissioner and

⁷ Charles D. Ferguson, *Experiences of a Forty-niner in Australia and New Zealand* (Melbourne: Gaston Renard Publisher, 1979), pp. 22-24.

⁸ Serle, p. 20.

⁹ Serle, p. 20.

¹⁰ Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 71.

¹¹ Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 70.

fined five pounds, and if he could not pay this, he was expected to pay off the debt at a rate of ten shillings a day by working hard labour.¹²

Diggers without licenses were often discovered through random license checks. Preshaw described one such “hunt” occurring at around 8 o’clock one morning. Twenty mounted men arrived suddenly and dispersed themselves over the goldfield, requesting to sight the licenses of the diggers present. Those who could not produce the document were detained and removed from the goldfield, “more like dogs than men.”¹³ This vibrant description of a license check provided action and drama in Preshaw’s narrative. His choice of words, particularly the animal-related metaphors, are closely associated with the diggers’ general disdain of goldfields authority. Australian settlers exhibited a dislike of police that predates the first gold discovery in Victoria, but this sentiment was noticeably exacerbated by the gold-rush.¹⁴ Hostility towards authority has been described as “the most prominent feature of the diggers’ ethos”.¹⁵

Despite these attitudes, the potential punishment for being caught without a license was enough to scare some diggers into ensuring they always had a current one on their person. On arriving on the outskirts of the Bendigo goldfields in 1852, Ferguson and his party immediately made their way to the Commissioner’s tent to take out a license for digging. They travelled for three miles through camps and claims, not stopping once, for fear of being apprehended and reprimanded if they did pause their journey.¹⁶ Other diggers were not so keen to part with their 30 shillings as per the license fee policy. A particular contentious issue was the lack of miner representation in the colonial Victorian government. Preshaw believed that it was dubious to levy a tax on a collective who had no voice in the very decision-making process which governed such a tax.¹⁷

¹² Ferguson, p. 24

¹³ G. O. Preshaw, *Banking Under Difficulties or Life on the Goldfields* (Christchurch: Capper Press, 1971), p. 13.

¹⁴ Rusell Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 156.

¹⁵ Ward, p. 154.

¹⁶ Ferguson, p. 22-24.

¹⁷ Preshaw, p. 32.

Challenges to the license fee policy culminated in the Eureka Rebellion of 1854, where diggers erected a primitive stockade before being overpowered by British Army soldiers and police. The official death toll is recorded as 27, although many more are thought to have perished. Unfortunately, no narrative examined by this thesis provided an eye-witness account of the Eureka events, but several authors referred to the general feeling towards the license fee. The main grievances surrounding the fee were its high cost, the issue of its levying, and antagonistic behaviour towards diggers by the government and the police. Ferguson claimed that a digger was generally treated no better by the authorities than a dog.¹⁸ Ferguson's use of 'dog' echoes Preshaw's comments regarding license checks, and invokes images of a master-servant relationship. Concepts of goldfields success were underpinned by a belief that gold could improve quality of life. Colonial society, with its ample opportunities for financial gain, had the capacity to eliminate the master-servant hierarchy visible in class-based Europe. Goldfields authorities were loathed for their attempts to reinforce this 'old world' dominance over diggers. Following the Eureka Stockade, Victoria's government yielded to the miners' demands to a small degree. The license fee was abandoned and replaced with a 'miner's right' which granted diggers the right to vote alongside the distribution of claims.

Other measures the Victorian colonial government enacted to regulate goldfields behaviour, and therefore preserve a semblance of order, included outlawing the sale of liquor on the goldfields. A person caught selling alcohol was, for their first offense, forced to forfeit his claim on the goldfields and fined no less than fifty pounds. For a second offense, the same monetary penalty was imposed, as well as a period of six months' imprisonment.¹⁹ Ferguson explained that most considered the fine as trivial but that a term in prison would be "very embarrassing."²⁰ Overall, the liquor ban was not particularly well respected or enforced, and the result was exactly what the legislation was attempting to prevent. Clacy believed there was more drinking and rioting on the goldfields than elsewhere in the

¹⁸ Ferguson, p. 32.

¹⁹ Ferguson, p. 29.

²⁰ Ferguson, pp. 43-44.

colony, where alcohol was sold freely. This was partially due to the 'forbidden fruit' allure associated with consuming the illegal: "the privacy and risk gives the obtaining it an excitement which the diggers enjoy as much as the spirit itself."²¹ Certain behavioural expectations were placed on Clacy as a nineteenth-century female. The consumption of alcohol was considered to be a masculine activity and Clacy herself is repulsed by a drinking, smoking, swearing woman she encounters on the Eagle Hawk goldfield in 1852.²² Clacy's description of goldfields drunkenness is perhaps influenced by her position as an observer to these activities. Social norms excluded her from participating and therefore, she is able to provide a rare narrative viewpoint, which looks towards the mainstream experience rather than existing within it.

To an extent, diggers on the goldfields of Victoria created and maintained their own systems of order, particularly in the time before government officials and police arrived at the goldfields. Reflecting the earlier discussion of colonial society eliminating class-based barriers, this phenomenon of self-governance was considered a natural occurrence of a society where each man is his own master:

Where every man is working for himself, all are interested in the preservation of social order, and the protection of mutual rights, and the most stringent police regulations in the world cannot effect half so much for the general well-being of society, as the influence of the universal exercise of the great principle of self-protection.²³

Mackenzie, however, suggested a more simple explanation for instinctive order on the goldfields. He explained that Victoria's goldfields claimed relatively few murders and robberies as a result of the positive influence exerted on the general population of diggers by the large amount of honourable men present.²⁴

²¹ Mrs. Charles (Ellen) Clacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-53* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853), available at Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4054.epub.images?session_id=1beb9c48732a6cce9213fa15af68a91c1fa137ee>, p. 32.

²² Clacy, p. 36.

²³ *Bendigo Advertiser*, 11 Nov. 1854, quoted in Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 72.

²⁴ David Mackenzie, *The Gold Digger: A Visit to the Gold Fields of Australia* (London: WM. S Orr, 1852), p. 57.

The belief that diggers could create and maintain their own systems of order was associated closely with colonial immigration propaganda. It was much cheaper to travel from Europe to North America than to Australia, so persuasive strategies were utilised to encourage migration to distant British Colonies.²⁵ Contemporary portrayals in both newspapers and guidebook-style narratives depicted Victoria as inherently 'safe' and 'sane'.²⁶ This was a direct contrast to the Californian fields, which were notorious for various disorderly characteristics. The regulation and administration of the Victorian goldfields was somewhat modelled after the Californian example – at least in terms of what diggers should not do or be allowed to become. Californian disorder became a mantra of sorts to political conservatives in Victoria, who sought every opportunity to remind the general public of what the Victorian fields “ought not to be allowed to become.”²⁷

In addition to claims of a natural system of order being present on the goldfields, there are examples of diggers actively seeking to protect themselves from the disorder of others. Disorder on the goldfields included robbery and theft, fighting, rowdy behaviour by drunks, and murder. Howitt described the Reid's Creek goldfield as being particularly disorderly due to the high number of murders committed there – apparently no less than fifteen - and the prolific rates of thefts of horses.²⁸ There was a general belief that the criminals in Victoria were the very same criminals shipped to the Australian penal colonies by Britain. Howitt recommended that immigrants remind themselves of this fact, and to not be surprised when they find themselves the victim of theft.²⁹ He further claimed that there were “thieves and murderers from every quarter of the globe” in Victoria.³⁰

It was not just the goldfields that harboured a criminal population, however. People living in towns and cities around the diggings also

²⁵ Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 66.

²⁶ For example, “As for these diggings, they appear quiet and orderly; and people leave their tents all day, and seldom have them ‘shook,’ as the phrase is, or robbed in plain English.” William Howitt, *Land, Labour and Gold*, facsimile edition (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972), pp. 174-175; “It is true that the cases of murders and robberies have yet been comparatively few in number at our diggings.” Mackenzie, p. 56.

²⁷ Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 67.

²⁸ Howitt, p. 182.

²⁹ Howitt, p. 50.

³⁰ Howitt, p. 148.

complained of disorderly behaviour. In 1852, Rochfort described Melbourne as “menacing”, particularly at night, with robberies and murders occurring frequently. He explained this as being a result of the unsettled state of society at this time.³¹ Clacy instead blamed “Vandemonian pickpockets, with [their] cunning eyes and light fingers”³² for the thefts in the town. The reality was that the social composition of gold-rush society provided a way for dishonest or violent individuals to blend in, undetected by authorities. Diggers were often transient, and did not spend long in one place. Goldminers were also generally ignorant of the names and backgrounds of party mates, and these aspects made goldfields society a good choice for the lawless.³³

Disorder was not exclusive to the goldfields proper, and many encountered their first hostile characters on their journey to the diggings. Many travellers quickly learned of the reality of safety in numbers, and the benefit of carrying firearms. Howitt reassured his readers that because his party consisted of thirteen “well-armed” men, they were very unlikely to be attacked by bushrangers on their journey from Melbourne to the diggings.³⁴ Rochfort’s party numbered thirty, choosing to travel together for the advantage of mutual protection.³⁵ Thefts on the roads to the diggings were often petty, but the risk of being robbed was so great that every individual or group encountered were viewed with suspicion.³⁶ Generally, smaller groups or lone travellers were more likely to be jumped by bushrangers. Despite this, anyone and everyone could find themselves at the wrong end of a rifle barrel. Rochfort explained that even the commissioner and the superintendent of police from the Bendigo goldfield have been “stuck up” on separate occasions, and members of the police force regularly experienced the same.³⁷

On the goldfields themselves, it was seen as important to own or have access to firearms to defend against disorder. In 1853, Howitt described a

³¹ John Rochfort, *The Adventures of a Surveyor in New Zealand and the Australian Gold Diggings* (London: David Bogue, 1853), p. 48.

³² Clacy, p. 13.

³³ Serle, p. 82.

³⁴ Howitt, p. 65.

³⁵ Rochfort, p. 50.

³⁶ Howitt, p. 146.

³⁷ Rochfort, p. 51.

random barrage of shots that rang out across the goldfield at the Ovens goldfield each night as a “custom at all the diggings”.³⁸ This custom was apparently a way of letting criminals and other disagreeable types know that the diggers were well-armed and not afraid to use their weapons. Ferguson explained why such a sense of security was important to those on the goldfields. He claimed that a digger was not safe to leave his tent after dark, as he was likely to be shot, robbed, or both. The Bendigo goldfield was labelled as “one of the worst places on earth” in 1852 and 1853, as there seemed to be no visible end to murders and thefts.³⁹ Ferguson pointed out that this was a change to his previous time spent on Bendigo, and attributed the difference to the absence of “old hands”.⁴⁰ This phrase refers to experienced miners who had followed the gold-rushes from California to Victoria. Presumably, Ferguson believed that older, practised diggers were likely to be successful in their goldfields exploits and therefore less likely to partake in criminal activities, especially those which involved claim-jumping or gold stealing.

Would-be criminals and seasoned bushrangers often used deception to lure unsuspecting diggers into ambushes. Rochfort described one night where his party could hear the groans and cries of a man apparently attempting to fight off a group of men. Rochfort’s party numbered just three and for that reason they decided not to intervene, as

these cries were often merely a ruse to draw people out of their tents, and lead them into an ambush, when they were shot and robbed. The cry is, Every man for himself, and God for us all! You cannot trust your neighbour, and very few can put confidence in their own mates.⁴¹

Clacy also wrote of a similar experience where her party rushed to the aid of two men they found bound to trees with rope. No sooner had they freed these two men, four more – these ones armed with guns – emerged from the bush and overpowered the ‘rescuers’. While Clacy herself was able to escape unharmed and returned with help, the males in her party were

³⁸ Howitt, p. 176.

³⁹ Ferguson, p. 29.

⁴⁰ Ferguson, p. 28.

⁴¹ Rochfort, p. 53.

taken prisoner and forced to turn over any gold on their person or at their camp.⁴²

The theft of gold was a common occurrence for diggers on and off the goldfields. A friend of a member of Clacy's mining party was robbed of the gold he carried while travelling through the Black Forest in Victoria.⁴³ To avoid such thefts, Mackenzie recommended that diggers take advantage of the Government-provided transportation of mined gold from the fields to Melbourne. A digger should "never... keep any large quantity of gold either about his person or in his tent."⁴⁴ Some villainous individuals would go even further than simply stealing gold already removed from the ground, however. They would take wash-dirt if they suspected it to be rich. There were parties of men who would find out where the best claims were located and would return at night to remove the dirt.⁴⁵ Rochfort described a digger who, to prevent theft from his prosperous claim, slept in his hole for six weeks.⁴⁶ Some individuals even found themselves robbed by a member of their party; a fellow digger who had been considered a 'mate'. Mackenzie highlighted the importance of exercising good judgment when selecting mining partners.⁴⁷ The stresses of the goldfields affected diggers both physically and mentally. The work was dangerous, difficult, and often resulted in little or no success. Destitute diggers who ran low on good luck could become depressed, and some even turned to petty theft in order to simply survive.

Another type of disorder visible in narratives of Victoria's goldfields was that of insanity. Gold fever unsettled society and compelled men to leave their jobs and families in search of auriferous wealth. While the lure of gold itself did not necessarily drive men insane, sudden goldmining success by those not familiar with wealth could have dire consequences. Clacy described seeing miners struggling to cope with their new found prosperity. She saw a man flippantly throwing coins from his pocket onto the street underfoot; another tearing imperfect bank notes while muttering

⁴² Clacy, pp. 62-64.

⁴³ Clacy, p. 41.

⁴⁴ Mackenzie, p. 52.

⁴⁵ Ferguson, p. 29.

