

## “What will they say in England?”: violence, anxiety, and the press in nineteenth century New Zealand and Vancouver Island

Kenton Scott Storey

Volume 20, numéro 2, 2009

Social History of Empire

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/044398ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/044398ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association / La Société historique du Canada

### ISSN

0847-4478 (imprimé)

1712-6274 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer cet article

Storey, K. S. (2009). “What will they say in England?”: violence, anxiety, and the press in nineteenth century New Zealand and Vancouver Island. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 20(2), 28–59. <https://doi.org/10.7202/044398ar>

### Résumé de l'article

L'historiographie britannique impériale contemporaine avance qu'à la fin des années 1850 et au début des années 1860, les discours raciaux antagonistes sont devenus de plus en plus populaires au sein de l'empire britannique. Dans cette foulée, la violence coloniale croissante et les discours darwiniens sur la race ont eu pour effet de marginaliser le principe humanitaire voulant que les peuples indigènes pouvaient atteindre un certain degré de civilisation britannique. À la même époque, les colonies britanniques de Nouvelle-Zélande et de l'île de Vancouver étaient aux prises avec un certain niveau d'anxiété liée à la menace de violence indigène. Si ces deux colonies avaient connu un développement très semblable, les conjonctures locales et les relations différentes avec la métropole britannique contribuaient à des réactions divergentes dans la presse locale concernant cette menace. Le présent article s'intéresse à certains journaux représentatifs publiés dans les capitales de la Nouvelle-Zélande et de l'île de Vancouver. L'analyse du *Southern Cross* d'Auckland et du *British Colonist* de Victoria permet de mettre en évidence les effets de l'angoisse des colons, la persistance des discours humanitaires et l'influence des contacts métropolitains dans la formation des perspectives éditoriales.

# **“What will they say in England?”: violence, anxiety, and the press in nineteenth century New Zealand and Vancouver Island\***

**KENTON SCOTT STOREY**

## ***Abstract***

*Contemporary British imperial historiography argues that during the late 1850s/early 1860s antagonistic racial discourses became increasingly popular across the British Empire. According to this interpretation, escalating colonial violence and Darwinian racial discourses marginalized the humanitarian tenet that Indigenous peoples could achieve a measure of British civilization. During this same period the British colonies of New Zealand and Vancouver Island featured anxiety related to the threat of indigenous violence. But while New Zealand and Vancouver Island featured remarkable parallels in their colonial development, differing local conditions and relationships to the British metropole contributed to divergent reactions within local press to the threat of indigenous violence. This paper focuses on representative newspapers from New Zealand’s and Vancouver Island’s capital cities. An analysis of Auckland’s Southern Cross and Victoria’s British Colonist provides an opportunity to highlight the effects of colonists’ anxiety, the local resiliency of humanitarian discourses, and the influence metropolitan connections played in the formation of editorial perspectives.*

## ***Résumé***

*L’historiographie britannique impériale contemporaine avance qu’à la fin des années 1850 et au début des années 1860, les discours raciaux antagonistes sont devenus de plus en plus populaires au sein de l’empire britannique. Dans cette foulée, la violence coloniale croissante et les discours darwiniens sur la race ont eu pour effet de marginaliser le principe humanitaire voulant que les peuples indigènes pouvaient atteindre un certain degré de civilisation britannique. À la même époque, les colonies britanniques de Nouvelle-Zélande et de*

---

\* I wish to acknowledge Education New Zealand and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for their financial support. Thank you also to my supervisors Angela Wanhalla, John Stenhouse, Tony Ballantyne, and to the anonymous reviewers of the *Journal* for their critical comments and insightful advice.

*l'île de Vancouver étaient aux prises avec un certain niveau d'anxiété liée à la menace de violence indigène. Si ces deux colonies avaient connu un développement très semblable, les conjonctures locales et les relations différentes avec la métropole britannique contribuaient à des réactions divergentes dans la presse locale concernant cette menace. Le présent article s'intéresse à certains journaux représentatifs publiés dans les capitales de la Nouvelle-Zélande et de l'île de Vancouver. L'analyse du Southern Cross d'Auckland et du British Colonist de Victoria permet de mettre en évidence les effets de l'angoisse des colons, la persistance des discours humanitaires et l'influence des contacts métropolitains dans la formation des perspectives éditoriales.*

## Introduction

In British Columbia the new arrival is waited for by the crafty bloodthirsty and implacable savage, who never throws away a chance, never exposes himself to the weapon of an enemy, nor misses an opportunity of slaughter and revenge. Nothing can be expected but a war of extermination sooner or later, in which it is to be feared that the cunning, the ferocity, and the local knowledge of the Indian may prove an over-match for the superior knowledge of the white men, who number so few.<sup>1</sup>

In 1862, D.G.F. Macdonald took advantage of popular interest in Vancouver Island and British Columbia and published a guide to emigration.<sup>2</sup> This guide was based on his experiences as a commissioner with the British North American Boundary Commission. Macdonald's narrative was unique, though. In contrast to other guides, he rejected not only the prospects of the region's gold fields, but also the colonies' complete potential as destinations for immigration.<sup>3</sup> As the opening quotation illustrates, Macdonald's objection was based on his negative assessment of the colonies' Aboriginal population and prediction that a war of racial extermination was imminent.<sup>4</sup>

Macdonald's narrative is particularly relevant because he developed his conclusion in relation to both his personal experience and the then ongoing con-

---

1 D.G.F. Macdonald, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1862), 70.

2 British Columbia in the late 1850s and early 1860s consisted of two British colonies: Vancouver Island, created in 1849, and British Columbia, created in 1858. Vancouver Island and British Columbia unified in 1866. I use the term British Columbia when referring to both colonies or the region following 1866.

3 For more conventional rejections of British Columbia's goldfields see: John Emmerson, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island: Voyages, Travels, and Adventures* (Durham: W. Ainsley, 1865), 148; William Mark, *Cariboo: A True and Correct Narrative* (Stockton: M. Weight, 1863), 33; Macdonald, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, 391, 393.

4 Macdonald, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, 70.

fluct in New Zealand between colonists and Māori. Of significance to Macdonald was the fact that the remarkable integration of Māori in New Zealand's colonial economy had not discouraged the outbreak of inter-racial violence.<sup>5</sup> For Macdonald, the war in New Zealand represented the failure of humanitarian policies of indigenous administration.<sup>6</sup> Colonial New Zealand was a failed experiment. Citing a speech from the British House of Commons, Macdonald argued that British imperialism was intrinsically unjust. Any attempt to partner imperialism with a humanitarian policy of assimilation was "sanctimonious hypocrisy," which merely delayed Indigenous peoples' inevitable extinction.<sup>7</sup> The lesson garnered was that an extended period of cooperation between colonists and Indigenous peoples, as had occurred in New Zealand, was no guarantor of a permanent peace. Prospective immigrants to British Columbia should steer clear of the colonies' inevitable racial conflict.

I draw attention to Macdonald's connections for several reasons. On one level, his text functions as an example of my research's central premise: nineteenth century British imperialists perceived British colonies within the wider context of empire and observed parallels between New Zealand and Vancouver Island.<sup>8</sup> A comparative analysis of colonial New Zealand and Vancouver Island, then, is not artificially premised, but a historically grounded appraisal of British imperialism. However, on another level Macdonald's rejection of the humanitarian administration of Indigenous peoples is an exemplar of what many historians have argued was the dominant racial discourse articulated by New Zealand's and Vancouver Island's colonial populations in the late 1850s and early 1860s.<sup>9</sup>

5 Ibid., 160–1.

6 I use the term Indigenous peoples to refer to both New Zealand's Māori and Vancouver Island's Aboriginal peoples.

7 Macdonald, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, 160–1.

8 Other nineteenth century British comparisons also focus on the Taranaki war's parallels to the situation in Victoria and draw attention to the necessity of extinguishing Aboriginal title in the same manner as had occurred in New Zealand. British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), Vancouver Island Rifle Corps, O/B/V 26, Rear Admiral Thomas Maitland to Governor James Douglas, 15 June 1861; *British Colonist* (22 May 1861); *Press* (30 June 1861); R.C. Mayne, *Four Years in British Columbia and Vancouver Island. An Account of their Forests, Rivers, Coasts, Gold Fields, and Resources for Colonization* (London: John Murray, 1862), 164–5.

9 Prominent examples from New Zealand's historiography include Keith Sinclair, *The Origins of the Maori Wars* (Wellington: New Zealand University Press, 1961), 207–208; James Belich's *The Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict: The Maori, The British, and the New Zealand Wars* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 321–330; Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1987), 159, 162. Examples from British Columbia historiography include Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), 86; Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 20–21; Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), 50–51.

Macdonald's conclusions resonate, too, with the argument in recent British imperial historiography that the 1857 Indian Rebellion signalled a shift across the British Empire against humanitarian discourses, which highlighted the crisis in India as evidence of the impossibility of civilizing non-Europeans.<sup>10</sup> According to this rationale, the increased incidence of indigenous violence across the British Empire in the mid-nineteenth century was paralleled by the rise of a Darwinian inspired scientific interpretation of racial difference. Both contributed to the decline in popularity of the humanitarian belief in all races' potential for improvement.

By humanitarian discourse, this paper means the nineteenth century British belief in the potential for Indigenous peoples to achieve a measure of civilization through Christian conversion and cultural reform. This belief in indigenous potential was grounded in Christian theology, specifically the tenet that through monogenesis all human races shared a spiritual equality.<sup>11</sup> Humanitarian racial discourses were central to Great Britain's successful Abolitionist movement of the early nineteenth century and by the late 1830s had become influential in the Colonial Office's decision making. British humanitarians, particularly those involved in the Aborigines Protection Society, believed that the British state had a responsibility to ameliorate the effects of imperialism for Indigenous peoples.<sup>12</sup> Within the framework of wider imperial culture, humanitarians were critical of settler colonialism's excesses, with its tendency to foreground commercial imperatives over Indigenous peoples' rights.<sup>13</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, British humanitarians had played a key role in investing the British Empire with a providential role, both to protect and improve Aboriginal peoples. Because of this, the superior treatment of Indigenous peoples had become a defining feature of an idealized mid-nineteenth century British identity.<sup>14</sup>

This paper challenges the broad conclusion that antagonistic racial discourses, such as Macdonald's, had become completely dominant in either New Zealand or Vancouver Island during the late 1850s and early 1860s. While New

10 See Andrew Porter, "Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery, and Humanitarianism," *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, vol. III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 214; Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks, Creating identities in nineteenth century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001), 138-139; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 23-27.

11 For a discussion of how a belief in monogenesis affected perspectives of racial difference, see Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25.

12 Harris, 9-10.

13 See Lester, *Imperial Networks*.

14 For a discussion of the Abolitionist movement's role in the formation of a British identity, which celebrated the British Empire's superior treatment of non-European peoples, see Kirsten McKenzie, "The Daemon behind the Curtain: William Edwards and the Theatre of Liberty," *South Africa Historical Journal* 61 (1997): 3, 482-505.