⁴⁶ Rochfort, p. 57.

⁴⁷ Mackenzie, p. 50.

about the “dirty paper money” he received for his untainted Alexander gold.⁴⁸ Dr Edward Paley, Inspector of Asylums in Victoria between 1863 and 1883, believed that colonial life was particularly inclined to produce insanity. Conditions such as isolation from family networks, alcoholism, and sudden reverses of fortune, “especially among the mining population”, were causes for lunacy in Victoria.⁴⁹

In colonial Victoria, police were an integral part of defining disorder and insanity. Public displays of disorder could result in either imprisonment or asylum committal.⁵⁰ Disorder in the wider community was feared, and the creation of ‘order’ was important to colonial society.⁵¹ Gold fever-related lunacy came in many forms. ‘Bush mania’ was a real occurrence, a kind of colonial-specific madness created by isolation and desolation.⁵² The intense physical labour of digging affected the goldminer’s mind as well as his body. The desire to find wealth pushed many diggers to the edges of their sanity, as they worked claim after claim and travelled to goldfield after goldfield. Historians later concluded that the “typical Australian lunatic” was “the maniacal labourer”.⁵³ Contemporary sources also discussed the suggestion that the Chinese in Victoria were mass mania sufferers due to their use of opium.⁵⁴

Examination of selected narratives has indicated that official forms of control such as legislation and taxation influenced behaviour on the goldfields of Victoria. Attempts by authorities to maintain order on the goldfields were met with varying degrees of obedience. However, narrative authors highlighted the natural inclination of diggers to self-govern,

⁴⁸ Clacy, p.14.

⁴⁹ Catharine Coleborne, ‘Making ‘mad’ Populations in Settler Colonies: the work of law and medicine in the creation of the colonial asylum’, in *Law, History, Colonialism: The Reach of Empire*, ed. by Diane Kirkby and Catharine Coleborne (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 112.

⁵⁰ Catharine Coleborne, ‘Passage to the asylum: the role of the police in committals of the insane in Victoria, Australia, 1848-1900’, in *The Confinement of the Insane: International Perspectives, 1800-1965*, ed. by Roy Porter and David Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 129.

⁵¹ Coleborne, ‘Passage to the asylum’, in *The Confinement of the Insane*, p. 135.

⁵² Coleborne, ‘Making ‘mad’ populations’, in *Law, History, Colonialism*, p. 112.

⁵³ Stephen Garton, ‘The Dimensions of Dementia’, in *Constructing a Culture: A People’s History of Australia Since 1788*, ed. by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988), p. 67.

⁵⁴ ‘Chinese Lunatics’, *Australian Medical Journal* 10 (1865), p. 202, cited in Coleborne, ‘Passage to the asylum’, in *The Confinement of the Insane*, p. 144.

particularly on new goldfields. For example, miners themselves voted in favour of a ban on the sale of liquor on the fields. The surveyed narratives described specific kinds of disorder, gold theft and claim jumping, and how diggers responded to these behaviours when displayed by others on the goldfields. While many of the authors define disorder as criminal activities, insanity and mental anguish was also a reality in gold-rush Victoria.

Otago

Order in Otago was created and maintained in similar ways to Victoria. Legislation, supported by official policies, sought to shape digger behaviour and activities, but diggers themselves also regulated their own conduct in various circumstances. In terms of official supervision and management, Otago goldfields were regulated by a system of law and overseen by appointed officials, such as goldfields commissioners and police. New Zealand's mining legislation was loosely based on Victoria's various Mining Acts.⁵⁵ However, New Zealand attempted to improve on Victoria's example, just as Victoria had sought to improve on the Californian experience.

The first, small, gold-rush in New Zealand occurred in the North Island, in Coromandel in 1852. This was followed by another, larger rush on the West Coast of the South Island in the late 1850s. These early gold discoveries meant that provisions for goldfields organisation were already in place by the time the Otago rush occurred in 1861. In 1852, the license fee was set at 30 shillings per month, and claims were sized depending on location: 15 feet of water frontage if next to a river, 20 feet square on open ground, and a narrow section 60 feet long in steep gorges and gullies.⁵⁶ Payment to local Māori was also arranged to reimburse iwi for the use of their land,⁵⁷ a decision which starkly contrasts with the management of Aboriginal land in Australia. As the Coromandel miners numbered less

⁵⁵ J. H. M. Salmon, *A History of Gold-Mining in New Zealand* (Wellington: R. E. Owen, 1963), p. 22.

⁵⁶ Salmon, p. 29.

⁵⁷ Salmon, p. 28.

than 300, only one goldfields commissioner was appointed, whose role was to generally oversee the diggings and mediate disputes.⁵⁸

New Zealand's first mining legislation came into effect in 1858 in the form of the Gold Fields Act. The Act legally empowered the Governor to declare any land in the colony a 'goldfield' and impose a system of management on both the land and the diggers working that land. A payment known as a 'miner's right' replaced the former license policy, with one pound securing one year's digging. Fines for mining without authorisation were specified. The position of Goldfields Commissioner, created during the earlier Coromandel rush, was retained and a warden's court was established alongside this role to ensure justice on the fields. This court determined disputes regarding claim boundaries and other disagreements between miners, and also considered breaches of mining law.⁵⁹

A recurring theme of Otago miners behaving more 'respectably' than their Victorian counterparts pervades many goldfields narratives, including later academic histories. Salmon explained that in New Zealand, "better qualities [of miners] prevailed" when compared with Victoria, and that Otago miners naturally followed a moral code which recognised and respected the rights of fellow diggers.⁶⁰ The reason for this preference for justice and fairness on Otago goldfields can be partly explained by the necessity for goldminers to self-govern, due to a lack of Government authority in remote locales. According to Salmon, if diggers wanted to succeed, it was in their best interest to develop methods of airing and solving grievances, as they could not rely on official administration to do so for them in these places.⁶¹ It could take weeks for Government-appointed supervision to arrive at a new goldfield, and by which time, many might already have taken up pick and shovel and begun working their claims. The very landscape of Otago made travelling a long and difficult process. Booth pursued claims of gold in the Lindis Pass region in

⁵⁸ Salmon, p. 29.

⁵⁹ Robyn Anderson, *Goldmining: Policy, Legislation, and Administration* (Wellington: Waitangi Tribunal, 1996), p. 18.

⁶⁰ Salmon, p. 18.

⁶¹ Salmon, p. 18.

1861. He highlighted the fact that there was no road to this goldfield, but a rough bullock dray track which quickly disappeared into no track at all.⁶²

A lack of authority on new goldfields encouraged the creation of digger-governed systems of order. Booth referred to these arrangements as “a self-constituted form of government” which assumed responsibility for the protection of all diggers and promoted good conduct in the mining community:

Some capable man was elected as president and chief, before whom all cases of misdemeanour were heard, and whose decisions and powers to inflict punishment were final. Under such rule, crude as it was, the utmost good conduct usually prevailed, and any glaring instances of robbery or crime were not only rare, but severely dealt with.⁶³

It was within the realms of this self-governance during the early gold-rush period that Otago diggers themselves voted against the sale of liquor on the goldfields. Wheeler explained that the miners voted “almost unanimously” when faced with this question.⁶⁴

Many of the Otago miners were diggers from other localities, particularly Australia. It is estimated that over 17 000 people arrived in Otago from the Australian colonies in 1861 alone, 1861 being the first year of the Otago gold-rush.⁶⁵ By 1866, half of the total goldminers in New Zealand were formerly from Victoria.⁶⁶ Bathgate claimed that “thousands” of people from Victoria “flocked” to Otago on hearing of the discovery of gold in the province.⁶⁷ Diggers displayed orderly and disorderly behaviour both on

⁶² Robert B. Booth, *Five Years in New Zealand 1859-1864* (London, J. G. Hammond & Co, 1912), p. 65.

⁶³ Booth, p. 71.

⁶⁴ Mr. Wheeler, *The New Zealand Goldfields, 1861: A Series of Letters Reprinted from the Melbourne Argus* (Dunedin: Hocken Library, 1976), p. 39.

⁶⁵ Erik Olssen, 'Lands of Sheep and Gold: The Australian Dimension to the New Zealand Past, 1840-1900', in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. by Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), p. 41.

⁶⁶ Geoffrey Blainey, 'The Momentous Gold Rushes', *Australian Economic History Review*, 50, 2 (July 2010), p. 214.

⁶⁷ Alexander Bathgate, *Colonial Experiences or Sketches of People and Places in the Province of Otago, New Zealand* (Glasgow: J Maclehose, 1874), available at Early New Zealand Books Collection
<http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docs/epub/colonial_experiences_or_sketches_of_people_and_places_in_the_province_of_otago_new_zealand-2804.epub>, p. 25.

and off the goldfields, and the conduct of those 'old hands' was particularly noticeable in Otago. Wheeler described his journey from Melbourne to Dunedin in 1861. He claimed that most, if not all, 400 passengers on his ship were miners, with three-quarters formerly of Ballarat. They were familiar with a rough lifestyle which included settling disputes through violence and intimidation, ignored laws at will, and behaved brashly and crassly. Thus, the week-long voyage was neither peaceful nor quiet.⁶⁸

It is interesting then, that Wheeler praised the work ethic of the diggers on the Tuapeka goldfield in 1861. Many of the Otago miners were formerly from Victoria, and it seems unlikely that they would shed their 'disorderly' behaviour immediately after reaching New Zealand shores. Wheeler also commended the lack of drunkards and idlers, and could barely contain his delight in describing the peaceful quietness present on the diggings at night: "lights shone through thin canvas tents, but hardly a sound disturbed the serene stillness which prevailed".⁶⁹ He contrasted this with the nocturnal revelry and disorder of the fields of Victoria, and asserted that those diggers could "learn a lesson from New Zealand miners."⁷⁰ By referring to the Otago miners as 'New Zealand' miners, Wheeler claimed the well-behaved for the province, and asserted the dominance of New Zealand over other British Colonies, like Victoria. He chose to ignore the true origins of many of Otago's diggers, despite travelling with many across the Tasman Sea as described above.

Wheeler continued his compliments by applauding the lack of crime at the Tuapeka goldfields in 1861. He explained that only two cases of theft had been escalated to the authorities, and very few cases of drunk and disorderly behaviour.⁷¹ Even Gabriel Read himself, discoverer of gold in Otago in 1861, did not neglect an opportunity to commend the Otago diggers and their disciplined behaviour. Pyke quoted him as exclaiming with pride in 1862 that the Otago miners were the best-behaved men he had ever seen on any goldfield. This statement was justified with the claim

⁶⁸ Wheeler, p. 7.

⁶⁹ Wheeler, p. 27.

⁷⁰ Wheeler, p. 28.

⁷¹ Wheeler, p. 39-40.

that no crimes had yet been committed on the Tuapeka goldfield, which at this time was home to approximately 4000 diggers.⁷²

Yet, crimes were committed on the Otago goldfields and in the surrounding settlements. Pyke attempted to explain away this unpleasant fact by suggesting the criminals were not New Zealanders, but in fact former convicts from the Australian colonies. A large proportion of diggers on Otago fields had migrated from Victoria and New South Wales. While Pyke reassured readers that many of these immigrants were “of a most orderly and highly respectable character”, he admitted that some were not.⁷³ Bathgate too conceded that there were some disagreeable individuals present on the Otago goldfields, a result of released criminals following the gold discoveries across the Tasman.⁷⁴ Anxieties about convicts partly developed as a result of high profile bushranger-type robberies of those transporting gold from field to town in the middle of 1862, and also because of the large numbers of immigrants continuing to pour into Otago. Pyke described these events as producing a “temporary panic”.⁷⁵

In response to these anxieties, the Provincial Government attempted to enact legislation to prevent convicts from entering Otago. Introduced in 1862, the ‘Ordinance to prevent the influx of Criminals into the Province of Otago’ sought to criminalise the entry of persons into the province who had, at any time, been found guilty of any “capital or transportable felony” by a court of competent jurisdiction in the United Kingdom “or any British Possession”. The Ordinance was passed but subsequently disallowed as it was determined to be beyond the power of a Provincial Government to create such legislation.⁷⁶ Bathgate explained that without controls and restrictions over their movement, these former convicts did one of three

⁷² Vincent Pyke, *History of Early Gold Discoveries in Otago* (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times, 1962), p. 46.

⁷³ Pyke, p. 55.

⁷⁴ Bathgate, p. 155.

⁷⁵ Pyke, p. 54.

⁷⁶ Pyke, p. 55; see also *Otago Daily Times*, ‘Provincial Council: Thursday, November 27’, 28 November 1862, p. 6.

things in the province: some returned to Australia, others were arrested for new crimes, and a few did become compliant citizens.⁷⁷

While some of the narrative authors surveyed here may not have experienced 'digger disorder' on the goldfields themselves, some did eventually come into contact with the less desirable aspects of mining life. Unsuccessful miners and their followers swamped Dunedin in 1861, either desperately searching for work, or accepting welfare from the Government at 5 shillings a day and loitering idly around the streets before returning to their tent shanties at night.⁷⁸ Many of the jobless and destitute were unable to make a life for themselves in the province nor did they have the money for passage to return to their former homes, and the frustrations of the indeterminate exploded occasionally. Wheeler witnessed a brawl on the street, and a man was subsequently arrested for drunk and disorderly behaviour, while his equally unruly friends harassed the apprehending policeman for their mate's release.⁷⁹ Wekey also described the unattractive characteristics of Dunedin – "crowded hotels and boarding houses, foul streets, thronged with eager, unwashed multitudes" – reminding his readers that these same scenes were visible in gold rush Melbourne, too.⁸⁰ The narratives utilised by this thesis make frequent comparisons between Otago and Victoria. Some highlight similarities, like the example above, while others display differences, such as the earlier discussed claims that Otago's diggers were better behaved than Victoria's mining ilk.