Zealand's and Vancouver Island's colonial populations had compelling psychological and fiscal motivations for embracing antagonistic racial discourses, humanitarian philosophies still resonated. This paper illustrates the resonance of humanitarian discourses through an examination of the press of both New Zealand's and Vancouver Island's capital cities. I focus specifically on colonial presses for several reasons. Recent scholarship has shown that the press was central to colonial politics; newspapers were themselves political institutions.<sup>15</sup> Yet colonial editorial manifestos are under-analyzed, especially regarding the press' characterizations of colonists' relations with Indigenous peoples and the implications of colonial presses' connections with metropolitan print cultures.<sup>16</sup> This does not mean that the nineteenth-century press has been entirely ignored. Historians of both colonial New Zealand and Vancouver Island have frequently drawn upon the press, often accepting editorial perspectives as transparent representations of public opinion. But this assumption regarding the unproblematic relationship between editorial perspectives and public opinion is too simplistic and ignores how editors' material and political interests informed editorial perspectives. In addition, colonial editors were sensitive to their position in local and imperial press networks and crafted their editorial perspectives accordingly. An analysis and comparison of New Zealand's and Vancouver Island's presses offers an opportunity to explore the impact of local versus metropolitan influences on changing racial discourses, emulating the transnational scholarship of Tony Ballantyne and Kirsten McKenzie, whose historical narratives have pursued the webs which criss-crossed the British Empire.<sup>17</sup>

### A Parallel Colonial Development

Both New Zealand and Vancouver Island entered Great Britain's informal empire as a result of Captain Cook's voyages of discovery at the end of the eighteenth century. Both regions were identified as crucial sources of strategic

15 Tony Ballantyne, "The State, Politics, and Power, 1769–1893," *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2009), 108–9.

16 For analyses of New Zealand's nineteenth century press, see G.H. Scholefield, *Newspapers in New Zealand* (Wellington: Reed, 1958); and Patrick Day, *The Making of the New Zealand Press: A Study of the Organizational and Political Concerns of New Zealand Newspaper Controllers, 1840-1880* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990). For analyses of the Victoria press, see Margaret Ross, "Amor Decosmos, A British Columbia Reformer" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1931); Roland Wild, *Amor De Cosmos* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1958); and George Woodcock, *Amor De Cosmos: Journalist and Reformer* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975). None of these writers pay particular attention to mid-nineteenth century newspaper editors' representations of colonists' relations with Indigenous peoples.

17 See Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Cambridge: Palgrave, 2002); and Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sidney and Cape Town, 1820–1850* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004).

resources related to British national defence and as a means to augment the British trade imbalance with China.<sup>18</sup> Following Cook’s visit, the Northwest Coast of North America and New Zealand became frequented by a variety of European and American shipping. Similarly, European commentators classified New Zealand’s and the Northwest Coast’s Indigenous peoples as racially superior, citing their warlike cultures and excellent trading skills to differentiate them from other indigenes within European racial hierarchies.<sup>19</sup> Early European contact with Indigenous peoples in New Zealand and on the Northwest Coast was not only defined by the degree of Indigenous peoples’ potential threat of violence, but also facilitated its increase through the trade-related arming of Indigenous peoples with firearms. In effect, by the time official colonization occurred in New Zealand and on the Northwest Coast, local Indigenous peoples were well supplied with firearms.<sup>20</sup> This superior armament limited colonists’ technological monopoly and empowered local Indigenous peoples’ potential to resist British hegemony.

New Zealand’s official entry into the British Empire occurred in 1840, while Vancouver Island became a formal British colony administrated by the Hudson Bay Company in 1849.<sup>21</sup> Much attention has been paid to New Zealand’s inaugural Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>22</sup> The treaty’s recognition of Māori title to all of New Zealand has been interpreted as a consequence of the influence of humanitarian discourses within the Colonial Office. While Vancouver Island’s colonial foundation did not feature a similar all-encompassing recognition of Aboriginal territorial rights,<sup>23</sup> it is important to recognize that until 1862, Vancouver Island’s colonial administration tacitly recognized Aboriginal title through the practice of purchasing Aboriginal territories prior to expan-

---

18 Margaret Steven, *Trade, Tactics and Territory: Britain in the Pacific, 1783–1823* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 37.

19 Macdonald’s narrative also provides an excellent example of this form of racial characterization, as he cites Captain George Vancouver’s journals of exploration in his description of Queen Charlotte Haida’s racial superiority, linking their similarity to Europeans with their warlike character. Macdonald, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, 128, 130–1.

20 Belich, *The Victorian Interperitition of Racial Conflict*, 21–2; C.E. Barrett-Lennard, *Travels in British Columbia: With the Narrative of a Yacht Voyage Round Vancouver’s Island* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862), 41–2.

21 As Richard Mackie has argued in “The Colonization of Vancouver Island, 1849–1858,” *BC Studies* 96 (1992–1993): 3–40, the Hudson Bay Company’s charter for Vancouver Island incorporated Wakefieldian principles for systematic colonization, which was an integral feature of several of New Zealand’s founding provinces.

22 For an analysis of the treaty’s origins and ongoing importance, see Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi*.

23 Chris Arnett illustrates how Douglas’ treaty-making on Vancouver Island was influenced by metropolitan debates over the nature of M ori territorial rights in New Zealand and the New Zealand Company’s purchases of territory from Ng i Tahu M ori on the South Island in 1848. Chris Arnett, *The Terror of the Coast: Land Alienation and Colonial War on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, 1849–1863* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1999), 31–4.

sion.<sup>24</sup> I emphasize this point to illustrate that both New Zealand's and Vancouver Island's early colonial history featured a fidelity to humanitarian principles of indigenous territorial recognition. The differences between New Zealand's and Vancouver Island's recognition of indigenous title between 1840 and 1849 represent not only humanitarian discourses' varying popularity within the Colonial Office during this period, but also the flexibility with which the Colonial Office matched policy to local conditions. In the late 1850s and early 1860s Vancouver Island had not yet diverged from a limited recognition of Aboriginal territorial rights. For the purpose of this paper, the most substantial differences between the two colonies relate to their colonial development and the differing humanitarian status of their Indigenous peoples. While New Zealand's colonial population experienced relatively rapid growth after 1840, surpassing the Māori population by the end of the 1850s, Vancouver Island remained a colonial backwater until the 1858 Fraser River gold rush sparked rapid growth.<sup>25</sup> Vancouver Island's and British Columbia's European population remained outnumbered by local Aboriginal peoples till the 1880s.<sup>26</sup> In terms of mid-nineteenth century humanitarian development, by the 1850s New Zealand's Māori population was largely Christianized and literate;<sup>27</sup> in the same period Vancouver Island's Aboriginal population was in the initial stages of missionization.<sup>28</sup>

Turning to this paper's period of interest, the colonial administrations of Governors Thomas Gore Browne in New Zealand and James Douglas in Vancouver Island were confronted with similar impediments to colonial development. Actual British hegemony over much of New Zealand and Vancouver

---

24 It is evident from Victoria press editorials and debate in Vancouver Island's House of Assembly that there was an expectation that local Aboriginal peoples would be compensated for their lands prior to colonial expansion. *British Colonist* (4 July 1859); *ibid.* (24 March 1860); *Second Victoria Gazette* (13 April 1860); *British Colonist* (22 August 1860).

25 New Zealand's Māori population was eclipsed by local colonists in 1858. By 1860, 56,049 Māori were outnumbered by 83,919 colonists. Macdonald assessed Vancouver Island's and British Columbia's combined colonial population at 5,800, out-matched by an estimated Aboriginal population of 65,000. *Statistics of New Zealand for 1859* (Auckland: W.C. Wilson, 1859), No.2; *Statistics of New Zealand for 1860* (Auckland: W.C. Wilson, 1860), No.1; Macdonald, 327.

26 Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 201–2.

27 For a discussion of Mōri Christianity, see Bronwyn Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven* (Tauranga: Moana Press, 1989). For a discussion of Māori literacy in the 1850s, particularly the claim that possibly three quarters of Māori were literate by the 1850s, see Lachy Paterson, *Colonial Discourses: Niupepa Maori 1855–1863* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2006), 38–39.

28 For the argument that Christian missions' successful evangelization on the Northwest Coast only began in the 1850s, see Fisher. For a cogent analysis of the syncretic form which Aboriginal conversion took in British Columbia, see Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).



Island was not substantive. British relations with Indigenous peoples in both contexts occurred across a cultural middle ground, where British administrators were compelled to adapt to indigenous customs.<sup>29</sup> In both colonies extinguishing indigenous land tenure was a fiscal nightmare, with colonists' demands for new lands running up against a lack of funds and indigenous resistance. Mitigating the use of coercive force by the Crown in both colonies was the threat of indigenous violence.

### Hugh Carleton's *Southern Cross*

March 1860 marked the beginning of warfare in the province of Taranaki between the British military and Te ti Awa Māori. The conflict ostensibly originated from Wiremu Tamihana Te Rangitake's resistance to the sale of the Waitara Block to the Crown by Te Teira Manuka. I will not elaborate the complex antecedents of the war in Taranaki.<sup>30</sup> Suffice to say, Taranaki was contested from New Zealand's inception. The New Zealand Company's original land purchase in the region had been thwarted by Governor Robert FitzRoy, who concurred with local missionaries that negotiations had not occurred with the region's actual Māori owners.<sup>31</sup> Taranaki's original Māori population had been dislocated in the 1830s during the inter-tribal conflicts of the Musket Wars.<sup>32</sup> In the 1850s, Taranaki's colonists held both the colony's administration and elements of the local Māori population in contempt for refusing to facilitate land sales they perceived essential to the province's development.<sup>33</sup> The tense situation in Taranaki was further complicated by the frequency of local Māori warfare. These conflicts often hinged upon the issue of land sales to local colonists, and contributed to colonists' anxiety that they might be drawn into war. Ironically, the Taranaki war's initiation in 1860 was grounded in Browne's attempt to impose law and order. In March 1859, Browne delivered two promises to Taranaki Māori: to respect their right to self-determination in the sale of their territories to the Crown and to intercede within Māori conflicts that threatened the province's stability.<sup>34</sup> The Waitara purchase was a test for Browne's pledges. The intention of Browne's use of military force to compel the sale of the Waitara Block to the Crown was threefold: to mitigate any esca-

---

29 My analysis of indigenous-colonist relations has been particularly influenced by Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, empires, and republics in the Great Lakes region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

30 For an analysis of the origins of the Taranaki war, see Sinclair, *The Origins of the Maori War*.

31 *Ibid.*, 113–14.

32 *Ibid.*, 111–12.

33 For an excellent appraisal of Taranaki colonists' perspective towards both Māori and New Zealand's colonial administrations in the mid-1850s, see David W. McIntyre's *The Journal of Henry Sewell, 1853–7*, vols. I–II (Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1980).

34 *Te Karere Maori* (31 March 1859).

lation of inter-tribal violence, to establish actual British sovereignty in the region, and to checkmate what he perceived was the attempt of a Māori land-league to thwart land sales to the Crown. Unfortunately, Browne's confidence in Te Teira's claim to Waitara was ill-considered and the Taranaki war initiated a decade of warfare in New Zealand.