Disorder on or around the goldfields can be most simply defined as a criminal behaviour. Burglary and theft were fairly common, while assault and murder occurred infrequently. Bathgate suggested that embezzlement and obtaining money by false pretences were also familiar crimes, as miners found themselves alone, a long way from home, achieving little or no success by digging. These individuals often began gambling and drinking in their depression, wasting what small amount of money they did

⁷⁷ Bathgate, p. 165.

⁷⁸ Wheeler, p. 35.

⁷⁹ Wheeler, p. 35.

⁸⁰ Sigismund Wekey, *Otago: Its Goldfields and Resources* (Melbourne: W. H. Williams, 1862), p. 8.

earn legitimately while desperately seeking more income to pay their mounting debts.⁸¹

It was not necessary to be a criminal to be disorderly, however. Sometimes diggers simply did not fit within expected colonial ideals. As in Victoria, insanity and vagrancy were two ways in which a goldfields immigrant could be considered disruptive to society. A lack of social associations or bondlessness, that permeated New Zealand colonial society, could exaggerate a frail mental state created by the physically demanding labour of the goldfields. Destitute individuals in Dunedin in 1861 were often unsuccessful miners.⁸² With no social or family network in the province to assist their transition from vagrant to settler or to fund passage 'home', many involved themselves in heavy drinking or fighting, as witnessed by Wheeler above. Historian James Ng has also suggested that loneliness particularly affected Chinese miners and was the "chief cause of mental illness" among these diggers.⁸³ Their reliance on social connections borne from kinship loyalties and tendency to associate solely with their own countrymen on the goldfields did not always have positive effects. This was especially visible in the decades following the 1860s, when the Otago Chinese digging community felt the demographic losses of those who returned home, relocated to other areas of New Zealand, or died.

Most of the goldfields' narratives examined focus on the order – or disorder – of males. Goldfields were traditionally male spaces, heavily dominated by ideas and displays of masculinity. Wheeler even suggested that the overall good behaviour of Otago diggers was a direct result of a *lack* of women on the goldfields.⁸⁴ While female diggers were uncommon, a high number of camp followers – that is, those who provided infrastructure, goods, or services to diggers – were women. Records show that these women could be disorderly, too. For example, women were

⁸¹ Bathgate, p. 167.

⁸² Wheeler, p. 35.

⁸³ James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, four volumes (Dunedin: Otago Heritage Books, 1993), I, p. 99.

⁸⁴ Wheeler, pp. 39-40.

arrested for selling liquor on the goldfields. Mrs. Singleton was fined £10 and costs in the court at the Waitahuna diggings in 1862.⁸⁵

An element of xenophobia also permeated views of goldfields order and disorder. Not only were former Australia convicts blamed generally for delinquencies, but also Chinese diggers were. Reports of their poor behaviour began circulating even before their arrival in Otago. In 1876, eight years after Chinese first arrived in 1868, Bathgate admitted that some Chinese did become known to authorities, but he also commended their overall tendency to be “peaceable and orderly citizens”.⁸⁶ He explained that they were usually quiet neighbours, who gambled only amongst themselves and smoked opium rather than drink liquor – the importance of the last point being that opium did not cause consumers to become violent and rowdy. Bathgate further praised their honesty and trustworthiness by relaying a story in which a Chinaman returned half-a-crown which he discovered had been mistakenly paid to him.⁸⁷

There are also instances of disorderly behaviour being targeting minority groups such as women and Chinese. At least one rape of a woman at the diggings was reported by newspapers. In August 1862, Mary Ann Smith was indecently assaulted at the Tuapeka diggings by several men, and her male companion was severely beaten.⁸⁸ Bathgate described an assault on a Chinese digger which occurred at Naseby in the 1860s:

a few infuriated miners caught an unfortunate Chinaman, and putting him in a barrel with both ends knocked out, trundled him down the street. The poor wretch managed to escape from his tormentors, and fled as for his life: the fright upset his reason... those who had witnessed anti-Chinese riots in Victoria considered it mild.⁸⁹

Otago gold-rush narratives have illustrated that behaviour was controlled and order maintained in similar ways to Victoria. Narrative authors also credited Otago goldminers with the ability to self-govern, but claimed they

⁸⁵ *Otago Witness*, ‘The Gold-fields: Waitahuna’, 7 June 1862, p. 8.

⁸⁶ Bathgate, p. 171.

⁸⁷ Bathgate, p. 177.

⁸⁸ *Otago Witness*, ‘Brutal Assault and Rape at Tuapeka’, 30 August 1862, p. 2.

⁸⁹ Bathgate, p. 170.

conducted themselves more respectably than those in Victoria. Some authors even attempted to blame immigrants from the Australian colonies for the existence of disorder on the Otago fields. Like Victoria, the examined narratives tended to emphasise disorder as being related to criminal activities, with such behaviour visible both on the goldfields and in the surrounding settlements. Disorder could refer to other elements of gold-rush life, however, such as vagrancy, destitution, and insanity. Goldminers who were unprepared or unsuited to the demands of digging – financially, physically, or mentally – could find themselves in conflict with expectations of ‘order’ in present colonial New Zealand society.

Summary

Analysis of the selected narratives indicates that authors who visited Victoria and Otago defined ‘order’ in similar ways. Goldfields in both locations were supervised by systems of legislation and authority figures. The payment of a licence fee was demanded in both Victoria and Otago before an individual could legally commence digging, although later in the respective gold-rush periods this tax was renamed to the ‘miner’s right’. Despite the existence of networks of official goldfields management, an emphasis on self-governance pervades the examined narratives. Such ‘natural democracy’ was most apparent on new goldfields where authorities had yet to establish their means of control and regulation. Booth called this “a self-constituted form of government” and explained that “some capable man” was elected as leader and assumed responsibility for the protection of all diggers against criminal behaviour.⁹⁰

Mackenzie attempted to explain why diggers were predisposed to conduct themselves well in certain circumstances. His suggestion that the large amount of ‘respectable’ diggers in Victoria exercised a positive influence over those who might cause trouble on the goldfields indicates a romanticised view of the colony and its inhabitants.⁹¹ The belief that diggers could create and maintain their own systems of order was closely

⁹⁰ Booth, p. 71.

⁹¹ Mackenzie, p. 57.

linked to colonial immigration propaganda. As it was much cheaper to travel from Europe to North America than to Australia and New Zealand, persuasive tactics were often employed to encourage migration to isolated British Colonies.⁹² Many of the surveyed narratives existed as guidebooks and 'emigration manuals' and they provided a vehicle for such strategies to be presented to a large audience.

There existed a point of difference between representations of authority by authors of narratives from Victoria's goldfields, however. These narratives emphasised an inherent conflict between authorities and diggers, while Otago's narratives do not express any disdain at all. Both Preshaw and Ferguson referred to the treatment of Victoria's goldminers by official administration through the use of animal metaphors, specifically the word 'dogs'.⁹³ Twentieth-century historians have suggested that the goldminers' anti-authority sentiment was part of a tradition present in the Australian colonies before Victoria's gold-rush. Australian settlers naturally exhibited a dislike of police and this was noticeably exaggerated by control and supervision methods developed to contain goldfields behaviour in the 1850s.⁹⁴

Visible throughout narratives of the Otago goldfields are comparisons with Victoria. Authors of narratives frequently constructed Otago goldfields as being 'more orderly' than those in Victoria. After enjoying the serene silence of a night on the Tuapeka in 1861, Wheeler asserted that diggers in Victoria could "learn a lesson from New Zealand miners".⁹⁵ Even Gabriel Read, discoverer of gold in Otago in 1861, is quoted in Pyke's narrative as claiming that the Otago goldminers were the best-behaved men seen on any goldfield.⁹⁶ These comparisons were an attempt to prove that New Zealand had learned from Victoria's goldfields example, and potentially existed as a form of immigration propaganda. The stories of the wild and unruly goldfields in Victoria may have discouraged some from the goldfields of Otago, but by illustrating the differences between the two

⁹² Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p. 66.

⁹³ Preshaw, p. 13; Ferguson, p. 32.

⁹⁴ Ward, p. 156.

⁹⁵ Wheeler, pp. 27-28.

⁹⁶ Pyke, p. 51.

locations and pointing out that time had educated authorities, travel writings such as those examined in this thesis often sought to encourage migration to Otago.

Interestingly, narrative authors in both locations attempted to explain away the disorderly elements of their goldfields by appropriating blame to particular groups of people. In gold-rush Victoria, Howitt reminded his readers that the Australian colonies were borne from penal settlements, and that immigrants to Victoria should not be surprised when they find themselves the victim of theft.⁹⁷ Clacy specifically named Vandemonians as being responsible for the majority of crime in Melbourne.⁹⁸ Otago authors, in turn, blamed the Australian colonies for the unpleasant aspects to their goldfields population. While Pyke claimed many of the trans-Tasman immigrants were respectable, he conceded that some were not.⁹⁹ Bathgate asserted that “a good many bad characters” had migrated from Australia following the gold discoveries in Otago, and that “the convict element” was visible on the goldfields.¹⁰⁰ Arguably, by shifting responsibility for the negative features of gold-rush society, Victoria and Otago narrative authors were constructing a kind of early nationalism, which separated the Australasian colonies from Europe and also from each other.

Disorderly behaviour was defined in similar ways in narratives of Victoria and Otago. Generally, when writing about disorder, narrative authors were referring to criminal behaviour and activities, particularly theft. Ferguson claimed that on the Bendigo goldfield in 1852 and 1853, a digger was likely to be shot or robbed if he left his tent after dark.¹⁰¹ A friend of a member of Clacy’s mining party had his gold stolen while travelling through the Black Forest in Victoria in 1852.¹⁰² On the Otago goldfields, Bathgate explained that fraud was a common crime.¹⁰³ Pyke also

⁹⁷ Howitt, p. 50.

⁹⁸ Clacy, p. 13.

⁹⁹ Pyke, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ Bathgate, p. 155.

¹⁰¹ Ferguson, p. 29.

¹⁰² Clacy, p. 41.

¹⁰³ Bathgate, p. 167.

mentioned bushranger-type gangs robbing groups and individuals travelling between goldfields or goldfields and settlements in 1861.¹⁰⁴

Authors of Victoria's narratives extend this discussion of disorderly behaviour by including suggestions that intend to protect would-be diggers from the same fate as the characters in the narrative's anecdotes. Owning a gun was one way a digger could defend himself against thefts. Howitt described the cacophony of discharged firearms at night on the Ovens goldfield in 1853 as a "custom at all the diggings" which apparently served the purpose of letting criminals know that the goldminers were armed and ready to shoot.¹⁰⁵ Other authors, such as Rochfort, emphasised the importance of travelling in large groups in order to deter thieves.¹⁰⁶ It was suggested that goldminers would benefit from keeping to themselves, and they should think carefully about helping others, even when their hardship seemed genuine. Clacy and Rochfort both recounted stories where criminals feigned injury or other misfortune, only to prey upon the 'rescuers' who heeded their cries for help.¹⁰⁷ Such descriptions are not present in the examined Otago narratives. This exclusion is perhaps linked to the narrative implications that Otago was relatively 'orderly', as discussed earlier. Recommendations for how to stay safe in Otago as a goldminer may not have been deemed necessary as the disorderly aspects of the goldfields were minimized by narrative authors.

The examined narratives also referred to disorder in terms of insanity. Sudden goldmining success by those not acquainted with affluence could have negative effects on a digger's sense of reason. Howitt feared for the fate of diggers who found "more gold than they have sense and prudence to deal with".¹⁰⁸ Clacy observed two successful diggers in Melbourne acting in peculiar ways as a result of their new-found prosperity.¹⁰⁹ Reports of the "extravagance and recklessness" of successful goldminers in Otago intrigued Bathgate:

¹⁰⁴ Pyke, p. 54.

¹⁰⁵ Howitt, p. 176.

¹⁰⁶ Rochfort, p. 50.

¹⁰⁷ Clacy, pp. 62-64; Rochfort, p. 53.

¹⁰⁸ Howitt, p. 19.

¹⁰⁹ Clacy, p. 14.

Making a sandwich of a £20 note and eating it, washing in a bucket of champagne, or setting up bottles of that liquor for skittle-pins...¹¹⁰

While these anecdotes varied from traditional definitions of lunacy circulating in the nineteenth-century, the examined narratives from both Victoria and Otago indicated the presence of a specific kind of gold-rush madness. Despite the apparent short-term nature of insanity produced by sudden mining success, such behaviour was still considered disorderly by the narrative authors.

Narrative authors in Victoria and Otago represented goldfields order in similar ways. Self-governance by diggers was emphasised in both locations as a means of behaviour control. The examined narratives represented authority in different ways, with authors on Victoria's goldfields criticising the treatment of diggers by police and other authority figures. Otago narratives draw particular attention to comparisons with Victoria's goldmining population, claiming that Otago diggers were somehow more respectable and 'orderly' than their counterparts in the Australian colonies. Narrative authors in both locations attempted to attribute disorderly behaviour to others present on the goldfields. Definitions of 'disorder' were similar in Victoria and Otago, with references made to criminality and insanity. Authors of narratives in Victoria expand their discussions of disorder by recommending safety precautions a digger can take to protect himself from crime, particularly theft. Such suggestions are not found in the surveyed Otago narratives.

¹¹⁰ Bathgate, p. 89.