This paper focuses specifically on the *Southern Cross*' reaction to the outbreak of war throughout 1860–1861. The *Southern Cross* was an Auckland newspaper edited by Hugh Carleton, a member of New Zealand's General Assembly. It was Auckland's second most popular newspaper following the *New Zealander*, and distantly trailed by the *Auckland Examiner*.<sup>35</sup> The *Southern Cross* and *New Zealander* were owned by the rival politicians John Williamson and William Brown, who used the newspapers to propagate their political manifestos, often at financial loss.<sup>36</sup> The *Auckland Examiner* was owned and edited by Charles Southwell, a virulent racist whose rejection of racial amalgamation was influenced by his militant atheism.<sup>37</sup> I focus on the resonance of humanitarian discourses of the *Southern Cross* versus the *New Zealander* or *Auckland Examiner* because its editorial policy throughout the 1850s was as a staunch advocate of colonists' rights and the ability of New Zealand's General Assembly to manage Māori affairs in lieu of the Colonial Office's appointed governor.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, the *New Zealander* was more clearly associated with a defence of Māori rights and affirmed the Colonial Office's control of native affairs.<sup>39</sup> Thus, an analysis of the *Southern Cross* offers a more intriguing illustration of how and why humanitarian discourses continued to resonate in the Auckland press than could be garnered from the *New Zealander*, with its predisposition to support racial amalgamation.

At the beginning of the Taranaki war in March 1860 the *Southern Cross* and the *New Zealander* similarly justified the conflict within an humanitarian framework.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, the *Auckland Examiner* identified the outbreak of war as a consequence of the failed humanitarian administration of Māori, which had instilled in Māori an overweening racial pride.<sup>41</sup> According to Carleton,

35 Scholefield, *Newspapers in New Zealand*, 80; Day, *The Making of the New Zealand Press*, 94.

36 Day, *The Making of the New Zealand Press*, 70.

37 My interpretation of Charles Southwell is particularly influenced by John Stenhouse, "Imperialism, Atheism, and Race: Charles Southwell, Old Corruption, and the Maori," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (October 2005): 771.

38 Scholefield, *Newspapers in New Zealand*, 78.

39 Day, *The Making of the New Zealand Press*, 132.

40 The *New Zealander*'s editorials from early 1860 stressed Browne's initiation of the Taranaki war as a means to liberate Māori and check Waikato and Taranaki Māori attempting to prevent the further alienation of land to the Crown. Like the *Southern Cross*, the *New Zealander*'s editorial perspective towards the initiation of the Taranaki war stressed the justice of Browne's position and the necessity of imposing justice on Māori offenders: *New Zealander* (28 March 1860); *ibid.* (5 May 1860); *ibid.* (23 May 1860).

41 *Auckland Examiner* (4 April 1860).

Browne had been compelled to defend the rights of Māori land sellers to freely dispose of their property against the illegal resistance of Māori leaders; the strength of the Waitara purchase rested in its initiation by a Māori seller.<sup>42</sup> Specifically, Carleton contextualized Browne’s actions in Taranaki within a humanitarian paradigm by identifying Browne as a patriarch disciplining an erring Māori minor: “None, from the very first, have been more strenuous advocates of Maori rights than ourselves — none have sympathized more heartily with the race ... none have devoted more actual labour in advocating the civilization of the race, than ourselves; yet we are now the first to admit the full force of what was said by a wise man of olden time, ‘He who spares the rod, spoils the child’.”<sup>43</sup>

It is important to recognize that neither the *New Zealander* nor the *Southern Cross* interpreted the outbreak of the Taranaki war to imply the inability of Māori to achieve cultural reform. Instead, both newspapers interpreted the conflict over Waitara as a crucial moment when Māori peoples’ rights as British subjects were being challenged by subversive Māori elements antagonistic to British sovereignty.<sup>44</sup> While the *Southern Cross*’ editorial perspective mirrored the *New Zealander*’s at the initiation of the war, over the course of 1860 Carleton’s support for the war decreased as the conflict dragged on and details of the colonial administration’s failure to investigate Te Rangitake’s right to Waitara emerged. By September 1860, Carleton recognized the injustice of the Waitara purchase:

None, saving a few of the *desperate intelligentsia* — gladiatorial partisans, venture to affirm any longer that the vendors at the Waitara had a clear title to the whole of the six hundred acres in dispute. No one affirms any longer that Taylor is a higher chief than King; he is long since, in spite of tinkered pedigrees, set down as a ‘nobody’ .... It is no longer maintained that the Governor acted up to his expressed intention, — namely, of never purchasing a piece of land the title to which was in dispute — an expression in which we once placed implicit confidence, directing our course accordingly, — for his Excellency has chosen out for enforced purchase the very piece of land, which, perhaps, of all others in New Zealand was overlaid with the greatest complication of disputes.<sup>45</sup>

Over the course of 1860, Carleton also defended the integrity of prominent humanitarians, such as Bishop George Selwyn and Archdeacon Octavius Hadfield, providing them with an avenue to express dissent with Browne’s war

---

42 *Southern Cross* (23 March 1860).

43 *Ibid.* (13 March 1860).

44 *New Zealander* (5 May 1860); *Southern Cross* (23 March 1860).

45 *Southern Cross* (7 September 1860).

policy.<sup>46</sup> While Carleton was replaced as editor of the *Southern Cross* in November 1860 and the newspaper's outspoken criticism of the Taranaki war ceased overnight, the *Southern Cross* did not criticize the colonial administration's negotiated peace with Wiremu Tamihana Tarapipipi in March 1861. Instead, the *Southern Cross* interpreted the cessation of hostilities in Taranaki to enable a shift in Browne's attention to the subjugation of the Kīngitanga of Waikato, the real enemy of British colonization in New Zealand.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, the *Southern Cross*' editorial perspective towards the Taranaki war changed over the course of 1860–1861. Carleton's editorial perspective mirrored the position of William Fox's opposition party within the House of Representatives, with which Carleton was affiliated. When John Logan Campbell, Brown's business partner, took over the *Southern Cross*' editorship in November 1860, its outspoken dissent became muted, reflecting Campbell's new allegiance to the ruling ministry's perspective.<sup>48</sup> What the *Southern Cross* did consistently argue throughout the Taranaki war was that the colony's representative government was the ideal agent to manage more efficient relations with Māori, and that the Colonial Office had a responsibility to subsidize and pursue the Taranaki war, which its emissary had initiated.<sup>49</sup> In 1861, following the cessation of hostilities in Taranaki, Campbell's *Southern Cross* advocated a war policy against the Kīngitanga of Waikato, while the *New Zealander* supported peaceful negotiation.

Regarding the *Southern Cross*' editorial perspective towards the Taranaki war, three questions predominate: what purpose did a humanitarian editorial perspective towards the Taranaki war serve, how did Carleton respond to the issue of colonists' anxiety in Auckland related to the threat of Māori violence, and why did Carleton allow the *Southern Cross* to articulate dissent to the war? In thinking about these questions, it is worth reflecting on the interplay between Carleton's political imperatives, his imagined community of readers, and his editorials' actual representations of public opinion. I believe Carleton crafted his editorial perspective of the conflict in Taranaki to meet the demands of a diverse imagined community of readers. This audience included an Auckland

---

46 Ibid. (10 August 1860); *ibid.* (14 August 1860); *ibid.* (31 August 1860); *ibid.* (1 September 1860); *ibid.* (7 September 1860); *ibid.* (18 September 1860).

47 Ibid, (16 April 1861).

48 In 1860 William Brown was in Great Britain and John Logan Campbell assumed control over the *Southern Cross* to reverse the newspaper's commercial decline.

49 The *Southern Cross*' defence of the representative government's ability to manage native affairs was intrinsically tied to its advocacy for Direct Purchase. For an assessment of how Auckland land speculators campaigned against the Crown's monopoly over land purchases from M ori and then used the Waikato war of 1863 to enact sweeping confiscations of M ori territory see Vaughan Wood, Tom Brooking, and Peter Perry, "Pastoralism and politics: reinterpreting contests for territory in Auckland Province, New Zealand, 1853-1864," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 34 (2008): 220-241.

“WHAT WILL THEY SAY IN ENGLAND?”: VIOLENCE, ANXIETY, AND THE PRESS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY NEW ZEALAND AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

readership, local Māori, and a metropolitan audience.<sup>50</sup> Carleton’s challenge was threefold: to popularize a partisan political agenda, to appear to be broadly representative of public opinion, but not to champion colonists’ rights at the expense of antagonizing either Māori or metropolitan parties accessing the newspaper. All the while, Carleton’s editorial perspective was formulated against a backdrop of potential violence, as Auckland’s colonial population feared the threat of violence from the Kīngitanga Māori of nearby Waikato throughout the Taranaki war.

The Kīngitanga was a Māori political affiliation which had previously elected their own king in 1858 as a symbol of their commitment to end land sales with the British Crown and implement their own code of laws.<sup>51</sup> Kīngitanga territory was located just south of Auckland in the Waikato region. In the Auckland press, the Kīngitanga was considered hostile to British sovereignty. In 1860, when the Taranaki war began, Auckland’s colonial population became apprehensive that the Kīngitanga might support Te Rangetake in Taranaki by attacking Auckland. It is evident from Carleton’s frequent attempts to downplay the veracity of this threat that rumours of Kīngitanga plans to annihilate Auckland were widespread and that anxiety related to the threat of Māori violence was a serious concern.<sup>52</sup> The following passage illustrates Carleton’s general attitude to colonists’ anxiety in April 1860:

It appears that there are some few in the town who are apprehensive of a native attack upon Auckland. They must remain so, for such are not likely to be talked out of apprehension. For our own part, we agree with the Governor’s dictum (if he did say it, for we have heard it contradicted), that we are as safe in Auckland as in London, or rather more so, for there is less chance of having one’s pocket picked.<sup>53</sup>

Carleton’s response to colonists’ anxiety was to downplay the veracity of the threat of Māori violence. Near the end of the Taranaki war, the *Southern Cross* again commented on colonists’ anxiety:

The good people of Auckland have been taking the present war very easily, and it appears to have caused more excitement in India than on the Waitemata. Of course we have had periodically little panics, and as a rule a fair supply of rumours, but the panic has seldom been a very distressing one .... The cry of

---

50 The importance of newspapers in the mid-nineteenth century is evidenced by the fact that in 1860 Auckland’s European population of 23,732 despatched to Great Britain 42,392 newspapers versus 40,721 letters; *Statistics of New Zealand*, No.27, No.29.

51 For an appraisal of the Kīngitanga’s origins, see John Gorst, *The Maori King; Or, the Story of our Quarrel with the Natives of New Zealand* (London: McMillan and Co., 1864).

52 *Southern Cross* (6 April 1860); *ibid.* (10 April 1860); *ibid.* (13 April 1860).

53 *Ibid.* (6 April 1860).

wolf has been often raised, and what we have to guard against is the proverbial apathy produced by a constant succession of false alarms .... In drawing attention to these facts we desire before all things not to cause any unnecessary alarm, but merely to counteract the injurious moral effect of twelve month's immunity from the horrors of a war.<sup>54</sup>

Even as this passage illustrates the *Southern Cross*' strategy to downplay the Māori threat of violence to Auckland, at the same time, it indicates that Auckland's colonial population had featured panics related to the threat of Māori violence. Also within this passage's dismissal of colonists' anxiety, it is intriguing to note how the writer carefully emphasized that the editorial's focus on the threat of Māori violence was not intended to cause alarm. The implication is that the writer was concerned that simply by mentioning the threat of Māori violence to Auckland it would precipitate a panic. I would suggest, then, that the *Southern Cross* intentionally did not characterize the degree to which Auckland's colonists feared the threat of Māori violence. Instead, the *Southern Cross* minimized the threat of Māori violence in order to alleviate colonists' anxiety.