Chapter Three – Minorities: Gender and Race

Implicit in representations of order and disorder in goldfields narratives are ideas about minorities, particularly those of race and gender. Race and gender were important concepts that shaped contemporary views of colonial society. For example, anxieties about high concentrations of men and their behaviour motivated both Victoria and Otago to offer incentives for the immigration of women to the colonies.¹ The perceived racial superiority of Europeans was influential in the rejection and persecution of Chinese diggers by white diggers. The process of ‘othering’ was also present in the creation and maintenance of ‘order’, evidenced by restrictions placed on the immigration of Chinese goldminers, particularly in Victoria in the 1850s.

It is important to note that goldfields narratives are generally dominated by male voices. Goldfields labour was inherently masculine so the characters embodied in such experiences are usually male, and many narrative authors were men. Women did write accounts of their experiences on or around the goldfields, but these narratives are infrequent and their content is discernibly influenced by gender norms of the nineteenth-century. Authors of goldfields narratives were also frequently European, with Western ideas and concepts shaping their perception of the colonial world. The overwhelming ‘white masculinity’ of the diggings has resulted in narrative records that can detract from or completely overlook the gold-rush experiences of minority groups, such as women, children, Chinese, Aborigines, and Māori.

This chapter seeks to place the ‘other’ on the goldfields of Victoria and Otago by investigating how minorities were portrayed by the selected narratives, and why. It will also consider the silences between the sporadic references across narratives and attempt to explain why minorities may have been excluded from the studied accounts. To summarize,

¹ Mark Peel and Christina Twomey, *A History of Australia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 75; “A community of men is a herd of selfishness and brutality”: David Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p. 153.

comparisons will be drawn between Victoria and Otago in terms of narrative representations of gender and race. Similarities and differences in the treatment of women, Chinese, and indigenous people will be considered, and the analysis will be concluded with a discussion of any visible changes over time.

Victoria

The goldfields of Victoria were predominantly populated by British immigrants, and this is reflected in the European dominance of the surveyed narratives in terms of both authorship and content. Diggers and camp followers were generally English, Irish, or Scottish, with proportions following that same order.² In the period 1852 to 1860, 290 000 people immigrated to Victoria from Britain and Ireland, which accounts for 55 percent of all British migration to Australia and New Zealand within those same years.³ The goldfields were also overwhelmingly male. Initial migrants to the diggings in Victoria were mostly young, single men, who often intended to make their fortunes in gold and then return home. In 1852-53, there were three times as many single males as there were married men in Victoria.⁴ In 1854, three-quarters of the population on both the Ballarat and Bendigo goldfields were males aged from 15 to 44 years old.⁵ From 1853, this gender imbalance began to change as developments in mining techniques encouraged the creation of a diverse support industry and created a more stable economy. More married men and their families migrated to the colony, with many expecting to stay long-term, if not permanently.⁶ The masculinity of gold-rush society is evident in the narratives selected for study. All but one were penned by male authors.

Women were, therefore, in the minority on the goldfields of Victoria. Despite this, women were a part of goldfields society. In 1854, 13 percent

² Charles Fahey, 'Peopling the Victorian Goldfields: From Boom to Bust, 1851-1901', *Australian Economic History Review*, 50, 2 (2010), p. 153.

³ Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), p. 44.

⁴ Serle, p. 48.

⁵ Fahey, p. 156.

⁶ Serle, p. 47.

of the Bendigo goldfield's population and 15 percent of Ballarat were women, aged 15 to 44.⁷ As expected, women comprised a relatively small proportion of the total number of migrants entering Victoria during the gold-rush period. Of the 600 000 immigrants to Victoria between 1851 and 1860, only 164 000 were female.⁸ Incentives were provided to encourage the migration of single women, and restrictions were placed on the mobility of single men, in an attempt to balance the natural gender bias and ensure greater order and stability. The inclusion of women in colonial society was important. Despite the later glamorisation of the 'lone male' as an Australian legend of sorts, groups of single men were seen as a social and moral problem in the goldfields era.⁹ Single women "of good character" enjoyed reduced charges for the passage to Victoria, while single males increasingly found themselves refused transportation, unless they were part of a family who had more daughters than sons.¹⁰ Authorities, however, found it difficult to attract any substantial amount of suitable women who wished to migrate.

Women on the goldfields were rarely directly involved with digging, although there are some scattered references to females working claims. On his arrival in Melbourne in 1852, Howitt described seeing diggers *and* diggeresses.¹¹ Clacy herself tried her hand at washing a tin-dish full of dirt for her party.¹² These were unusual sights. Instead, women were more likely to be 'camp followers' than miners in their own right. They often provided goods and services that a goldfield required and a digger demanded, such as food, alcohol, and sex. Women worked as prostitutes, barmaids, domestic servants, storekeepers, and entertainers. Ferguson recalled two separate groups of people who prepared and sold food to

⁷ Fahey, p. 156.

⁸ Margaret Anderson, 'Mrs Charles Clacy, Lola Montez and Poll the Grog-seller: Glimpses of Women on the Goldfields', in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 225.

⁹ Peel and Twomey, p. 75; Goodman, p. 153.

¹⁰ Serle, p. 54.

¹¹ William Howitt, *Land, Labour and Gold*, facsimile edition (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972), p. 42.

¹² Mrs. Charles (Ellen) Clacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-53* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853), available at Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4054.epub.images?session_id=1beb9c48732a6cce9213fa15af68a91c1fa137ee>, p. 37.

hungry diggers on the Bendigo and Beechworth goldfields, respectively, in 1852: “an old German and his wife and niece”, and a fellow American and his wife.¹³

It is interesting to note that the women Ferguson described existed within family units. Goldfields women often travelled with husbands, brothers, or other male family members. Preshaw Snr. described his party of “thirty-nine men and one woman” loading their horses and bullocks for their trek to the Campbell’s Creek goldfield in 1852.¹⁴ He further explained that the woman was newly married to one of the males in his party. Another female with a companion was briefly encountered by Preshaw Snr. on his travels to the goldfields. He referred to her unflatteringly as “a digger’s fat wife”.¹⁵ Clacy penned her narrative of the Victorian goldfields while travelling with her brother in 1852 and 1853.

The goldfields were generally viewed as a man’s domain due to the rough and ready nature of work and play, so women on the diggings were rare. Preshaw Snr. heard that the diggings were no place for the “soft sex”, so he left his wife and four daughters in town.¹⁶ The diggings were transient and chaotic places, and common goldfields activities, such as gambling and drinking, were somewhat at odds with contemporary expectations of women and their behaviour. Women who did partake in traditionally ‘male’ amusements were viewed with contempt. On the Eagle Hawk goldfield, a tent adjacent to Clacy’s party housed a husband and wife, and while the husband spent his days digging, the wife ran a sly-grog shop. Between patrons, she was seen to drink and smoke, and often swore in her conversations with others. Clacy described her foul language as being “ten thousand times more awful” than hearing the same words from a man.¹⁷ There were also concerns about the safety of a female in such a masculine world. Clacy explained that the goldfields were not somewhere a woman should be without a male “protector” and even suggested that

¹³ Charles D. Ferguson, *Experiences of a Forty-niner in Australia and New Zealand* (Melbourne: Gaston Renard Publisher, 1979), pp. 24, 33.

¹⁴ G. O. Preshaw, *Banking Under Difficulties or Life on the Goldfields* (Christchurch: Capper Press, 1971), p. 8.

¹⁵ Preshaw, p. 9.

¹⁶ Preshaw, p. 3.

¹⁷ Clacy, p. 36.

potential female immigrants should only travel to the colony if they did so “under suitable protection”.¹⁸

Women on the goldfields of Victoria were treated as a novelty. In 1852, Preshaw Jnr’s eldest sister visited him on the Mount Alexander diggings. Preshaw claimed she was one of the first females on that goldfield. As her cart made its way to its destination, cries were heard: "A woman! A woman!" and diggers lined the road to catch a glimpse of her.¹⁹ Generally, females on the goldfields were viewed positively, as a civilising agent, or a reminder of the domesticity of ‘home’. Sometimes they accompanied digging husbands or other male family members to support them in their work collecting gold. Clacy described seeing the “soft influence” of a female in a miner’s tent:

the tins are as bright as silver, there are sheets as well as blankets on the beds, and perhaps a clean counterpane, with the addition of a dry sack or piece of carpet on the ground; whilst a pet cockatoo, chained to a perch, makes noise enough to keep the "missus" from feeling lonely when the good man is at work.²⁰

Howitt saw “a good many women” travelling to the goldfields and claimed that they did not seem to mind the transient, harsh life.²¹ Clacy, however, explained that not all women instantly appreciated the reality of a goldfields lifestyle. Some experienced fear and anger before reconciling the colonial reality with their expectations and previous circumstances.²² Clacy offered advice to any woman considering immigrating to Australia, suggesting that the colonies were not a place for women used to an idle lifestyle where their every need is catered to by someone else.²³ The kinds of women who enjoyed life in the colony were those capable of working with their hands. Clacy’s examples of useful skills included being able to milk cows, churn butter, cook damper, and prepare a pudding.²⁴ Read also

¹⁸ Clacy, pp. 46, 91.

¹⁹ Preshaw, p. 28.

²⁰ Clacy, p. 33.

²¹ Howitt, p. 113.

²² Clacy, p. 33.

²³ Clacy, p. 91.

²⁴ Clacy, p. 91.

shared the sentiment that Victoria needed hard-working women with practical knowledge.²⁵

Sadly, the most common representation of a woman on the Victorian goldfields was that of the 'gold widow'. Many women were left either at home, or in the towns and cities close to the fields, in poverty, battling loneliness, or forced to find work in a colonial society where their contributions were increasingly redundant.²⁶ Howitt conceded that there was not the "pressing want" for domestic servants in the colony as he had expected.²⁷ Destitution due to unemployment and abandonment by husbands were common occurrences for goldfields women.²⁸

Unmarried women were rare on the goldfields, while single men were not. There was a great demand for wives as colonial bachelors were "so ready to get married".²⁹ Not all goldfields marriages resulted in happy unions, however. Howitt explained that marrying a man in the colony during the gold rush period was a risk, as former lives – and possibly wives and families too – might have been deserted and forgotten.³⁰ The 'stranger' was somewhat of a goldfields archetype. The diggings were largely anonymous, and individuals were able to easily blend into the gold-rush crowds. Questions were rarely asked of a man about his past and party members were generally satisfied to hear information about their mate when it was provided and not before. Ferguson described his discomfort with a "multitude of enquiries" from a young shop assistant, who wanted to know where Ferguson was from.³¹

The nomadic nature of digging also created problems for wives and families. Miners were constantly anticipating new gold discoveries and this restlessness made them eager to follow rumours and hearsay.³² This transiency was compounded by the fact that many diggers married in the urban centres around the goldfields. While the diggings themselves were

²⁵ C. Rudston Read, *What I Heard, Saw, and Did at the Australian Gold Fields* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1853), p. 326.

²⁶ See: Anderson, 'Glimpses of Women on the Goldfields', in *Gold*.

²⁷ Howitt, p. 40.

²⁸ Goodman, *Gold Seeking*, p.

²⁹ Clacy, p. 83.

³⁰ Howitt, p. 40.

³¹ Ferguson, pp. 47-48.

³² Howitt, p. 185.

dominated by men, towns and cities near the goldfields were often spaces occupied by high concentrations of women. Clacy observed that that women seemed to far outnumber men in Melbourne, despite statistics that claimed one female to every four males in the colony overall.³³

Sometimes marriage was connected to success, with digger weddings a way of publicly celebrating and announcing the realisation of the goldfields dream of 'wealth'. Howitt saw several wedding parties in Melbourne in 1852, and was aware that marriages were common when miners visited the city to spend their gold.³⁴ He explained that many newlywed diggers quickly returned to the goldfields and left their wives behind. He provided an exceptional case where one woman married a miner who left her the very next day.³⁵ Some men who left never returned, for varying reasons, including death and disinterest. Abandoned women, especially those with children to care for, often found themselves destitute, particularly if they had little or no family support in the colony. Clacy shared a story where a family had immigrated to Victoria in 1852 only to find the promises of high wages, cheap goods, and low unemployment to be false. In desperation, the husband and father left his family in Melbourne to try his luck on the goldfields. Weeks went by and the wife did not hear from her husband, for better or worse, and eventually poverty, sickness, and anxiety overcame her.³⁶ Read also discussed a similar situation of no contact, where a wife had no news of her husband for six weeks. She was "in the last state of despair, not knowing what had become of her husband".³⁷

Some of the narratives examined do not discuss women on the goldfields of Victoria at all. From the narratives that do, combined with official statistics, we know that females *were* present on and around the diggings in various capacities. As a female travelling with male family members, Clacy would have been more likely to record and report her experiences with women in the colony. The lack of others of her own gender on the goldfields would have been palpable, a sentiment illustrated by Clacy's

³³ Clacy, p. 83.

³⁴ Howitt, p. 170.

³⁵ Howitt, p. 40.

³⁶ Clacy, pp. 94-95.

³⁷ Read, p. 227.

“surprise and delight” when she came across a fellow female on the fields.³⁸ Howitt travelled through Victoria with his two sons, but left his wife in England – a well-educated woman who had not only co-authored several books with Howitt before his sojourn in the colonies, but also penned her own works independent from her husband.³⁹ Howitt’s connection to a woman accomplished in her own right may have meant he viewed goldfields females more sympathetically than other narrative authors, like Ferguson, who were single males often focussed on gold, wealth, and little else.⁴⁰ The gold rushes in Victoria occurred at a time when a woman’s contribution to society was still largely based on her ability to have and raise children, and keep a home. The goldfields were characteristically in conflict with ideas of civility and domesticity; therefore the absence of females on the goldfields was not seen as anything exceptional to many.