Similar to its handling of colonists' anxiety, the *Southern Cross*' vacillating characterizations of Auckland's public support for the Taranaki war obscured more than they revealed. After hostilities commenced, Carleton stated, "We find that there are many in Auckland, who sympathize — not exactly with the insurgents, for they do not quite like to look that side of the question straight in the face, but generally and indistinctly with the 'natives'."<sup>55</sup> Later, Carleton noted that the opinions of colonists with knowledge of Māori culture had shifted to the demand that Māori required a stern and bitter lesson.<sup>56</sup> On another occasion, Carleton argued, "Public opinion is here what it always was — strongly in favour of the Maori, who have, in fact, been the making of Auckland."<sup>57</sup> Tellingly, this last representation of public opinion featured in an editorial about a public meeting which occurred in Auckland on 19 May 1860. This 'Monster Meeting' was convened to elicit support for Browne's campaign in Taranaki and featured a hostile attack against both Bishop George Selwyn, a prominent humanitarian who expressed dissent against the war and Auckland's press for failing to communicate colonists' support for the war to Great Britain. An examination of the *Southern Cross* coverage of this event yields insight into the origins of Carleton's characterizations of public opinion in Auckland towards the Taranaki war.

---

54 Ibid. (5 March 1861).

55 Ibid. (27 March 1860).

56 Ibid. (24 April 1860).

57 Ibid. (22 May 1860).

Not only did Carleton publicly defend Selwyn at this public meeting, but in his subsequent editorial he condemned the gathering, arguing that it would be interpreted in Great Britain as a detrimental example of public opinion: “Settlers were inimical to the Natives, and that the interests of the Natives were cared for by the Government alone.”<sup>58</sup> Carleton then proceeded to downplay the meeting’s significance, arguing that only one-fourth or one-third of the 450 colonists present supported the meeting’s resolutions. In contrast, the *New Zealander* lauded the same public meeting as a positive outpouring of support for Browne, arguing that the 800–900 colonists present exhibited undeniable support that Auckland supported the war effort.<sup>59</sup> The incongruity between these two assessments illustrates the two editors’ divergent concerns. Carleton intentionally emphasized colonists’ sympathies for Māori and downplayed patriotic enthusiasm in order to undermine the perception that colonists’ patriotism was synonymous with antagonism to Māori interests. This was in keeping with Carleton’s political support for the greater empowerment of the colony’s representative government’s control over native affairs. During this period, Browne controlled native affairs. This situation could only be changed within Great Britain if metropolitan policy-makers believed colonists would not abuse their control over Māori. The *New Zealander*’s support for Browne was unproblematic, though, given its endorsement for the continued imperial governance of the colony. Both editors targeted a metropolitan audience in their interpretations of the public meeting. Each editor represented public opinion divergently to match their particular political sympathies. The interpretations of this public meeting by the Auckland press are examples of the dangers associated with accepting disparate editorial representations of public opinion at face value.

Essentially, Carleton’s editorial perspective of the Taranaki war sought to avoid what occurred with the *Auckland Examiner*. On 21 April 1860, the *Auckland Examiner* featured an editorial entitled “Blood for Blood.” In it, Southwell condemned Browne’s “wretched” Māori policy and in particular the possibility that Browne might end the Taranaki war by despatching Donald McLean, the Land Commissioner, on a peace-making mission.<sup>60</sup> Regarding a “potentially dishonourable peace,” Southwell asked his readers: “Does the government mean to brave public opinion?”<sup>61</sup> Offering his own terms for peace, Southwell stated: “Let this community stand forward and demand, as the first basis for peace, the head of Wiremu Kingi — demand it in the name of the British blood that has been shed — the blood of innocent settlers and their help-

---

58 Ibid. (22 May 1860).

59 *New Zealander* (23 May 1860).

60 *Auckland Examiner* (21 April 1860).

61 Ibid. (21 April 1860).

less offspring.”<sup>62</sup> In addition, Southwell localized the Taranaki war’s implications for Auckland by highlighting the threat which vindictive local Māori posed. For Southwell, there was no difference between Māori combatants in Taranaki and Auckland’s own Māori population.

Southwell’s racial antagonism did not go unnoticed. On 24 April 1860, Carleton responded:

A series of fiery articles or letters — the distinction is immaterial, is appearing in that journal, which, although in ordinary times they would be harmless enough, are at present, to our knowledge, productive of great evil. Their tendency is to exasperate the ill feeling which is unhappily springing up between Natives and Europeans, — too run the natives down, and, indirectly, to menace them with extermination. We presume that our co-temporary is as well acquainted as ourselves with the fact that whatever appears in the Auckland newspapers concerning the native race, is regularly translated to them ... There is a further consideration involved. We take this occasion to express our belief that if a few homesteads were fired by the natives, and the inmates murdered, all efforts in this province, to restrain the numerous and well armed European population would be ineffectual, — that a war of races, — that is to say, of extermination, would be the ultimate result. It would be, for the first time, colour against colour.<sup>63</sup>

Carleton’s key point was that local Māori had access to everything which appeared within the Auckland press and that antagonistic editorials like Southwell’s had the potential to inflame local race relations into open war. The implication of Carleton’s argument was that colonial editors had a responsibility to avoid antagonizing their Māori audience. Indeed, there is evidence that Māori engaged specifically with the *Southern Cross* and the colonial press more generally, and that Carleton included a Māori audience within his imagined community of readers.<sup>64</sup>

While Māori experienced limited engagement within the structures of colonial government in the late 1850s and early 1860s, they were aware of and affected by New Zealand’s press. The implications of recent scholarship regarding Māori engagement with Western culture suggests that by the 1850s Māori culture had been deeply affected through engagement with Christianity and Western economic innovation.<sup>65</sup> My emphasis is that when changing racial discourses within New Zealand are considered, it is inappropriate to

---

62 Ibid.

63 *Southern Cross* (24 April 1860).

64 Ibid. (13 March 1860); *ibid.* (24 April 1860).

65 Lindsay Head, “Land, authority, and the forgetting of being in early colonial Māori history,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Canterbury, 2006); Hazel Petrie, *Chiefs of Industry: Māori Tribal Enterprise in Early Colonial New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2006).



dichotomize British colonial culture from its Māori counterpart simply because the majority of Māori communities in this period were only lightly administered by the Crown. Records of Māori interaction with the colonial government from the late 1850s indicate that both Māori and the Crown articulated their mutual relationship within humanitarian paradigms that emphasized both the Christian underpinnings of the British state and Māori conversion to Christianity. Thus, it is possible that Carleton muted both the *Southern Cross*' characterizations of colonists' anxiety in Auckland and their patriotic fervour for the Taranaki war in order to avoid alienating local Māori, characterizing his support for the Taranaki war in a humanitarian framework in order to replicate the Crown's own endorsement of racial amalgamation.<sup>66</sup>

However, “Blood for Blood's” resonance did not end in the pages of the *Southern Cross*. Forwarded by Browne to the Colonial Office, it reappeared in July 1860 in a House of Lords debate over the Duke of Newcastle's proposed New Zealand Bill.<sup>67</sup> There Lord Granville attributed Browne's peace-making difficulties to colonists' demand for “Blood for Blood.”<sup>68</sup> Later in October 1860, in New Zealand's House of Representatives, William Fox, the opposition leader, criticized Browne for forwarding “Blood for Blood” to the Colonial Office as a representation of public opinion.<sup>69</sup> As Fox remarked:

He should have thought that his [Governor Browne's] high sense of duty would have prevented him from selecting one trumpery newspaper, and sending it home as a true representation of the feelings and sentiments of the people of the colony .... Instead of the sentiment of the colonists at large, it was only the sentiment of one single individual in the colony.<sup>70</sup>

While members of the House of Representatives disagreed about Browne's culpability, what was evident to all was that the appropriate context for “Blood for Blood” had been lost in its transmission to Great Britain.<sup>71</sup> It is important

---

66 For an analysis of the colonial government's bilingual newspaper, *Te Karere Maori* (*The Maori Messenger*), which advocated a humanitarian vision of Māori racial amalgamation, see Paterson.

67 The intention of the New Zealand Bill was to reform the administration of New Zealand's native affairs; the proposed legislation would have removed the Crown's monopoly on Māori land sales, but would have maintained the Colonial Executive's control over native affairs. The New Zealand Bill garnered considerable criticism and was withdrawn.

68 *Wellington Independent* (9 October 1860).

69 *Southern Cross* (9 October 1860).

70 *Ibid.*

71 While William Fox criticized Browne for transmitting “Blood for Blood” as a representation of colonial public opinion, other members of the House of Representatives, such as Henry Sewell and Francis Dillon Bell, argued that Browne's intentions had been misconstrued and that colonists themselves bore a share of responsibility for “Blood for Blood,” because of their failure to denounce the *Auckland Examiner*'s reprehensible content. *Southern Cross* (9 October 1860).

to recognize that commentators did not question that an example of the colonial press might be interpreted in Great Britain as a representation of public opinion. Rather, colonial political leaders were outraged that the *Auckland Examiner*, a particularly marginal and subversive newspaper, had been chosen to represent colonists. Their intuitive assumptions regarding the press' representation of public opinion were justified. Browne's despatch had never claimed the *Auckland Examiner* was representative of colonial public opinion.<sup>72</sup> Lord Granville himself made this assumption.

What I would suggest is that the *Southern Cross*' humanitarian justification of the Taranaki war, its characterizations of public sympathy for Māori, minimization of colonists' anxiety, and articulation of humanitarians' dissent were all intentionally crafted to bridge successfully the transmission to Great Britain, and positively influence metropolitan public opinion and policy. As an advocate of New Zealand's responsible government, more than any other member of the Auckland press, Carleton was sensitive to metropolitan perceptions of colonists' attitudes towards Māori. If anything, Carleton's editorial perspective of the Taranaki war employed a considerable degree of censorship, through his obfuscation of both colonists' antagonistic attitudes towards Māori and their anxiety related to Māori violence. The *Southern Cross*' metropolitan focus must be understood in light of Carleton's knowledge that the *Southern Cross* was transmitted to Great Britain and his perception that Great Britain was the centre of political power. Interestingly, this concern by Carleton and other humanitarian dissenters to guide metropolitan interpretations of the Taranaki war has merited little attention. No doubt, historians' retrospective knowledge that the Colonial Office ultimately proved reticent to interfere in New Zealand's colonial affairs in the late 1850s and 1860s has contributed to a lack of interest regarding perceptions of the Colonial Office within New Zealand's colonial society. Yet, what Carleton's sensitivity to metropolitan public opinion indicates is that in 1860 he perceived the Colonial Office to have the potential to interfere inappropriately within colonial affairs. Also, this brief examination of the *Southern Cross*' reaction to the Taranaki war illustrates that the Auckland press' support for the Taranaki war was not a transparent reflection of the decline of humanitarian discourses.<sup>73</sup> The Taranaki war had been initiated through Browne's ill-considered humanitarian imperatives; it was interpreted by the *Southern Cross* as such. To conclude that by 1861 colonists had simply embraced antagonistic racial discourses toward

72 Great Britain, Colonial Office (hereafter CO), New Zealand Original Correspondence, Hocken Collections, 29 No. 6942, Reel 122/101, Thomas Gore Browne to the Duke of Newcastle, 25 April 1860.