Children were uncommon on the goldfields of Victoria, but just like women, they did sometimes accompany family members to the diggings. A digger from Bendigo shared his description of the goldfield with Howitt in 1852. He claimed it was “like a country fair five miles long” with men, women, and children all mixed together.⁴¹ On his journey to the Ovens diggings in 1852, Howitt himself saw diggers’ wagons crammed with mining equipment. He also noted that often two or three women and children were perched on top of the pile.⁴² Howitt even observed a party travelling with a baby.⁴³ Not all children on the goldfields were under the supervision of parents, however. Some lived in the colony with older siblings. In Melbourne, Howitt watched a group that apparently consisted of a digger, his heavily pregnant wife, and his younger brother, who assisted with the party’s horse.⁴⁴

³⁸ Clacy, p. 44.

³⁹ Mary Howitt Walker, ‘Howitt, William (1792–1879)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 1972
<<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/howitt-william-3807>> [accessed 4 February 2015].

⁴⁰ Ferguson never mentioned a wife or being married.

⁴¹ Howitt, p. 19.

⁴² Howitt, pp. 112-113.

⁴³ Howitt, p. 113.

⁴⁴ Howitt, p. 43.

Children were expected to assume various roles on the goldfields, often depending on their gender or age. Preshaw Jr. travelled to the Campbell's Creek goldfield in 1852 with his father when he was just thirteen years old. He explained that there were no schools on the goldfields, so he was expected to make himself useful by helping with mining activities.⁴⁵ There was a demand for schooling on the more populous diggings, however, with families at Castlemaine, Castleton, Ballarat, and the Ovens displaying interest in sending their children to such institutions if they were established.⁴⁶ Even on the journey to the goldfields, children assumed appropriate responsibilities. Howitt witnessed a large family stopping for the night and organising themselves for dinner. While the mother prepared the food, the eldest daughter helped to wash and groom her siblings, and the eldest boy assisted the adult males in herding the bullocks to grass.⁴⁷

A large part of Clacy's narrative referred to a ten-year old girl named Jessie, who Clacy's party met on their travels near Forest Creek. Jessie made and sold veils to keep the flies off diggers' faces. She explained to Clacy that she lived with her grandfather, as her father had been killed in an accident on the goldfields and her mother died soon after. Jessie's grandfather was also unwell, a result of the intense physical labour of digging, so her veil-making was often the pair's only form of income.⁴⁸ Clacy's emotive inclusion of Jessie's plight is perhaps closely linked to Clacy's reason for writing her narrative. She intended to provide information on the goldfields "for many mothers, wives, and sisters in England".⁴⁹ Despite being female, her narrative is not excluded from gender norms of the nineteenth-century, where women were most commonly located in a 'house and home' environment. This included the raising of children, thus Clacy's description of Jessie is an attempt to bring familiarity to a narrative setting traditionally dominated by men, transiency, disorder, and harsh physical labour.

⁴⁵ Preshaw, p. 29.

⁴⁶ Read, pp. 243-244.

⁴⁷ Howitt, p. 165.

⁴⁸ Clacy, p. 52.

⁴⁹ Clacy, p. 5.

Just as the diggings were not seen as a place for women, some also considered them inappropriate places for children. The harsh nature of goldfields life and the generally poor behaviour of diggers meant that children could imitate some interesting activities. Read described the language used by children on the goldfields in 1853 as “dreadful and horribly disgusting”. He clarified that swearing was not exclusive to boys alone but girls too would participate in expressing such profanities.⁵⁰ Children could also be involved with lawless parents in petty crime. One of Rochfort’s mates was robbed by three men and a ten-year-old boy in 1852. Once the victim was deprived of his gold and tied to a tree, the boy cocked a pistol and asked one of the men, “Father, shall I shoot the old—
——?”⁵¹

There was also a significant population of Chinese on the goldfields of Victoria. In 1854, it was calculated that Victoria was home to 2000 Chinese diggers.⁵² By the end of 1856, there were approximately 20 000 Chinese on the goldfields, and this number rose to 35 000 in mid-1857. These numbers were not particularly high proportional to the total population, however, with the Chinese constituting just 8% of Victoria’s total population in 1859.⁵³

Chinese diggers generally did not intend to settle in the regions they worked in, although some eventually did. They often sent money back to family in China, and many planned to return as soon as they could. The Chinese placed high importance on kinship links and they were typically involved in networks of debt and obligation.⁵⁴ Some Chinese immigrants received loans from their countrymen to aid their passage to the colony, and others had been sent by employers to work on the goldfields for a specified time for a set wage.⁵⁵ By 1857, the Chinese were viewed as strong competition for an already scarce resource, and many European diggers were offended by their apparent disinterest in permanently

⁵⁰ Read, p. 244.

⁵¹ John Rochfort, *The Adventures of a Surveyor in New Zealand and the Australian Gold Diggings* (London: David Bogue, 1853), p. 51.

⁵² Serle, p. 321.

⁵³ Serle, p. 320.

⁵⁴ Peel and Twomey, p. 77.

⁵⁵ Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd. 1967), p. 18.

establishing themselves in the colonies. They were seen as unwilling to contribute anything long-lasting to Victoria; the goldfields were simply a means to their end.⁵⁶ The idea that the hard-won gold from colonial soil was enriching the lives of merchants and speculators half a world away in China angered many.

Complaints about the Chinese extended beyond their reasons for digging. Europeans considered their mining techniques wasteful.⁵⁷ The Chinese were labelled as heathens or pagans as they worked and traded on the Sabbath, worshipped in temples rather than churches, and honoured their dead with funeral traditions viewed by Europeans as unusual, such as gongs and fireworks.⁵⁸ Their enjoyment of gambling and opium smoking was not appreciated by other diggers. The Chinese were also blamed for carrying and passing illnesses around the goldfields, but this had a more logical explanation. Dietary deficiencies and poverty contributed to sickness and disease, and the close proximity of large numbers of people and poor sanitation promoted the continued transmission of infections.⁵⁹

Chinese women on the goldfields were even rarer than European women. This created another point of contention between Chinese and European miners, as there was a concern that the few 'white' women would marry a Chinese digger instead of a 'white' man. Colonial ideas surrounding racial interbreeding did not look kindly on this possibility.⁶⁰ Many were officially recorded as unmarried, but in fact many left wives in China. Chinese women tended not to emigrate for reasons of domestic obligation and financial restriction.⁶¹

The first official attempts to restrict Chinese immigration to Victoria came in 1855. 'An Act to make Provision for Certain Immigrants' restricted the number of Chinese passengers on any ship and imposed an entrance tax.

⁵⁶ Serle, p. 327.

⁵⁷ Ann Curthoys, 'Men of All Nations, except Chinamen: Europeans and Chinese', in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 108; Serle, p. 327.

⁵⁸ Serle, pp. 327-328.

⁵⁹ Serle, p. 80.

⁶⁰ Rosemary van den Berg, *Nyoongar People of Australia: Perspectives on Racism and Multiculturalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 115.

⁶¹ Kate Bagnall, 'Rewriting the History of Chinese Families in Nineteenth-Century Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 42, 1 (2011), pp. 65-66; Fahey, p. 153.

Protectors were also appointed to mediate in disputes involving Chinese.⁶² Their formal purpose was to “look after the interests of the Chinese” but in reality, Protectors were given the power to supervise, control, and regulate the Chinese population.⁶³ The Act failed to limit the numbers of Chinese immigrating to the colony, however, as ships landed their passengers in South Australia. From there, immigrants could make their way overland to Victoria, on foot, thus avoiding the entrance fee. One witness watched six or seven hundred Chinese immigrants do exactly this, on one specific day alone, walking in a line two miles long.⁶⁴

Tension towards Chinese diggers exploded in Victoria in 1857, in the form of the Buckland Riots. On the Buckland River goldfield, Chinese miners outnumbered their European counterparts by more than double. Disputes had been intensifying for weeks, exacerbated by the fact that there were only two policemen on the field to maintain control over 2000 total diggers.⁶⁵ In July 1857, European diggers held a meeting to determine the best way to “drive the Chinese away” and immediately after, up to 100 men swarmed the Chinese camps and set their tents and stores alight. Chinese diggers were beaten and robbed as they attempted to flee, and the European miners threw any belongings left behind into the river.⁶⁶ Sympathetic Europeans who attempted to protect the Chinese were also attacked.⁶⁷ Thirteen Europeans were arrested – but later acquitted of their crimes – and the Chinese were initially invited by authorities to return to the goldfield, but very few accepted this offer.⁶⁸

Following the Buckland Riot, an Act to Regulate the Residence of the Chinese Population of Victoria imposed a residence tax of £1 every second month on all adult Chinese males. The tax was justified by the apparent need to carry out sanitary management in the Chinese goldfield camps – “the filthy state of which formed a ground of complaint”.⁶⁹ Anti-Chinese sentiments in Victoria were closely linked to colonial ideas of

⁶² Willard, p. 21.

⁶³ Willard, pp. 21-22.

⁶⁴ Serle, p. 325.

⁶⁵ Serle, p. 325.

⁶⁶ Willard, p. 25.

⁶⁷ Serle, p. 326.

⁶⁸ Willard, p. 25.

⁶⁹ Willard, p. 27.

race, and a widespread European belief in the racial superiority that accompanied being 'white'. Opposition to Chinese diggers in part informed future Australian immigration policies and other conceptual developments in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, such as 'White Australia' and the Yellow Peril panic.

The general absence of references to Chinese diggers is palpable in the narratives examined. Some authors do mention them infrequently; such as Rochfort who stated that there were "a good many Chinese" working on the Bendigo goldfield in 1852.⁷⁰ Clacy noticed visible numbers of ethnic minorities in urban areas surrounding the goldfields. Gold-rush Melbourne was a bustling city, a social melting-pot of sorts where travellers like Clacy saw "all nations, classes, and costumes" walking the streets, including Chinamen and Aborigines.⁷¹ This exclusion is in part explained by the timeframes in which our authors travelled throughout Victoria's goldfields. Tensions with Chinese diggers increased as the gold-rush progressed, and many of the authors of the narratives analysed, such as Clacy, Ferguson, and Mackenzie, only spent a very short time in the colony.

Aborigines are even more absent from our narratives than the Chinese. In Victoria, Aborigines were not generally employed as diggers, although there are infrequent accounts of Aboriginal gold prospecting. They were more likely to work in the support industry around the goldfields, as police, gold escorts, guides, trackers, and bark-cutters.⁷² Aborigines were relatively friendly to Europeans on goldfields and often extended assistance to goldminers. In 1853, an Aboriginal man offered to show Ferguson a place where he had found gold. Before they could leave, the man was injured in a fight with a rival group of Aborigines, and Ferguson applied first aid after his kin sent for his help.⁷³ It is uncertain if Ferguson's help was motivated by the promise of the Aboriginal man to show him gold, or if Ferguson rendered his assistance selflessly and charitably.

⁷⁰ Rochfort, p. 65.

⁷¹ Clacy, p. 13.

⁷² Fred Cahir, *Black Gold: Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850-1870* (ANU E Press, 2012), available at <press.anu.edu.au/?p=198511>, p. 2.

⁷³ Ferguson, p. 79.

Some of the narratives analysed do not specify an ethnicity beyond skin colour, so it can be difficult to determine if their references relate to Aborigines or not. Howitt recounted a brief story where his party quickly found gold in a new claim on Pennyweight Flat in 1853. After watching their success, “two men... one of them a negro” tried their luck in a claim of their own adjacent to Howitt’s party.⁷⁴

Views about minorities on the goldfields of Victoria are presented in the selected narratives. Narrative authors frequently contextualised their references to women on the goldfields through their relationships with men. The reality of gold-rush life for women and families was also considered by the narratives, with authors discussing destitution and abandonment. Brief references were also made to the role of children on Victoria’s goldfields, and the effects of gold-rush society on their behaviour. Chinese and Aboriginal miners are noticeably absent from the examined narratives, with only a handful of mentions present over seven studied texts. With regards to Chinese, this exclusion is somewhat explained by the fact that many of the narrative authors visited Victoria’s goldfields before tensions with Chinese miners were at their peak.

Otago

The goldfields of Otago, like Victoria, were primarily populated by young, single, European males. In 1864, two-thirds were aged between 21 and 40 years.⁷⁵ In December 1861, census figures reported that the total population of Otago was 30 263. Some 21 000 were recorded as adult males (above 16 years of age), with 80 percent of these individuals listed as unmarried.⁷⁶ The Otago goldfields mostly attracted Europeans, particularly English, Irish, and Scots. Urban centres surrounding the goldfields were no different. At the end of 1861, Scottish settlers were still a majority in Dunedin, with almost half of the total numbers of residents

⁷⁴ Howitt, p. 187.

⁷⁵ Jennifer L. Dickinson, ‘Picks, pans and petticoats: Women on the central Otago goldfields’, (unpublished BA Dissertation, University of Otago, 1993), p. 14.