73 For the argument that the *Auckland Examiner*'s antagonism towards Māori represented New Zealand colonists' views generally and that humanitarian racial discourses were articulated only by a vocal minority between 1860–1861, see Sinclair, *The Origins of the Maori War*, 207–8.

Māori is neither borne out by an examination of the Auckland press nor captures the multi-faceted utility of humanitarian discourses to be deployed both for and against Māori.

### **Amor De Cosmos' *British Colonist***

In 1858, Victoria was transformed by the Fraser River gold rush. Alongside thousands of prospectors, experienced journalists and aspiring politicians travelled to Victoria where they established a local press. Between 1858–1863, Victoria featured the foundation of nine newspapers.<sup>74</sup> Only five survived longer than six months. By 1862, the *British Colonist* was reported to be Victoria's principal newspaper, with a combined circulation of 4,000 for both daily and weekly editions.<sup>75</sup> The *British Colonist* was founded in December 1858 by the aspiring politician and former Nova Scotian Amor De Cosmos.<sup>76</sup> I chose this newspaper as a parallel to the *Southern Cross* because of its longevity, popularity, and representative nature. In particular, De Cosmos introduced a vituperative political tone to the Victoria press. Victoria's first newspaper, the *Victoria Gazette*, had been founded by several Californians with a politically neutral editorial manifesto,<sup>77</sup> which reflected both the promising early days of the gold rush and its founders' intention to monopolize the local press. Unfortunately, neither Victoria's sustained economic prosperity nor the *Victoria Gazette*'s monopoly materialized.<sup>78</sup> In contrast, opposition to Douglas' administration was a central tenet of the *British Colonist*'s editorial manifesto.<sup>79</sup> This political opposition and editorial sensationalism reflected De Cosmos' political ambitions, Victoria's economic instability, and the development of a competitive local press. And De Cosmos' editorial criticism did not go unnoticed. Douglas unsuccessfully attempted to legislate the *British*

---

74 *Victoria Gazette* (June 1858–November 1859); *Vancouver Island Gazette* (July–September 1858); *Newsletter for Vancouver Island and New Caledonia* (September 1858); *Le Courier de la Nouvelle Caledonie* (September–October 1858); *The British Colonist* (December 1858–1980); *New Westminster Times and Vancouver Island Guardian* (September 1859–March 1860); second *Victoria Gazette* (December 1859–September 1860); *Press* (March 1861–October 1862); *Victoria Daily Chronicle* (October 1862–June 1866). Hugh Doherty, “The First Newspapers on Canada's West Coast: 1858–1863,” <<http://hughdoherty.tripod.com/victoria.htm>>, (viewed 23 November 2009).

75 Charles Forbes, *Vancouver Island: Its Resources and Capabilities as a Colony* (Victoria: The Colonial Government, 1862), 34.

76 Amor De Cosmos' former name was William Alexander Smith. He changed his name in California on 17 February 1854. Wild, *Amor de Cosmos*, 12.

77 *Victoria Gazette* (25 June 1858); *ibid.* (30 December 1858).

78 The *Victoria Gazette*'s founders quit the colony in November 1859, citing the establishment of an untenable local press and Douglas' ruinous discouragement of American immigration. *Victoria Gazette* (26 November 1859).

79 *British Colonist* (11 December 1858).

*Colonist's* closure in April 1859.<sup>80</sup> Subsequent members of the Victoria press emulated De Cosmos' example.

Turning to De Cosmos' characterizations of Victoria's local Aboriginal population, what is particularly striking is their uneven nature. Unlike Carleton's consistent endorsement of Māori potential for improvement, De Cosmos often characterized Vancouver Island's Aboriginal population within an antagonistic racial discourse. Indeed, De Cosmos expressed little confidence in the potential of Victoria's Aboriginal population to become civilized:

To engage in active and useful pursuits they will not, except some mere drudgery; and though they are possessed of 'bone, muscle, energy and intellect,' their habits of indolence, roaming propensities, and natural repugnance for manual labor [*sic*], together with a thievish disposition which appears to be an inherent characteristic of the Indian race, totally disqualifies them from ever becoming either useful or desirable citizens. The efforts of the last fifty years both in the Canadas and in the United States, where every exertion has been used to improve the social and moral condition of the native population, and redeem them from their wandering and idle habits, by the adoption of industrial pursuits, have proved a decided failure, so far, at least, as turning their 'bone, muscle and intellect' to any useful or practical account, is concerned.<sup>81</sup>

As this passage illustrates, De Cosmos' assessment of local Aboriginal peoples' potential for achieving a measure of British civilization was affected by his interpretation of the historic failure of humanitarians' efforts in North America.<sup>82</sup> Rather than supporting the provision of Aboriginal peoples with their full rights as British subjects, throughout 1858–1862 De Cosmos sought to limit Aboriginal peoples' freedom of movement, restrict their right to bear arms, and remove Aboriginal peoples completely from Victoria.<sup>83</sup> Unlike Carleton, De Cosmos highlighted rather than elided colonists' anxieties related to the threat of Aboriginal violence. Yet, in spite of De Cosmos' general antag-

---

80 According to Macdonald, Douglas attempted to silence the *British Colonist* through the imposition of outdated British legislation, which compelled newspaper owners to provide an £800 bond. Macdonald details how the necessary funds were subscribed by local colonists at a public meeting. While the legislation appears to have been aimed directly at the *British Colonist*, it also applied to the *Victoria Gazette* and possibly hastened the exodus of its Californian owners from Victoria. Macdonald, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, 278–9.

81 *British Colonist* (19 February 1861).

82 For an assessment of how Protestant missionaries' difficulties in evangelizing North American Aboriginal peoples resulted in shifting characterizations of Aboriginal potential for improvement, see C.L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820–1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000).

83 *British Colonist* (13 March 1860).

onism, he still characterized demands for Aboriginal eviction within a humanitarian rationale and supported the recognition of Aboriginal title on Vancouver Island. This section seeks to understand De Cosmos’ inconsistency.

It is important to recognize the historical antecedents of De Cosmos’ editorial perspectives. Victoria featured both a local Aboriginal population and an anxiety related to the threat of Aboriginal violence well before the Fraser River gold rush. In particular, colonists experienced anxiety related to the annual migration of large numbers of Ts’msyen and Haida to Victoria from the Northwest Coast.<sup>84</sup> These northern Aboriginal peoples were originally attracted to Victoria in 1853 by a potlatch convened by local Lekwungen, but then returned to Victoria on an annual basis to trade and work.<sup>85</sup> When the Fraser River gold rush occurred, Victoria’s rapid growth also increased northern Aboriginal peoples’ economic opportunities, thereby attracting increased numbers between 1858–1862.<sup>86</sup> For example, in 1860, Victoria’s Aboriginal population reached up to 4,000, almost double the colonial population of 2,000.<sup>87</sup> This paper’s analysis of Vancouver Island is bookended by the emergence of the Victoria press in 1858 and the 1862 smallpox epidemic, which resulted in the eviction of all northern Aboriginal peoples from Victoria.

At issue for Victoria’s colonial population was the fact that northern Aboriginal peoples pursued their inter-tribal conflicts in proximity to Victoria. Inter-tribal violence often manifested itself in pitched battles.<sup>88</sup> As C.E. Barrett remarked in 1862, “until quite recently members of different tribes, at war with one another, would forthwith proceed to extremities on meeting, even in the streets of Victoria itself, and at the present moment the utmost efforts of the authorities are ineffectual to prevent the frequent occurrence of murders in the vicinity of the town.”<sup>89</sup> Douglas’ correspondence to the Colonial Office and Hudson Bay Company reveals that Victoria’s colonial population never become

---

84 See John Lutz, “Work, Sex, and Death on the Great Thoroughfare: annual migrations of Canadian Indians to the American Pacific Northwest” in *Parallel Destinies: Canadians, Americans and the Western Border* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); and John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

85 Lutz explains that the Lekwungen potlatch of 1853 likely featured the redistribution of trade-goods which had been received through the sale of land in 1850 to the Hudson Bay Company. Lutz, *Makúk*, 80–1.

86 *Ibid.*, 176.

87 BCA, Great Britain/Admiralty Papers, GR1309, Vol. 2, File 1, Rear Admiral R.L. Baynes to Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 August 1860; *British Colonist* (21 February 1860).

88 *British Colonist* (16 May 1859); *ibid.* (17 June 1859); *ibid.* (22 June 1859); *ibid.* (13 March 1860); *ibid.* (29 March 1860); *ibid.* (3 April 1860); *ibid.* (26 May 1860); *ibid.* (29 May 1860); *ibid.* (7 June 1860); *ibid.* (21 June 1860); *ibid.* (21 September 1860); *ibid.* (11 March 1861); *ibid.* (2 April 1861); *ibid.* (24 June 1861).

89 Barrett-Lennard, *Travels in British Columbia*, 41–2.

acclimatized to northern Aboriginal peoples' presence.<sup>90</sup> Worth emphasizing, too, is that while Douglas himself understood northern Aboriginal peoples' economic motivations for sojourning at Victoria, he perceived their presence as a grave threat to Victoria's security.<sup>91</sup>

As Douglas remarked in 1856, "Their [northern Aboriginal peoples] presence inspired terror and not without cause, as there is no restraining principle in their minds, and they have no scruples about committing acts of murder and rapine, whenever there is a prospect of escaping with impunity."<sup>92</sup> This comment reflects Douglas' perception that northern Aboriginal peoples' lack of a "restraining principle" resulted in an inability to act in their material interests to preserve Victoria's peace. It is no coincidence that Douglas described colonists' precarious situation in 1856 as "a smouldering volcano, which at any moment may burst into fatal activity."<sup>93</sup> Douglas' description of northern Aboriginal

90 Douglas commented to the Colonial Office on northern Aboriginal peoples' presence in Victoria and their threat in the following despatches quoted in James E. Hendrickson, *Colonial Despatches of British Columbia, Vancouver Island*, vols.1–6 (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1988) — volume and page numbers are provided in parentheses: Douglas to Russell, 21 August 1855, CO 305/6 No.10048 (vol. 3, 28–9); Douglas to Grey, 1 March 1856, CO 305/7 No.3969 (vol. 3, 92); Douglas to Labouchere, 10 April 1856, CO 305/7 No.5814 (vol. 3, 97); Douglas to Labouchere, 20 August 1856, CO 305/7 No.9708 (vol. 3, 109–10); Douglas to Labouchere, 20 October 1856, CO 305/7 No.11582 (vol. 3, 114–15); Douglas to Labouchere, 5 May 1857, CO 305/8 No.6331 (vol. 3, 191–2); Douglas to Labouchere, 13 June 1857, CO 305/8 No.7950 (vol.3, 194); Douglas to Lytton, 25 May 1859, CO 305/10 No.6949 (vol. 5, 21–2); Douglas to Newcastle, 7 July 1860, CO 305/14 No.8319 (vol.6, 37–40); Douglas to Newcastle, 8 August 1860, CO 305/14 No.9267 (vol.6, 43); Douglas to Newcastle, 25 August 1860, CO 305/14 No.9594 (vol.6, 45). Douglas' correspondence to the Hudson Bay Company also frequently highlighted the threat posed by northern Aboriginals to Victoria: BCA, A/C/20/Vi/2A, Douglas Letters to the Hudson Bay Company on Vancouver Island Colony, 1850–1855, Douglas to Barclay, 15 June 1854, 213–17; Douglas to Barclay, 13 July 1854, 218–19; Douglas to Smith, 19 July 1855, 241–43; *ibid.*, A/C/20/Vi/3A, Douglas Letters to the Hudson Bay Company on Vancouver Island Colony, 1855–1858, Douglas to Smith, 5 March 1856, 6–10; Douglas to Smith, 1 April 1856, 12–13; Douglas to Smith, 7 July 1856, 18–19; Douglas to Smith, 4 August 1856, 22; Douglas to Smith, 13 August 1856, 23–4; Douglas to Smith, 19 August 1856, 25–6; Douglas to Smith, 16 October 1856, 37–8; Douglas to Smith, 18 February 1857, 55; Douglas to Smith, 30 October 1857, 62.

91 Douglas explicitly comments on northern Aboriginal peoples' economic motivations for visiting Victoria in the following Colonial Office despatches in Hendrickson, Douglas to Russell, 21 August 1855, CO 305/6 No.10048 (vol. 3, 28–9); Douglas to Lytton, 25 May 1859, CO 305/10 No.6949 (vol. 5, 21–2); Douglas to Newcastle, 7 July 1860, CO 305/14 No.8319 (vol. 6, 37–40); Douglas to Newcastle, 8 August 1860, CO 305/14 No.9267 (vol. 6, 43). Governor Douglas' correspondence to the Hudson Bay Company also features commentary on northern Aboriginals' economic motivations for visiting Victoria. BCA, A/C/20/Vi/2A, Douglas Letters to the Hudson Bay Company on Vancouver Island Colong, 1850–1855, Douglas to Barclay, 15 June 1854, 213–17.

92 Hendrickson, Douglas to Labouchere, 10 April 1856, CO 305/7 No.5814 (vol. 3, 97).

93 *Ibid.*, Douglas to Labouchere, 22 July 1856, CO 305/7 No.9300 (vol. 3, 106).

peoples' threat as a natural disaster hinged upon his perception of their uncontrollable and elemental temper. Yet there was a critical difference between Douglas' and De Cosmos' assessment of the threat by northern Aboriginal peoples. Douglas feared that northern Aboriginal peoples might inadvertently harm Victoria; De Cosmos believed that northern Aboriginal peoples fully desired Victoria's destruction.<sup>94</sup>

Until the Fraser River gold rush occurred, Vancouver Island's available security forces were limited.<sup>95</sup> Douglas' preferred strategy to manage sojourning northern Aboriginal peoples was to use what Cole Harris terms the “politics of terror” to expel troublesome tribes from Victoria whenever possible.<sup>96</sup> Between 1854–1862, Douglas succeeded in evicting northern Aboriginal peoples every year, with the exception of 1855 and 1860, when increased numbers made this preventative strategy too dangerous to employ.<sup>97</sup> Between 1858–1862, the evictions of northern Aboriginal peoples were accomplished in a piece-meal fashion until 1862.<sup>98</sup> In April 1862, De Cosmos exploited colonists' fears regarding the contagion of smallpox to compel Augustus Pemberton, the police commissioner, to enact a comprehensive eviction of local Aboriginal peoples. This eviction of Aboriginal peoples had disastrous consequences, facilitating the spread of smallpox all along the

---

94 In relation to an editorial against the use of Aboriginal testimony in court cases, De Cosmos provided this assessment of the Aboriginal character: “Will these savages be allowed on all occasions when their hatred of the white race, whom they look upon as their enemy, incites them to anger, run into Court and prefer a charge against some member of the obnoxious race, based on nothing more substantial than their own testimony? Such an insecure state of affairs is calculated to alarm the feelings, and arouse the fears of the most quiet person in our midst. The Indian looks upon the white man as one who owes him obedience; as a slave who has broken from his will, and will gradually take the place of himself and children, their lands, everything, unless they are checked, and made to quail. There is, consequently, a continual craving after revenge, in the mind of an Indian, which blinds him to every other feeling.” *British Colonist* (26 March 1859).

95 Prior to the Fraser River gold rush, Vancouver Island's security forces had been limited to a small militia force. In 1858, Victoria featured the permanent garrison of British naval forces at nearby Esquimalt Harbour and the enlargement of Victoria's police force from two members to 14. Frederick John Hatch, “The British Columbia Police, 1858–1871,” (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1955), 100.

96 Harris, *Making Native Space*, 22.

97 Hendrickson, Douglas to Russell, 21 August 1855, CO 305/6 No.10048 (vol. 3, 28–9); Douglas to Labouchere, 10 April 1856, CO 305/7 No.5814 (vol. 3, 97–8); Douglas to Labouchere, 20 August 1856, CO 305/7 No.9708 (vol. 3, 109–10); Douglas to Labouchere, 20 October 1856, CO 305/7 No.11582 (vol. 3, 114–15); Douglas to Labouchere, 5 May 1857, CO 305/8 No.6331 (vol. 3, 191–2); Douglas to Lytton, 25 May 1859, CO 305/10 No.6949 (vol. 5, 21–2); Douglas to Newcastle, 7 July 1860, CO 305/14 No.8319 (vol.6, 37–40). *British Colonist* (5 September 1861); *ibid.* (1 May 1862).

98 *Victoria Gazette* (24 February 1859); *Press* (5 September 1861).

Northwest.<sup>99</sup> When contextualizing the Victoria press' demands for Aboriginal eviction, it must be remembered that members of the press were new to the colony and not likely aware of Douglas' prior employment of eviction. Thus, members of the Victoria press interpreted Douglas' reticence to evict unwanted Aboriginal peoples between 1858–1862 as stemming from hostility to eviction itself rather than his actual inability to expel northern Aboriginal peoples from Victoria given the limited coercive power at his disposal.<sup>100</sup>

In order to understand why De Cosmos highlighted the threat of Aboriginal violence in his demands for Aboriginal eviction, it is useful to analyze the degree of Aboriginal violence which the press reported to have occurred in Victoria and on the Northwest Coast. Looking at Victoria's reported murder rate, the most serious measure of local crime, it is evident that Aboriginal violence far outstripped colonists'. Between 1858–1862, the Victoria press reported that 75 murders occurred in Victoria, 60 of which had been committed by Aboriginals.<sup>101</sup> While the majority of these murders involved both

---

99 For an assessment of how colonists' perceptions of Aboriginal moral dissolution and contagion contributed to the 1862 eviction, see Perry. For an evaluation of the role which eviction played in British Columbia's disastrous 1862 smallpox epidemic, see Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774–1874* (Vancouver/Seattle: UBC Press and University of Washington Press, 1999).

100 Douglas' letter to Rear Admiral R.L. Baynes, the commander in chief of local British naval forces, from 3 August 1860, sheds light on his reticence to evict northern Aboriginal peoples from Victoria. Responding to Baynes' suggestion to evict northern Aboriginal peoples, Douglas responded: "Sir, I have had the honour of receiving your letter of the 1st instant containing certain suggestions which have occurred to you with regard to the better management of the Indians at Victoria. 2. The difficulties in connection with them are becoming every day more complicated, in consequence of fresh arrivals, which have now swelled their numbers to upwards of four thousand. This large assemblage is unprecedented within my experience and materially lessens my power to control without the continued presence of an armed force. More are expected, but I do not well see, although very desirable, how it will be practicable to prevent their further influx. Any measures to that end practiced here would at once create in the ignorant mind of the savages the idea that we feared their presence, and, as by the time they reach this place their stock of food is generally exhausted, to turn them back would only be to let them loose upon the scattered settlers on the coast, to commit ravages and depredations which would almost inevitably be followed by sacrifice of life .... To remove the Indians from Victoria is another desideratum not easy of attainment, so that permanent good would result. Coercive measures would be productive of great evils in other parts of the British possessions, more exposed and less protected than Victoria." BCA, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, C/AA/30.1J/1A, Vol.2.

101 *Victoria Gazette* (14 September 1858); *ibid.* (16 November 1858); *British Colonist* (5 February 1859); *ibid.* (26 February 1859); *ibid.* (8 June 1859); *ibid.* (10 June 1859); *ibid.* (29 July 1859); *ibid.* (1 August 1859); *ibid.* (15 August 1859); *ibid.* (19 August 1859); *ibid.* (6 December 1859); *ibid.* (13 December 1859); *ibid.* (3 April 1860); *ibid.* (5 April 1860); *ibid.* (17 May 1860); *ibid.* (22 May 1860); *ibid.* (29 May 1860); *ibid.* (31 May 1860); *ibid.* (7 June 1860); *ibid.* (19 June 1860); *ibid.* (21 June 1860); *ibid.* (23 June 1860); *ibid.* (30 June 1860); *ibid.* (3



“WHAT WILL THEY SAY IN ENGLAND?”: VIOLENCE, ANXIETY, AND THE PRESS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY NEW ZEALAND AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

Aboriginal victims and perpetrators, the Victoria press' coverage of murder on the Northwest Coast indicated that local colonists were threatened by the region's Aboriginal population.<sup>102</sup> For example, between 1858 and 1862 the Victoria press identified 213 murders on the Northwest Coast; 183 of which involved Aboriginal perpetrators and 117 out of this total featured victimized colonists.<sup>103</sup>

Over five years, then, the Victoria press detailed the murder of at least 288 men and women. The Victoria press identified Aboriginal perpetrators to be responsible for 84 percent of this total, with colonists victimized by Aboriginal perpetrators 43 percent of the time. Compare this high Aboriginal murder rate with the fact that the Victoria press reported colonists to be involved in only nine murders which featured colonists as both perpetrators and victims.<sup>104</sup> While the Victoria press coverage of murder on the Northwest Coast was often based on rumour and second-hand reports, it is important to recognize that few murder-related reports were later revealed to be false.<sup>105</sup> Colonists would have been influenced, too, by editors' statements that the Victoria press provided an incomplete assessment of actual Aboriginal violence.<sup>106</sup> This knowledge, in

---

July 1860); *ibid.* (17 July 1860); *ibid.* (24 July 1860); *ibid.* (21 August 1860); *ibid.* (4 September 1860); *ibid.* (16 November 1860); *ibid.* (3 January 1861); *ibid.* (27 February 1861); *ibid.* (7 March 1861); *ibid.* (13 March 1861); *ibid.* (15 April 1861); *ibid.* (3 June 1861); *ibid.* (28 June 1861); *Press* (9 July 1861); *British Colonist* (12 August 1861); *ibid.* (9 September 1861); *ibid.* (21 September 1861); *ibid.* (23 September 1861); *ibid.* (26 September 1861); *ibid.* (16 October 1861); *ibid.* (10 December 1861); *ibid.* (27 December 1861); *ibid.* (26 May 1862); *ibid.* (28 May 1862); *ibid.* (16 September 1862); *ibid.* (15 December 1862).