⁷⁶ Sigismund Wekey, *Otago: Its Goldfields and Resources* (Melbourne: W. H. Williams, 1862), p. 32.

claiming the nationality.⁷⁷ The European prevalence in Otago – and the New Zealand provinces in general – was in part due to direct immigration from Britain, but also resulted from ongoing European migration through other colonies, specifically Australia. As noted, in 1861 alone, 17 000 people arrived in Otago from the Australian colonies.⁷⁸ Bathgate described “thousands” of migrants coming from Australia.⁷⁹ By 1866, half of the goldminers in New Zealand overall were formerly from Victoria.⁸⁰ Pyke described this kind of ‘stepping stone’ migration as providing a “considerable addition” to the population of Otago.⁸¹

The Otago goldfields suffered the same gender and ethnic imbalances as Victoria. In 1861, men outnumbered women 100 to 1 in Otago. Over the next ten years, however, numbers of women on the diggings gradually increased: 100 to 18 in 1864, 100 to 30 in 1867, and 100 to 47 in 1871.⁸² Bathgate shared statistics that show by the beginning of 1871, there were approximately 36 000 males and 23 000 females in the province overall.⁸³ These changes over time are linked to developments in the Otago economy, including the movement from gold ‘fever’ to more stable industries such as farming, and official efforts to encourage more female migrants. As the gold discoveries in Otago faded away in the mid- to late-1860s, diggers who had pursued the discoveries from Victoria to Otago – and perhaps from California even earlier – were faced with a decision: follow the gold discoveries again, to other parts of New Zealand such as the West Coast, or settle in Otago or other provinces. While many did indeed continue chasing their gold-rush dreams, some remained. Those

⁷⁷ Wekey, p. 10. The high number of Scots in Dunedin was largely a result of the work of the assisted immigration scheme offered by the Otago Association from the 1840s.

⁷⁸ Erik Olssen, ‘Lands of Sheep and Gold: The Australian Dimension to the New Zealand Past, 1840-1900’, in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. by Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), p. 41.

⁷⁹ Alexander Bathgate, *Colonial Experiences or Sketches of People and Places in the Province of Otago, New Zealand* (Glasgow: J Maclehose, 1874), available at Early New Zealand Books Collection

<http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docs/epub/colonial_experiences_or_sketches_of_people_and_places_in_the_province_of_otago_new_zealand-2804.epub>, p. 164.

⁸⁰ Geoffrey Blainey, ‘The Momentous Gold Rushes’, *Australian Economic History Review*, 50, 2 (July 2010), p. 214.

⁸¹ Vincent Pyke, *History of Early Gold Discoveries in Otago* (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times, 1962), p. 28.

⁸² James Forrest, ‘Population and Settlement on the Otago Goldfields, 1861-1870’, *New Zealand Geographer*, 17, 1 (April 1961), p. 80.

⁸³ Bathgate, pp. 63-64.

who did establish themselves permanently in Otago may have done so due to their age and declining ability to maintain the intense physical labour distinctive of goldmining. Historian James Ng suggests that nineteenth-century Otago goldminers (of any ethnicity) were considered 'old' at 50 years of age.⁸⁴ By 1865, seventeen years had passed since the start of the Californian gold rush, and fourteen years since the first discoveries in Victoria. At the very least, "a considerable proportion" of those who migrated to the province for the purposes of gold remained in New Zealand.⁸⁵

Otago authorities attempted to attract females to the province during the gold rush years in order to boost the number of household servants in urban areas and to equalize the gender ratio. Women were considered to be civilizing agents, whose soft, domestic virtues could restrain and refine goldfields society, which was primarily comprised of single men living in often primitive conditions.⁸⁶ Women who met specific criteria were offered free passage to Otago through an Assisted Immigration Scheme which ran between October 1862 and April 1863. This system intended to attract single females between the ages of 12 and 35. Many British working class women took this opportunity, seeing it as "a chance to live comfortably".⁸⁷ A woman could expect relatively high wages if employed in domestic service in Otago, as illustrated by Bathgate:

£35 and £40 per annum is the current rate of wages for housemaids and cooks in private families, and that even for the most indifferent of servants. A girl of sixteen who goes to mind a baby expects 8s. or 10s. a week. Such rates of wages enable the servants to dress as well as their mistresses, and sometimes even better...⁸⁸

However, the Assisted Immigration Scheme struggled to find enough suitable females willing to immigrate. Bathgate explained that whenever a

⁸⁴ James Ng, 'The Sojourner Experience: The Cantonese Goldseekers in New Zealand, 1865-1901', in *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, ed. by Manying Ip (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), p. 8.

⁸⁵ W. D. Borrie, *The European Peopling of Australasia; A Demographic History 1788-1988* (Canberra: Australian National University Printing Service, 1994), p. 147.

⁸⁶ Dickinson, p. 39.

⁸⁷ Dickinson, p. 22.

⁸⁸ Bathgate, pp. 58-59.

ship docked in Dunedin, any single women were employed “within a few hours”, as demand significantly outstripped supply.⁸⁹

Many of the women on or around the Otago goldfields were married, or at the very least, associated to males in the province through family connections. The 1861 census recorded 3346 adult females in Otago, but only 1010 of this number were noted as ‘unmarried’.⁹⁰ With this in mind, it is not surprising that many of the women encountered by the authors examined are defined by their connections to males, particularly husbands. Pyke described a female who found payable gold as the “wife of a shepherd” and although the subsequent goldfield was named after her, ‘Munroe’s Gully’, could just as easily have been a reference to her husband rather than her.⁹¹ Women were rare on the diggings themselves, and it was often in their capacities as wives that they were present on the goldfields of Otago. Wheeler explained that there were only a half dozen women on the Tuapeka goldfield in 1861 – a fact to which he interestingly attributes the relative lack of crime.⁹² However, Pyke emphasised the fact that it was not just men who followed the news of the gold discoveries in Otago: “women and children in numberless cases have gone also”.⁹³

While it was uncommon for females to work a goldfields claim in their own right, women supported husbands and other family members in their mining work. Sometimes, they even assisted other diggers with their claims in return for payment. Bathgate shared a story about a couple whose luck had abandoned them when the husband’s quartz mine venture failed in 1863. Following his financial ruin, the pair lived in a “miserable hut” with their “squalid-looking” children, and the wife was forced to supplement her husband’s now meagre income by washing pay-dirt for neighbouring miners.⁹⁴

Abandonment by husbands and destitution as a result of desertion were the sad realities for many women in gold-rush Otago. As in Victoria, men

⁸⁹ Bathgate, p. 63.

⁹⁰ Wekey, p. 32.

⁹¹ Pyke, p. 31.

⁹² Wheeler, pp. 39-40.

⁹³ Pyke, p. 29.

⁹⁴ Bathgate, pp. 7-8.

would leave wives and children at home or in the towns and cities near goldfields, as the diggings were generally considered inappropriate for families. Gold fever could consume a man for a lifetime, and it was this restless excitement that lured men towards goldfields and away from homes, wives, family, and friends.⁹⁵ Seasonal migration distinctive of the Otago goldfields produced a transitory digging population. This nomadic lifestyle could make it difficult to keep in regular contact with families, and for families to know where a husband or father was at any given time – or even if he was still alive.

Like Victoria, children were uncommon on the Otago goldfields. The rough and tough nature of diggings life contrasted starkly with ideas of home and family. Money shared his experiences of spending time in the Ballarat (Otago) Hotel, which was owned by a man who was formerly in the French military. He described the hotelier's two children as "most lovely". Money enjoyed spending time watching the children as their innocence and gentle nature strongly juxtaposed with the sights on the surrounding goldfields.⁹⁶ Official records fail to provide clear numbers of children on the Otago goldfields. No children were documented on the Tuapeka goldfield in the 1861 census, but three years later, 1438 males were listed as "under the age of twenty-one".⁹⁷ It is likely, however, that many of these young men were close to the age specified and were employed in goldmining, rather than being small children dependant on parents. Bathgate was 18 years old when he first arrived in Otago. Booth's narrative spans his five years in New Zealand which began when he was just 16 years old. The immigration of young males either alone or in family groups was not uncommon.

Chinese miners were invited to the Otago goldfields by official authorities. In early 1865, prominent Otago business owners and the Otago Provincial Council encouraged the migration of Chinese diggers from Victoria.⁹⁸ The

⁹⁵ Wekey, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Charles L. Money, *Knocking About in New Zealand* (Melbourne: Samuel Mullen, 1871), p. 19.

⁹⁷ Forrest, p. 76.

⁹⁸ James Ng, 'Chinese Gold seekers in Otago, New Zealand', in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. by Jan Ryan (New Dehli: New Age International, 1995), p. 30.

Chinese responded cautiously with a request for the guarantee of their safety – a pragmatic enquiry prompted by their treatment on the diggings in Victoria. Authorities answered with the promise that Chinese goldminers would enjoy “the same protection as other residents”.⁹⁹ Bathgate explained that this question from the Chinese was intended to establish if the provincial government would be likely to authorise restrictions on their activities or movement in the future.¹⁰⁰ As noted above, limitations had been placed on Chinese immigration into Victoria and specific taxes had been levied on Chinese diggers in the 1850s.

The decision by provincial authorities to invite Chinese goldminers to Otago goldfields contrasted strongly with the Chinese experience in Victoria, which involved broad public contempt, and management and supervision by goldfields authorities. The offer from Otago was closely linked to reasons of economic necessity. While the Otago diggings were generally highly auriferous, they were also small in size and sparsely located across the province. The easily-won alluvial gold could be exhausted quickly, and the luck-based nature of digging success meant that diggers might not have accumulated enough capital to invest in other – more technical, and often more expensive – forms of mining. For some European diggers, the only options available were to follow new gold discoveries around the province or to move away from gold as a form of income.

The necessity of seasonal migration also influenced the high transiency of Otago goldminers. Otago experienced hot, dry summers as well as cold, snowy winters. These extremes of climate affected the labour that could be utilised on certain goldfields at certain times of the year. Some goldfields, such as Campbell’s Gully, could be simply inaccessible during winter as snow and ice isolated them from supply routes. Winter conditions were also highly uncomfortable for diggers to work in, given the primitive way in which many lived. Goldfields that were centred on rivers, however, like the Shotover River diggings, benefited from winter as low water levels resulted in more exposed riverbank to work. Summer produced different

⁹⁹ *Otago Witness*, 30 September 1865, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁰ Bathgate, pp. 168-169.

concerns with droughts creating water supply issues for those relying on sluicing techniques. Generally, European diggers in Otago moved between river-based goldfields and non-river based goldfields, with the former being the popular choice in winter and the latter in summer.¹⁰¹

The first noticeable departure of population from the Otago goldfields was related to climate. The winter of 1862 was particularly severe, with wood so scarce that there was only enough for cooking, not heating.¹⁰² Many European miners formerly from Victoria returned across the Tasman, but some revisited Otago goldfields again the subsequent summer. Population figures illustrate this specific period of seasonal ebb and flow. At the end of 1861, over 11 000 miners were recorded on Otago goldfields. This figure declined to 10 000 in November 1862, but increased to 13 000 by mid-summer.¹⁰³

European miners began to leave the Otago goldfields again in the mid-1860s. They did so in greater numbers than the earlier winter-induced retreat and many did not intend to return. Otago diggers were enticed by news of further gold discoveries on the West Coast of the South Island. In early 1864, the Otago diggings boasted a population of nearly 19 000. This number had dropped to 6 000 by the end of 1865.¹⁰⁴ The West Coast goldfields were believed to provide “better” opportunities for mining success, perhaps an implication that miners had become frustrated with harsh weather conditions and the inhospitable landscape of Otago hampering their fiscal advancement.¹⁰⁵ It has also been suggested that the migratory nature of Otago goldmining produced “footloose” men who were willing to move anywhere for the chance of fortune.¹⁰⁶

The exodus of Otago diggers, combined with the typical goldfields economic instability of inflated prices and high demand for particular goods and services, left merchants and shop owners in a precarious position. The provincial government had expanded the commercial

¹⁰¹ Forrest, pp. 67-68.

¹⁰² Forrest, p. 79.

¹⁰³ Forrest, p. 66.

¹⁰⁴ Ng, ‘Chinese Gold seekers’, in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁵ Douglas Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*, revised edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 80.

¹⁰⁶ Forrest, p. 75.

industry in Otago to better serve the promising goldfields, and they were searching for ways to save their investment.¹⁰⁷ Bathgate interpreted the solution of 'importing' Chinese miners as somewhat desperate: "Give us consumers, no matter whether they be white or yellow," business-owners pleaded.¹⁰⁸

Otago authorities invited Chinese goldminers from Victoria for economic reasons, but officials could have requested miners from any ethnicity to fill the vacuum created by departing European diggers. The Chinese were specifically targeted due to the way in which they worked goldfields – a detail learned from their labour patterns on the diggings in Victoria. The introduction of Chinese diggers helped to maintain populations on and around goldfields that would have been abandoned sooner by Europeans, and also provided renewed life to already deserted diggings.¹⁰⁹ Chinese were relatively frugal, as their typical goal was to save enough money to be able to return to China, and this allowed them to "live on what a European miner would starve on".¹¹⁰

Initially, Chinese miners in Otago worked alluvial claims abandoned by Europeans. For example, a place referred to as 'New Beach', situated on the banks of the Shotover River, was one such location. In the late 1860s, approximately 200 Chinese miners laboured here, with success, despite multiple ineffective European attempts previously.¹¹¹ By reworking these river-based spaces they were able to avoid paying European miners rent for payable inland claims, while gaining useful experience and earning "tucker money" which could be used to fund future mining endeavours.¹¹² Bathgate explained that the Chinese were so adept at re-working goldfields that no gold was left behind once they had finished.¹¹³ Chinese diggers were also particularly skilful at working co-operatively, a trait owed to their strong bonds with their countrymen. This was of particular use when the 'effortless' gold was exhausted and advancements in technology

¹⁰⁷ Ng, 'Chinese Gold seekers', in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁸ Bathgate, p. 169.

¹⁰⁹ Forrest, p. 80.

¹¹⁰ Bathgate, p. 172.

¹¹¹ Bathgate, p. 129.

¹¹² Ng 'The Sojourner Experience', in *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity*, pp. 14, 16.