102 Forty-four percent of murders reported in the Victoria press featured both Aboriginal victims and perpetrators, for a total of 128/288.

103 *Victoria Gazette* (25 June 1858); *ibid.* (30 July 1858); *ibid.* (24 August 1858); *ibid.* (25 August 1858); *ibid.* (3 September 1858); *ibid.* (16 September 1858); *ibid.* (29 September 1858); *ibid.* (18 December 1858); *British Colonist* (29 January 1859); *ibid.* (29 June 1859); *ibid.* (15 July 1859); *ibid.* (20 July 1859); *ibid.* (19 August 1859); *ibid.* (9 November 1859); *ibid.* (29 March 1860); *ibid.* (3 April 1860); *ibid.* (19 May 1860); *ibid.* (29 May 1860); second *Victoria Gazette* (13 July 1860); *British Colonist* (12 July 1860); *ibid.* (17 July 1860); *ibid.* (8 August 1860); *ibid.* (22 January 1861); *ibid.* (26 January 1861); *ibid.* (7 February 1861); *ibid.* (12 February 1861); *ibid.* (25 February 1861); *ibid.* (26 March 1861); *ibid.* (8 April 1861); *ibid.* (1 June 1861); *ibid.* (11 June 1861); *ibid.* (5 July 1861); *ibid.* (6 August 1861); *Press* (7 September 1861); *ibid.* (10 November 1861); *British Colonist* (22 March 1862); *ibid.* (16 June 1862); *ibid.* (16 July 1862); *ibid.* (23 July 1862); *ibid.* (11 August 1862); *ibid.* (23 August 1862); *ibid.* (28 August 1862); *ibid.* (1 September 1862); *ibid.* (16 September 1862); *ibid.* (30 September 1862); *ibid.* (13 October 1862); *ibid.* (13 October 1862).

104 The Victoria press reported colonists as perpetrators in eleven percent of all murders, for a total of 31/288. Colonists were identified as responsible for the murder of nine colonists and 22 Aboriginals.

105 One of the few narratives of Aboriginal violence later revealed to be false was the murder of 45 prospectors in the *Victoria Gazette's* edition for 25 August 1858. The edition for 27 August 1858, detailed the murders to be a hoax.

106 *British Colonist* (9 November 1859); *Press* (17 June 1862).

combination with the Victoria press' description of local Aboriginal peoples' contempt for colonists, likely exacerbated some colonists' anxiety.<sup>107</sup>

My emphasis here is that Victoria's colonists experienced anxiety related to threat of violence in a very different manner than Auckland's colonists. In Auckland, the threat of Māori violence throughout the Taranaki war had been abstract; while colonial New Zealand has a deserved reputation for violence, there is no comparison between the Auckland press' coverage of crime and the Victoria press. The *Southern Cross* paid almost no attention to Māori crime in Auckland, while almost every edition of the *British Colonist* featured narratives of Aboriginal crime. The *Victoria Press* highlighted Aboriginal crime in its demands for Aboriginal eviction, arguing that colonists were at significant risk from local Aboriginal peoples.<sup>108</sup> As this *Press* editorial from June 1862 illustrates, Victoria's Aboriginal crime rate was perceived as an aberration within the British Empire:

For four years Victoria has suffered to an extent unknown in any civilized town in the universe from the residence of an Indian population. Time and again were the evils pointed out by the press, but no notice was taken of injunction or admonition .... How many men have been the victims of Indian assassination round about Victoria, we shall probably never know; but if we take those cases of murder that have been already substantiated in our law courts, the catalogue is the largest that ever disgraced, in comparison to the population, any civilized town. So familiarized, in fact, had the inhabitants become with Indian murders that the continued recurrence of the crime created but little excitement.<sup>109</sup>

A point to emphasize, though, is that the local press was not the only voice in Victoria to highlight the threat of Aboriginal violence. During the late 1850s and early 1860s, grand jury reports periodically featured in the Victoria press. Victoria's grand juries were composed of eligible colonists chosen to sit on

---

107 The Victoria press rarely focused on Aboriginal perspectives of local disorder, but limited insights can be garnered from Bishop George Hills' diary and House of Assembly transcripts. These sources reveal the Lekwungen leader Chee-ah-thluc's, also known as King Freezy, discontent with the Victoria police force's non-intervention in cases of Aboriginal murder and desire for the eviction of northern Aboriginal peoples from Victoria. *British Colonist* (26 February 1859). See also Roberta L. Bagshaw, ed., *No Better Land: The 1860 Diaries of the Anglican Colonial Bishop George Hills* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1996), 55.

108 *Victoria Gazette* (1 February 1859); *British Colonist* (5 February 1859); *Victoria Gazette* (3 March 1859); *ibid.* (17 May 1859); *British Colonist* (8 June 1859); *ibid.* (29 July 1859); *ibid.* (26 January 1860); second *Victoria Gazette* (12 March 1860); *British Colonist* (13 March 1860); *ibid.* (19 April 1860); *ibid.* (29 May 1860); *ibid.* (21 June 1860); *ibid.* (18 April 1861); *ibid.* (22 May 1861); *ibid.* (3 September 1861); *Press* (10 December 1861); *ibid.* (12 December 1861).

109 *Press* (17 June 1862).

local court cases for quarterly sessions. One of their responsibilities was to prepare a report for Vancouver Island’s chief justice, drawing attention to issues within the purview of the local judiciary. Of particular note, between 1859–1860, five out of seven grand jury reports commented on northern Aboriginal peoples’ presence in the vicinity of Victoria, requesting that steps be taken for their eviction and better administration.<sup>110</sup> As the grand jury’s chairman argued in April 1860:

The Grand Jury beg to recommend that some vigorous action be speedily adopted with regard to the Indians in the neighbourhood of the town, the growing insecurity of the Esquimalt Road being daily manifested by attempts to molest passengers, which in some instances have resulted in grievous bodily harm. The frequent occurrence of strife and murder amongst the Indians calls for the adoption of immediate measures; the fact of such proceedings taking place in the vicinity of a civilized community reflecting but little credit upon the system pursued towards them. The Grand Jury also beg to call the attention of the authorities to the fact that the Indians are again commencing to form an encampment on the south side of James’ Bay, and also on the ground north of Johnson street, and would recommend their immediate removal.<sup>111</sup>

These grand jury reports illustrate that the Victoria press’ advocacy for Aboriginal eviction was grounded in a measure of grassroots support. Certainly, De Cosmos perceived a degree of anxiety when he described the roots of colonists’ support for the formation of a Volunteer Corps in 1861: “Some nervous, and many cautious people, impressed with an idea that we are in a very defenceless position in case of an Indian outbreak, and not having full faith in the potency of the Hudsonian institution to quell the blanketocracy — are urging the formation of a volunteer corps or the embodiment of the militia.”<sup>112</sup> Perhaps the most telling evidence that Victoria’s colonists experienced anxiety related to the threat of Aboriginal violence is the unanimity with which the Victoria press advocated Aboriginal eviction.<sup>113</sup>

---

110 *British Colonist* (15 January 1859); *ibid.* (21 January 1860); second *Victoria Gazette* (20 February 1860); *British Colonist* (14 April 1860); *ibid.* (7 July 1860).

111 *British Colonist* (14 April 1860).

112 De Cosmos utilized the term ‘blanketocracy’ to refer to local Aboriginal peoples in Victoria; its meaning stemmed from the important role which blankets played in the local Aboriginal economy; *Ibid.* (15 June 1861).

113 *Victoria Gazette* (1 February 1859); *ibid.* (24 February 1859); *ibid.* (3 March 1859); *ibid.* (17 May 1859); *British Colonist* (8 June 1859); *ibid.* (26 January 1860); *ibid.* (13 March 1860); second *Victoria Gazette* (12 March 1860); *British Colonist* (12 April 1860); *ibid.* (19 April 1860); *ibid.* (29 May 1860); second *Victoria Gazette* (8 June 1860); *British Colonist* (21 June 1860); *ibid.* (23 July 1861); *Press* (5 September 1861); *ibid.* (10 December 1861); *ibid.* (12 December 1861); *ibid.* (27 December 1861); *British Colonist* (28 April 1862); *Press* (28 April 1862); *ibid.* (11 May 1862); *ibid.* (27 May 1862); *ibid.* (28 May 1862); *ibid.* (17 June 1862).

Members of the Victoria press agreed on very little. But while the political manifestos of the *Victoria Gazette*, *British Colonist*, second *Victoria Gazette*, and *Press* diverged, they all wholeheartedly supported Aboriginal eviction.<sup>114</sup> This unanimity occurred in spite of the fact that demands for Aboriginal eviction implicitly critiqued Douglas' administration of local Aboriginal peoples. Even beyond the fact that newspapers traditionally sympathetic to Douglas advocated Aboriginal eviction, it is worth stressing that unanimity itself within the mid-nineteenth century press was rare. Mid-nineteenth century editors defined their editorial perspectives in oppositional reference to their rivals. Readers expected to encounter contrasting editorial perspectives in the different elements of a community's press. The Victoria press, then, was ideologically predisposed to foment division rather than consensus. That the Victoria press unanimously supported Aboriginal eviction suggests two possibilities: Victoria's colonists broadly supported Aboriginal eviction and members of the Victoria press perceived Aboriginal eviction to be in their own material interests. I stress both factors. If either was lacking it seems likely that a member of the Victoria press would have opposed Aboriginal eviction simply to differentiate their editorial perspective.

Returning to the *British Colonist*, De Cosmos' humanitarian rationale for Aboriginal eviction was the argument that local Aboriginal peoples' improvement could not occur in proximity to colonists' vice.<sup>115</sup> As De Cosmos explained: "We see no ultimate course but the removal of these poor creatures from their present quarters. Humanity demands that efforts be made to civilize them, as well as restrain them from crime, and to do this, they must be placed in circumstances of less temptation and demoralization, than those which surround them at present."<sup>116</sup>

De Cosmos employed this humanitarian rationale in order to contextualize eviction in the best interests of local Aboriginal peoples. The purpose of this argument was to illustrate that Aboriginal eviction was in keeping with Douglas' mandate from the Colonial Office to facilitate the civilization of local Aboriginal peoples. Indeed, De Cosmos frequently admonished Douglas' failure to stop local Aboriginal violence as a failure to live up to the Aborigines Protection Society's expectations.<sup>117</sup> The implication of De Cosmos' criticism was that Douglas had failed his mandate to protect local Aboriginal peoples and had not lived up to his reputation as a superior manager of relations with local

---

114 The *British Colonist* and *Press* were vocal critics of Douglas' administration while the *Victoria Gazette* and second *Victoria Gazette* tended to support Douglas.

115 *British Colonist* (26 January 1860); *ibid.* (13 March 1860); *ibid.* (29 May 1860); *ibid.* (19 February 1861).

116 *British Colonist* (26 January 1860).

117 *Ibid.* (22 June 1859); *ibid.* (1 August 1859); *ibid.* (5 September 1859).