¹¹³ Bathgate, pp. 171-172.

or processes were required to further work a goldfield. Groups of diggers were able to pool their money and resources and this was often necessary when, for example, a hydraulic sluicing system cost as much as £2000 – twenty times the average national wage in the 1860s.¹¹⁴

The first Chinese goldminers invited by Otago authorities arrived slowly and cautiously, starting in December 1865.¹¹⁵ These initial immigrants were mostly mining veterans, but over time the Chinese gained confidence in the province and began to migrate directly from China. By the end of 1867, there were 1185 Chinese in the province.¹¹⁶ This number had increased to over 4000 by 1871.¹¹⁷ Throughout the 1860s, approximately 12 per cent of Otago's total population was Chinese, with the majority of these living and working on the goldfields.¹¹⁸ The principle camp of Chinese diggers in Otago was located at Lawrence.¹¹⁹

The aim of many Chinese diggers was to earn enough money to return home, to China. Bathgate explained that their monetary goal was two or three hundred pounds. This amount would allow the miner and his family to “pass the rest of their lives in peace and plenty.”¹²⁰ Bathgate also pointed out that the Chinese government prohibited the emigration of women, and that many Chinese miners worked hard towards their goal of returning to China so they could be reunited with wives and lovers.¹²¹ This is interesting to note as many sources instinctively label Chinese diggers as single or unmarried, and often frame their emigration without families as a choice rather than a necessity. There was, in fact, an imperial ban on foreign travel for all Chinese, but this was not actively enforced for Chinese males, particularly in the gold-rush era of the nineteenth-century.¹²² Historians have instead suggested several other reasons for the lack of female Chinese migrants. James Ng highlighted the effects of foot-binding and explained that the custom hindered the physical

¹¹⁴ Ng, 'Chinese Gold seekers', in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 31.

¹¹⁵ Ng, 'Chinese Gold seekers', in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 30.

¹¹⁶ Ng 'The Sojourner Experience', in *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity*, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ Ng, 'Chinese Gold seekers', in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 30.

¹¹⁸ Olssen, 'Lands of Sheep and Gold', in *Tasman Relations*, p. 44.

¹¹⁹ Ng, 'Chinese Gold seekers', in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 32.

¹²⁰ Bathgate, p. 171.

¹²¹ Bathgate, p. 171.

¹²² James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, four volumes (Dunedin: Otago Heritage Books, 1993), I, p. 89.

movement of Chinese women.¹²³ There were also traditions of family obligation that expected women to remain in China, such as the raising of the children and the care of the elderly.

Despite their arrival in Otago being encouraged, Chinese diggers were not completely free of persecution on the goldfields of the province. Many European miners opposed the invitation extended to their Chinese counterparts but there were few opportunities to express their discomfort, as diggers had little political representation in 1865 Otago.¹²⁴ Objections to Chinese diggers focussed on their “thieving propensities” and perceived tendency to be vile and wicked.¹²⁵ Bathgate described a specific incident where a Chinese miner was harassed at Naseby in the 1860s. The digger was forced into a barrel and rolled along the street. He escaped, body unharmed, but the incident severely upset his mind – “the fright upset his reason” – and he was assessed as insane. Bathgate pointed out, however, that European diggers labelled this event as “mild” in comparison to anti-Chinese behaviour on the goldfields of Victoria.¹²⁶ Even pragmatic views of Chinese miners could be clouded by deeply entrenched anxieties about race, religion, and culture. Bathgate commended the Chinese goldminers as being “hard-working, industrious, steady people” with cheerful temperaments, but in the same sentence referred to them as heathens.¹²⁷ Chinese religious philosophy conflicted with prevailing nineteenth-century Christian ideas.

The sojournism of Chinese goldminers was one practice that divided the ethnically diverse diggers. The Chinese also tended to live, work, and play in groups consisting exclusively of their countrymen. Their goldfields camps were often serviced by Chinese merchants, storekeepers, hoteliers, and doctors.¹²⁸ They observed traditional Chinese holidays such as Chinese New Year and continued to perform customary funeral rituals. Recreational activities like gambling and opium smoking were just as

¹²³ Ng, *Windows*, p. 89.

¹²⁴ Ng, ‘Chinese Gold seekers’, in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 30.

¹²⁵ Bathgate, p. 169.

¹²⁶ Bathgate, p. 170.

¹²⁷ Bathgate, p. 171.

¹²⁸ Ng, ‘Chinese Gold seekers’, in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 32.

popular in Otago as they were in China.¹²⁹ Chinese diggers even imported food and drink from China so they could maintain their usual diet.¹³⁰ Their self-sufficiency and stubbornness to change, combined with the fact that many simply did not intend to settle in Otago long-term, exacerbated pre-existing racial tensions like those seen on the goldfields of Victoria in years previous.

Chinese concepts of kinship, hospitality, and obligation were related to this tendency to segregate socially and culturally. The Chinese felt strong connections to those from their same geographic location, and in fact many emigrated in small groups originating from the same village.¹³¹ Bathgate referred to the complexity and vastness of the kinship networks a Chinese miner could claim and expressed bewilderment at “the inexhaustible number of cousins which some of them possess”.¹³² Despite a strong affinity with their countrymen, Chinese miners interacted with Europeans when necessary. They used European services such as the post-office and banks, and some even requested assistance from Bathgate address letters in English.¹³³

Māori were another ethnic minority who were part of gold-rush Otago, despite their lesser numbers in the South Island when compared to the North. While numbers of Māori in 1861 were approximately 50 000 in New Zealand overall, in Otago they were said to be counted by the hundreds rather than the thousands.¹³⁴ In 1861, Wekey claimed that there were 612 “natives” on Otago goldfields compared to 30 000 total Europeans in the province.¹³⁵ Prior to European contact, Māori were relatively disinterested in gold and did not place any significant cultural value on its use or collection. They were aware of its existence in Otago before the arrival of European settlers, as confirmed by Pyke who described this fact as “tolerably well-established”.¹³⁶ The existence of Māori goldminers in Otago was in part related to the desire to trade with

¹²⁹ Ng ‘The Sojourner Experience’, in *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity*, p. 19.

¹³⁰ Ng, ‘Chinese Gold seekers’, in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 32.

¹³¹ Ng ‘The Sojourner Experience’, in *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity*, p. 11.

¹³² Bathgate, p. 173.

¹³³ Bathgate, p. 173.

¹³⁴ Wheeler, p. 40.

¹³⁵ Wekey, p. 32.

¹³⁶ Pyke, p. 10.

Europeans. Despite gold having no real importance in the Māori world, as Māori realised the value of the mineral to Europeans they became increasingly interested in collecting it.¹³⁷

Several Māori are personally credited with discovering gold in various Otago locations. The Arrow goldfield was discovered in 1862, with William Fox popularly attributed with being the first to unearth gold in this location. Pyke explained that the “real” discoverer was a Māori from Thames, named Hatini Whiti but known commonly as Māori Jack.¹³⁸ Two Māori are accepted as the first to find gold in the Shotover River in 1862, but secondary sources generally do not name the individuals.¹³⁹ Pyke, however, does: Dan Ellison, a “half-caste”, and Hakaria Haeroa, a full-blooded Māori.¹⁴⁰ Pyke’s declaration of the ethnicity of the two men is significant, as it mirrored contemporary ideas about the future of the Māori race. In 1856 at the first meeting of the Wellington Philosophical Society, Isaac Featherston, a doctor who later became a businessman and politician, (in)famously articulated the demise of the Māori:

The Māoris [sic] are dying out, and nothing can save them. Our plain duty, as good, compassionate colonists, is to ‘smooth down their dying pillow’.¹⁴¹

It was assumed that the Māori race would ‘die’ through means of assimilation into colonial – European – society. Belief in this occurrence continued for many years, but it was a radical view that was not supported by all, as shown by historian John Stenhouse.¹⁴² Despite this, references to this extreme opinion can be found in the studied narratives. Booth declared that Māori were “gradually dying out” in 1865.¹⁴³ Pyke’s

¹³⁷ J. H. M. Salmon, *A History of Gold-Mining in New Zealand* (Wellington: R. E. Owen, 1963), p. 16.

¹³⁸ Pyke, p. 84.

¹³⁹ Donald Denoon, Philippa Mein-Smith, and Marivic Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 141.

¹⁴⁰ Pyke, p. 88.

¹⁴¹ Isaac Featherston, quoted in Denoon, Mein-Smith, and Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, p. 80.

¹⁴² John Stenhouse, ‘A disappearing race before we came here,’ Doctor Alfred Kingcome Newman, the Dying Maori, and Victorian Scientific Racism’, *The New Zealand Journal of History*, 30, 2 (1996).

¹⁴³ Booth, p. 8.

comments concerning the racial composition of the two men who found gold in the Shotover River also reflected the importance placed on ethnicity at this time. The mention of 'half-caste' was perhaps a thinly veiled political message, to illustrate that Māori were indeed being successfully assimilated, and unlike their full-blooded counterparts, they had European names, too.

Wheeler provided us with an extended description of Māori at Gabriel's Gully in 1861. He stated that they numbered about fifty – men and women – and were responsive to authority. Wheeler seized this opportunity to differentiate the Otago Māori from the North Island Māori, who were at this time involved in armed conflicts with Europeans in Taranaki. He further discussed the mining techniques of the Māori at Gabriel's Gully as inefficient and their success consequently limited.¹⁴⁴ Direct and indirect references to what would be later known as the New Zealand Wars continued. Pyke explained that Wellington authorities in 1861 expected the Otago gold discoveries to attract Māori from the North Island, therefore drawing them away from their current confrontations with Europeans.¹⁴⁵ Wekey's comments that Māori on the Otago goldfields were "loyal, peaceable, and friendly to Europeans" again highlight this artificial divide created between Māori from the two islands.¹⁴⁶

Diggers were not the only residents of the Otago goldfields and surrounding areas. Aside from the traditional archetype of a colonial settler, there were two types of inhabitants on any goldfield: the mining population, and the 'camp followers'. Bathgate explained that the camp followers found employment in catering to the wants of the miners. He referred to them as "parasitic".¹⁴⁷ In truth, these camp followers assisted diggers in their pursuit of success on the fields, as they provided essential goods and services such as food, clothing, and medicine, as well as indulgences like alcohol and sex. When the population of the Otago goldfields was reported to be 15 700 persons in 1864, Pyke estimated that

¹⁴⁴ Wheeler, p. 40.

¹⁴⁵ Pyke, p. 52.

¹⁴⁶ Wekey, p. 33.

¹⁴⁷ Bathgate, p. 86.

only 10 000 of these were actually diggers.¹⁴⁸ The self-imposed separation of Chinese diggers from European miners, for example, resulted in a need for a Chinese exclusive support industry. Chinese camps desired Chinese retailers, physicians, and hoteliers. Bathgate explained that some Chinese in Otago even took up trades, such as carpentry or cabinet-making, or became involved in other businesses like market-gardening. Bathgate generally complimented their work in these areas, stating that their cabinet-making work was “very neat” and that their market-gardening experiences were overall very successful.¹⁴⁹

Analysis of the selected narratives has provided insight into gold-rush representations of minorities in Otago. Narrative authors highlight the relative lack of women on the Otago goldfields but concede that some followed husbands and families to the diggings and helped to work a claim. Other women were camp-followers and provided goldminers with required goods and services. Chinese diggers are referenced more frequently in Otago narratives when compared to Victoria’s texts. This may be explained in part by the heightened awareness of European miners to the presence of Chinese due to the decision of Otago authorities to formally invite the ethnic group to the province. Māori are also referred to in the examined narratives, including specific mention of Māori as gold discoverers and miners in their own right.

Summary

Minority groups that were part of gold-rush society in Victoria and Otago include women, Chinese, and indigenous people. Official sources, such as immigration records and census documents, confirm their presence. Goldfields narratives represent these minorities in distinctive ways, with variation apparent in the treatment of the different groups across the two locations examined.

¹⁴⁸ Pyke, pp. 91-92.

¹⁴⁹ Bathgate, p. 180.

Narrative authors in Victoria and Otago rarely represented women on the goldfields as miners in their own right. This reflected the reality of many goldfields. They were often masculine spaces, inhabited almost entirely by men and characterised by hard labour, heavy drinking, and primitive living, which were all considered inherently 'male' activities in the nineteenth-century. However, Howitt does make specific note of the 'diggeresses' he saw in Melbourne in 1852.¹⁵⁰ Clacy herself even attempted to wash gold-dirt for the mining party she was travelling with.¹⁵¹ In Otago, Wheeler observed that there were "half a dozen" women on the Tuapeka diggings in 1861, but does not provide further clarification of their activities on the fields.¹⁵² Pyke observed that women had also followed the news of gold discoveries to the Tuapeka goldfield in 1861.¹⁵³ The absence of explicit narrative references to female goldminers, considered alongside other primary sources from the gold-rush period in both locations, indicates that women were generally not goldminers in Victoria in Otago. Undoubtedly, there were exceptions to this claim, but digging women were so rare that the authors of the examined narratives did not encounter them.

Similarities in the narrative treatment of goldfields women in Victoria and Otago can be found in their construction of women as 'associates' of men. Howitt's reference to diggeresses, discussed above, was preceded by a mention of male diggers.¹⁵⁴ The sole female in Preshaw's travelling party of forty was identified as the wife of one of the males.¹⁵⁵ Even females who discovered gold were acknowledged through their relationships with men. Pyke described a woman who discovered gold in Otago as simply the "wife of a shepherd".¹⁵⁶ The tendency of goldfields narratives to emphasise the connections between women and men reflected nineteenth-century views of gender. Colonial society, like its European metropole, expected women to remain firmly within the sphere of domesticity. The goldfields were fundamentally in conflict with concepts of home and family, illustrated in the selected narratives by Preshaw's belief

¹⁵⁰ Howitt, p. 42.

¹⁵¹ Clacy, p. 37.

¹⁵² Wheeler, pp. 39-40.