Aboriginal peoples.<sup>118</sup> What De Cosmos’ employment of a humanitarian discourse also illustrates is that he believed this humanitarian discourse still resonated with local colonists.

Indeed, De Cosmos likely employed a humanitarian rationale in his demands for Aboriginal eviction in order to garner broad public support for Aboriginal eviction. While this paper has illustrated that the Victoria press’ advocacy for eviction was grounded in a measure of grassroots support, it is also clear that Aboriginal eviction was not in all colonists’ interests. Local Aboriginal peoples were bound to colonists through intimate ties and economic relationships. Victoria’s Aboriginal peoples made significant contributions to local commerce and functioned as a vital element of the local labour force, as this letter to the *British Colonist* illustrates:

We the undersigned storekeepers on Johnson street, wish to inform you that our principal trade is with the Indian population, from whom we derive our subsistence, and that when you incite the government to drive the Indians away, you seek to deprive us of our livelihood, and of the means to pay our rent and taxes, to say nothing of our subscriptions to your newspaper, which is trying to ruin us. We feel neither willing nor able to discuss the usefulness or faults of their race, but we call your notice to the fact, that it would be far more worthy to organize some better means for Christianizing and improving them, than to drive them away merely to get rid of them; and that when you accuse them, for instance, of stealing, if you were to send away all those who are suspected of improbity, you would compel a great many others besides Indians to leave the country. At any rate we find them fair customers and good payers, whereas we have never seen you once in any of our stores.<sup>119</sup>

If local Aboriginal peoples made such significant contributions to Victoria’s economy, why did De Cosmos and other members of the press advocate their removal rather than articulate strategies to mitigate Aboriginal violence? A clue lies in De Cosmos’ argument that Victoria suffered from an excess of Aboriginal labour. While the common wage for colonists was \$2.00 per day, Aboriginal labourers received \$0.50 per day or \$20.00 per month.<sup>120</sup> According to De Cosmos, surplus Aboriginal labour had caused a depression in local wages, making it impossible for failed prospectors to remain within the region.<sup>121</sup> The *British Colonist*’s advocacy for Aboriginal eviction, and the Victoria press’ more generally, must be understood in light of Victoria’s economic instability and colonial editors’ desire to promote colonial development

---

118 Ibid. (18 April 1861).

119 Ibid. (6 September 1861).

120 Ibid. (5 June 1860).

121 Ibid. (26 October 1860).

conducive to a sustainable press. De Cosmos' demands for eviction, which highlighted the threat of Aboriginal violence, attempted to mobilize some colonists' genuine anxieties, ignoring local Aboriginal peoples' significant contributions to Victoria's economy, because they occupied no space within his vision for Victoria's colonial development.

The theme which emerges is that De Cosmos' employment of humanitarian discourses was mediated by a flexible pragmatism. An excellent example is found in De Cosmos' changing attitude towards the recognition of Aboriginal title. Between 1859–1860, De Cosmos demanded that Douglas take steps to extinguish Aboriginal title.<sup>122</sup> Articulating the rationale for his demands in August 1860, De Cosmos stated:

What therefore is expected is the speedy extinction of this title. We call it the title though lawyers may quibble about an Indian title, and say there is no such thing. But still we hold that they possess an equitable title, disguise it in legal lore as you please, and that it is our policy to respect that title, which may be vested in the government now at a trifling expense compared with its value in the future.<sup>123</sup>

Notice De Cosmos' reference to the contested nature of debates regarding the legality of Aboriginal title and his own affirmation of Aboriginal peoples' "equitable title."<sup>124</sup> By March 1861, however, De Cosmos' attitude had shifted. Referencing the ongoing struggle between the Legislative Assembly and the Colonial Office over whose responsibility it was to subsidize the recognition of Aboriginal title, De Cosmos linked Victoria's history of Aboriginal violence with colonists' support for the recognition of Aboriginal title. According to De Cosmos:

For months and years the Indians on the Reserve cut each other's throats every day, attacked pedestrians, fired into town; and we were told: "Don't arrest them, or we will have an Indian war." We did arrest them; hung one of them and now they are all as quiet as mice. We were then frightened by a bugbear. On the land question we are frightened by another: "Pay the Indians for the land or we'll have an Indian war." We don't believe it. We hold it to be our best policy to pay them, to avoid even the possibility of a war.<sup>125</sup>

De Cosmos linked colonists' support for the recognition of Aboriginal title with their anxiety regarding the threat of war. Citing the recent successful imposition of law and order among Victoria's northern Aboriginal peoples, De Cosmos

---

122 Ibid. (4 July 1859); *ibid.* (8 July 1859); *ibid.* (22 August 1860).

123 Ibid. (22 August 1860).

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid. (8 March 1861).

suggested that colonists' anxieties were groundless, demarcating his new conditional support for the recognition of Aboriginal title. If the colonial administration could not procure the necessary funds, then local Aboriginal peoples should be settled on reserves and punished severely if they trespassed on colonists' lands. As De Cosmos noted, “We are willing to take this course, provided we *cannot* buy out the title.”<sup>126</sup> Later in 1862, De Cosmos supported Douglas' attempts at treaty-making in the Cowichan district, which included the recognition of Aboriginal title through purchase.<sup>127</sup> This last attempt at treaty-making on Vancouver Island was abandoned in 1863, following the murder of several colonists by local Aboriginals.<sup>128</sup>

What this brief analysis reveals is that De Cosmos' support for the recognition of Aboriginal title lessened as the perceived threat of Aboriginal violence declined. For De Cosmos, his advocacy for the recognition of Aboriginal title was motivated by the necessity of opening the nearby Cowichan district to settlement in order to spur colonial development. It was the threat of potential violence which initially compelled him to affirm Aboriginal peoples' inherent right to compensation for their territories. It is not surprising, then, that following the 1862 smallpox epidemic's decimation of local Aboriginal peoples that popular support for the recognition of Aboriginal title disappeared, as the ultimate extinction of local Aboriginal peoples appeared imminent.

I would suggest that the *British Colonist's* uneven endorsement of humanitarian discourses indicates that they were crafted for a local rather than metropolitan audience. Given the Victoria press' youth and lack of regular maritime connections with Great Britain between 1858–1862, De Cosmos likely believed that his editorial perspectives did not reach a metropolitan audience and would not inadvertently affect metropolitan policy. This is not to say that De Cosmos was insensitive to metropolitan commentary on the region. He was sensitive to it. But what is missing from De Cosmos' editorial perspectives, in comparison to Carleton's, is an attempt to characterize in a consistent manner colonists' relations with local Aboriginal peoples within an idealized humanitarian paradigm. Nor does one garner the impression that De Cosmos crafted his editorial perspectives with any sensitivity to Aboriginal access. De Cosmos' characterizations of Victoria's local Aboriginal population were not mediated by the belief that the use of an antagonistic racial discourse might itself precipitate racial violence. Rather, De Cosmos used humanitarian discourses to

---

126 Ibid.

127 In August 1862, Douglas led a party of colonists into the Cowichan district, purposefully arriving when the majority of local Aboriginal peoples were absent at their summer fishing camps. According to De Cosmos, Douglas promised the Cowichan peoples compensation for their territories in addition to the designation of their villages and cultivations as Reserve lands. *British Colonist* (22 August 1862); *ibid.* (13 September 1862).

128 Arnett, *Terror on the Coast*, 107.

critique the disparity between Victoria's local disorder and Douglas' humanitarian mandate and to rationalize eviction in the best interest of local Aboriginal peoples. As De Cosmos' attitude towards Aboriginal title illustrates, his employment of humanitarian discourses was pragmatic and prone to change swiftly when the threat of Aboriginal violence decreased.

## Conclusion

In this brief analysis of the *Southern Cross* and the *British Colonist* I have highlighted the continued public resonance of humanitarian discourses and focused on divergent reactions to the threat of indigenous violence. This paper does not contend that editors' employment of humanitarian discourses transparently reflected local public opinion. They did not. Nor does this paper suggest that colonists' perceptions of indigenous threat were accurate. They were not. Both colonists' anxiety and the growing popularity of antagonistic racial discourses in the mid-nineteenth century were fuelled by disconcerting colonial realities when colonists were confronted by Indigenous peoples' capacity for resistance and the insubstantiality of British racial superiority. Much work remains to be done in delineating how editors' self-interests, local conditions, and the tenor of colonial audiences influenced the editorial manifestos of the Auckland and Victoria press.

However, humanitarian discourses continued to be strategically deployed in the *Southern Cross* and the *British Colonist* during this period because Carleton and De Cosmos believed that they reflected the ideals of their imagined community of readers and enhanced their own political manifestos' acceptability. It was this ideal imagined community of readers which functioned to mediate and encourage the continued use of humanitarian racial discourses as a necessary affirmation of British cultural superiority. What also made humanitarian racial discourses still attractive was that alongside their premise of racial equality, they still unequivocally reinforced cultural hierarchies. Any British commentator could claim sanctioned authority over non-European peoples simply on the basis of innate cultural superiority. The transition to more racially antagonistic discourses in colonial New Zealand and Vancouver Island simply did not occur as uniformly as has been previously assumed.

I would also suggest that the differing characterizations of Indigenous peoples in the *Southern Cross* and the *British Colonist* had much to do with both local conditions and these colonies' reflexive relationship to Great Britain. Indigenous access to colonial press, Protestant conversion, and colonial perceptions of the British metropole's power to influence colonial governance were important factors which seem to have provoked different reactions to the threat of indigenous violence in New Zealand and Vancouver Island. The value of this paper's comparative analysis, then, is not that it takes for granted that



humanitarian discourses resonated in New Zealand and Vancouver Island for the same reasons. Rather, a comparative analysis facilitates a better understanding of what made each colonial situation unique, in spite of their similar founding narratives. Indeed, the degree to which Carleton crafted the *Southern Cross*' editorial perspective of the Taranaki war for a metropolitan audience not only illustrates the importance of pan-imperial press connections but also brings more clearly into focus the effects of the Victoria press' isolation. Likewise, the degree to which Victoria's social disorder affected the formation of antagonistic racial discourses in the *British Colonist* only becomes apparent when contrasted with the *Southern Cross*' elision of colonists' anxiety related to the threat of M ori violence. This paper represents a tentative step in the comparative analysis of changing racial discourses in New Zealand's and Vancouver Island's mid-nineteenth century press.

\* \* \*

**KENTON SCOTT STOREY** is a PhD candidate in the Department of History & Art History at the University of Otago, New Zealand. His dissertation focuses on the mid-nineteenth century press of New Zealand and Vancouver Island, looking in particular how editorial responses to indigenous violence and colonists' anxiety were articulated within humanitarian racial discourses and mediated by these colonies' connections to Great Britain.

**KENTON SCOTT STOREY** est doctorant au département d'histoire et d'histoire de l'art à l'Université d'Otago, en Nouvelle-Zélande. Sa thèse porte sur la presse du milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle en Nouvelle-Zélande et sur l'île de Vancouver, plus particulièrement sur la façon dont les réactions éditoriales face à la violence indigène et à l'angoisse des colons ont été exprimées à travers des discours humanitaires liés à la race et ont été teintées par la relation entretenue entre la colonie et la métropole britannique.