¹⁵³ Pyke, p. 29.

¹⁵⁴ Howitt, p. 42.

¹⁵⁵ Preshaw, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ Pyke, p. 31.

that the diggings were not appropriate for the “soft sex”.¹⁵⁷ For men, the gold-rushes provided an opportunity to fulfil their traditional gender role as ‘breadwinner’ for wives and families.¹⁵⁸

In Victoria, women were also represented in goldfields narratives as ‘camp followers’. These women took advantage of digger wants and needs by providing required goods and services on the goldfields, such as food, alcohol, and sex. Ferguson remembered two groups who sold food on the diggings in 1852. Both groups included females.¹⁵⁹ To Clacy’s disdain, a female neighbour at the Eagle Hawk goldfield ran a sly-grog shop while her husband worked a claim.¹⁶⁰ References to camp followers were comparatively absent from narratives of Otago. Bathgate, however, briefly labelled them as “parasitic”.¹⁶¹ The aversion to discuss those who provided support services to the goldfields is perhaps linked to colonial expectations of behaviour based on gender. Female camp followers were often – but not exclusively – prostitutes and liquor peddlers. Nineteenth-century society generally viewed open sexuality and the consumption of alcohol as part of a masculine world. The women who provided such services on the goldfields were examples of “a social world characterised by inversion and absurdity” and supported “the mockery of... social forms of the metropolis”.¹⁶² Clacy’s contempt of her swearing, drinking, smoking neighbour highlighted the potential for unease with such antipodean reversals, yet Clacy is enamoured with Harriette Walters, whose behaviour and role in gold-rush Victoria more closely aligned with gender norms of the time.¹⁶³

Goldfields narratives not only reproduced ideas about gender, but also constructed images of race. However, narratives of Victoria’s goldfields presented a noticeable absence of Chinese goldminers. The few comments made place Chinese in the periphery of gold-rush society, such

¹⁵⁷ Preshaw, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ See: Annabel Cooper, ‘Poor Men in the Land of Promises: Settler Masculinity and the Male Breadwinner Economy in Late Nineteenth-Century New Zealand’, *Australian Historical Studies*, 39 (2008).

¹⁵⁹ Ferguson, p. 24; Ferguson, p. 33.

¹⁶⁰ Clacy, p. 36.

¹⁶¹ Bathgate, p. 86.

¹⁶² Goodman, ‘Reading Gold Rush Travellers’ Narratives’, p. 102.

¹⁶³ Clacy, p. 44.

as Clacy's casual observation of "Chinamen" on the streets of Melbourne in 1852.¹⁶⁴ Such exclusions are unlikely to be entirely malicious, but more simply a result of timing. All of the selected narrative authors visited Victoria sometime between 1852 and 1854. By March 1854, there were approximately 2000 Chinese goldminers in Victoria.¹⁶⁵ At this same time, numbers of total diggers in Victoria had reached 60 000.¹⁶⁶ Chinese immigration to Victoria did not become "a steady stream" until later in 1854.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, the scarcity of Chinese diggers in the examined narratives is due to the absence of encounters with Chinese. Between 1852 and 1854, the numbers of Chinese on the goldfields of Victoria were small when compared to the mining population at large.

Comparatively, narrative authors in Otago referenced Chinese miners frequently. Bathgate, in particular, dedicated portions of his narrative to descriptions of their lives in Otago. He defined their goldfields ambitions, highlighting the widespread goal of Chinese goldminers to return to families in China.¹⁶⁸ He explained their ways of working claims: through "earnest co-operation" they often reworked alluvial diggings abandoned by Europeans.¹⁶⁹ Overall, Bathgate constructed a sympathetic tone towards Chinese goldminers in Otago. He complimented their hard-work and honesty, as well as the high quality of their cabinet-making and market gardening work when they turned away from gold as employment.¹⁷⁰ The inclusion of Chinese diggers in Otago narratives perhaps was borne from a heightened awareness of their presence in the province. Chinese goldminers were invited to Otago by local authorities in 1865.¹⁷¹ This was well-known within the colonies and was widely publicised in contemporary newspapers, with debate occurring around the topic. Many European goldminers disagreed with the invitation, but as diggers had little political

¹⁶⁴ Clacy, p. 13.

¹⁶⁵ Serle, p. 321.

¹⁶⁶ Trudy Ring, Robert M. Salkin, and Sharon La Boda, *International Dictionary of Historic Places: Asia and Oceania*, five volumes (New York: Routledge, 1996), V, p. 75.

¹⁶⁷ Serle, p. 321.

¹⁶⁸ Bathgate, p. 171.

¹⁶⁹ Bathgate, p. 129.

¹⁷⁰ Bathgate, p. 180.

¹⁷¹ Ng, 'Chinese Gold seekers', in *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, p. 30.

representation at this time in Otago, they had limited means to express their opposition.¹⁷²

Narratives of the goldfields of Victoria and Otago also represented concepts of race through their treatment of indigenous peoples. The examined narratives make little to no references to Aborigines. Ferguson described an attack on an Aboriginal man who had promised to show Ferguson the location of gold.¹⁷³ Howitt peripherally mentioned a “negro”, but does not clarify an ethnicity.¹⁷⁴ The exclusion of Aborigines in Victoria’s gold-rush narratives reflected attempts by authorities to exclude indigenous peoples from colonial society. Prior to the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851, indigenous people in the colony had already been part of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate.¹⁷⁵ Legislation was also enacted in 1869 that was intended to control all aspects of an Aboriginal person’s life, from where they could live, what employment they could take, and with who they could form intimate relationships.¹⁷⁶ These forms of regulation intended to remove the Aboriginal population from Australia, either by assimilation into ‘white’ colonial society or complete elimination. These views were supported by contemporary ideas about the perceived racial superiority of Europeans. The forced disconnection of Aboriginal people from colonial Victoria resulted in limited encounters between indigenous people and the examined narrative authors.

In contrast, narratives of Otago goldfields discussed Māori at some length. There were a small number of indigenous goldminers in Otago. For example, Wekey claimed that there were 612 Māori on the Otago goldfields in 1861.¹⁷⁷ Pyke also credited Māori with gold discoveries at the Shotover and Arrow Rivers in 1862.¹⁷⁸ Wheeler presented a protracted description of Māori diggers at Gabriel’s Gully in 1861, including their numbers, and their mining techniques.¹⁷⁹ The contrast between the

¹⁷² Ng, ‘Chinese Gold seekers’, p. 30.

¹⁷³ Ferguson, p. 79.

¹⁷⁴ Howitt, p. 187.

¹⁷⁵ Cahir, *Black Gold*, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada and New Zealand* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), p. 18.

¹⁷⁷ Wekey, p. 32.

¹⁷⁸ Pyke, pp. 84, 88.

¹⁷⁹ Wheeler, p. 40.

narrative exclusion of Aboriginal people and the relatively positive representation of Māori can be somewhat explained by the state of contemporary race relations. While some had attempted to apply what would be later labelled 'fatal impact theory' to the reduction in Māori numbers following first contact, the idea that the Māori race would vanish within decades was an extreme view. This juxtaposed strongly with nineteenth-century legislative and policy actions in Australia that *intended* to force this very outcome on the Aboriginal population.

Representations of Māori in goldfields narratives also sought to differentiate South Island iwi from those in North Island. While Otago Māori were digging for gold in the mid-1860s, Taranaki Māori were engaged in armed conflicts with Europeans. Wheeler assured readers that Māori at Gabriel's Gully were "uniformly well conducted", unlike their northern counterparts.¹⁸⁰ Wekey labelled a particular group of indigenous miners as "peaceable".¹⁸¹ These references to the hostilities in the North Island constructed a further divide between geographically dispersed Māori and allowed for the reinforcement of 'good' and 'bad' categories of indigenous people, labels which are useful for the ongoing justification of colonial policies.

The examined goldfields narratives of Victoria and Otago displayed similarities and differences in the treatment of gender and race minorities. Women were represented in comparable ways across both sides of the Tasman. Due to the rarity of female goldminers, few narratives described women as diggers. Women on the goldfields of Victoria and Otago were often mentioned in the surveyed narratives alongside their relationships with men, such as husbands. Narrative authors in Victoria discussed women as 'camp followers' but Otago authors did not. Mentions of Chinese diggers were scarce in Victoria's narratives due to inconsistencies in timing. However, Otago narrative authors, particularly Bathgate, provided detailed descriptions of Chinese goldminers. This inclusion indicated an increased awareness of the presence of Chinese on the goldfields of Otago. While Aborigines were generally absent from

¹⁸⁰ Wheeler, p. 40.

¹⁸¹ Wekey, p. 33.

narratives of Victoria, Otago narratives presented much information about Māori goldminers. Narrative views of Māori were shaped by contemporaneous armed conflicts that occurred in the North Island of New Zealand between the indigenous population and Europeans.

Conclusion

This thesis has investigated (Western) representations of thirteen published narratives of the goldfields of Victoria and Otago. Similarities and differences in the narratives' presentation of specific themes have been highlighted, and reasons for these respective parallels and contrasts have been suggested. Analysis of the selected narratives has emphasised trans-Tasman connections in the nineteenth-century Pacific gold-rush period, including the reciprocal transfer of people and ideas. This thesis has focussed on the experiences of individuals who travelled within colonial Australasia and their constructions of the goldfields they encountered. By analysing published narratives rather than settler's letters or digger's diaries, this thesis has considered contemporary cultural meanings of depictions of Australasian gold-rush society. The thirteen published narratives studied were selected on their ability to discuss various characteristics of the goldfields of Victoria and Otago in relative detail. All were authored by 'white' individuals, and all but one were male.

Chapter One: Boom and Bust analysed narrative representations of success and failure on the goldfields of Victoria and Otago. As gold-rush migrants were generally motivated by the promise of gold to provide vast amounts of wealth and fortune, investigation into the realisation of this goal was necessary. Chapter One indicated that narrative authors in Victoria and Otago conceptualised success differently. Narratives of Victoria's goldfields emphasised grand dreams of prosperity, while Otago narratives represented success in more realistic ways. The surveyed narratives provided a range of factors that could contribute to a goldminer's success, such as luck, social connections, and kinship. Definitions of failure were presented by the narratives and examples of a 'failed' digger were similar between Victoria and Otago.

Chapter Two: Order and Disorder considered the theme of behaviour and control in the context of gold-rush society. Nineteenth-century ideas of success and failure were often linked to perceptions of orderly or disorderly conduct, and through control of such behaviour, authorities

sought to foster success and limit or reverse failure. Narrative authors in both Victoria and Otago emphasised the natural ability of goldminers to self-govern in the absence of official administration. Authority was represented in Victoria's narratives negatively, with authors particularly condemning the conduct of police. Comparisons were frequently drawn between Victoria and Otago by authors of Otago's narratives. It was suggested that Otago's goldfields were more orderly and respectable than their Australian counterparts. Authors in both locations denounced others for the disorderly aspect to their goldfields and attempted to shift blame away from their 'own' goldminers. Definitions of disorder were similar, with the studied narratives referencing criminality and lunacy. Narratives of Victoria's goldfields included suggestions for the new digger with regards to protection from disorder, particularly crime.

Chapter Three: Minorities examined the portrayal of race and gender minorities in goldfields narratives. Such analysis is important to this thesis due to the Eurocentric nature of the selected narratives, and the overwhelmingly 'white masculinity' of goldfields labour. Views of race and gender permeated perceptions of success, failure, order, and disorder. Narrative authors in Victoria and Otago described goldfields women in similar terms. Women were rarely goldminers in their own right. In both locations, narratives tended to identify goldfields women by their associations with men. Victoria's narratives also referred to women as 'camp followers', but an element of shame for Otago authors created an avoidance of this component of gold-rush society. Chinese diggers were not afforded a central position in narratives of Victoria's goldfields. Comparatively, they are described in some detail by Otago narratives. The treatment of indigenous people also varied between narratives of the two locations. Aborigines are all but absent from narratives of Victoria. Māori, however, are given agency in colonial New Zealand society as goldminers and are compared favourably to their North Island counterparts.

Through the analysis of selected narratives within the themes described above, this thesis has confirmed that gold-rushes in colonial societies, like Victoria and Otago, reflected, reinforced, and exaggerated anxieties and perceptions relevant to both the European metropole and the colonial

society itself. The focus of this thesis on narratives that explored the first few years of the respective gold-rushes has indicated the presence of a kind of social disruption distinctive of the goldfields. Examination of goldfields narratives has provided both a physical and discursive space in which this thesis has investigated representations and constructions of Australasian goldfields and their meanings to the colonial trans-Tasman world.

The foundations laid by this thesis can be extended with further historical investigation. Placement into the wider, global gold-rush context of the nineteenth-century could be achieved with the inclusion of Californian narratives. This seems like a logical progression as the gold-rushes of Victoria and Otago were a continuation of the Californian events, with transfers of people and knowledge occurring between the three locations over time. Additionally, the rush in California occurred barely beyond the time period specified in this thesis.

Further enquiry could also consider the selected narratives in greater depth and with analysis of more or different themes. Several of the examined narratives possessed a large amount of detail regarding the goldfields and a dedicated study into those texts could be beneficial for broader comprehension into published goldfields narratives and their representations. An inherent source limitation also exists within the narratives surveyed by this thesis. Selected narratives were authored by white travellers, and only one author was female. Future research could uncover other narratives appropriately suited for examination that were penned by women, indigenous people, or Chinese. Overall, studies of the goldfields of Victoria and Otago would gain much from sustained consideration of gold-rush minorities. It is hoped that this thesis may serve as a basis for additional exploration into textual constructions of goldfields narratives, whether they be Australasian or part of the global gold-rush milieu of the nineteenth-century.

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