A CLASH OF VISIONS:
THE ETHNIC QUESTION IN LOWER CANADA, 1848-1850

by

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ABSTRACT

Although much historiographical attention has been paid to the way in which Lower-Canadian political groups responded to the Union, Responsible Government, the April 1849 burning of the Parliament in Montreal, and the annexation movement, the key principle underlying the political discourses of *les Rouges*, the conservative English Canadians, and the ministerial press in the late 1840s remains somewhat elusive. Much of the existing scholarship, moreover, is divided along linguistic and regional lines, which often produces interpretations that do not take into account the wider political discussion between French and English Canadians. By analysing the debates between *L'Avenir*, the *Montreal Gazette*, *La Minerve*, and *The Pilot*, and considering the manner in which those newspapers used the 1848 European Revolutions to add strength to their visions of Lower Canada's future, this thesis argues that interethnic harmony and disharmony represented the ultimate stakes for all Lower-Canadian political groups between 1848 and 1850. *Les Rouges* (*L'Avenir*) and the conservative English Canadians (the *Montreal Gazette*) believed that French and English Canadians could not live together in harmony, and, as a result, they demanded reforms that would strengthen the political role of the ethnic group to which they respectively belonged. In contrast, the ministerial press (*La Minerve* and *The Pilot*) believed in the possibility of interethnic harmony and wanted to preserve Responsible Government, which, in their opinion, had the potential to prevent future interethnic conflicts.

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1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 1840s both Lower Canada and Europe experienced a drastic change in political order and severe popular turmoil. In January 1847, Lower Canada welcomed a reformist Governor General, Lord Elgin, who introduced Responsible Government in the colony. With this, Elgin agreed to appoint elected representatives who had the confidence of the Assembly to the Executive Council and accept all domestic acts passed in the Assembly. Reformists won the 1847-48 election and were called on by Elgin to form the next government. On March 11, 1848, Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine, the French-Canadian reformist leader, and Robert Baldwin, who held the support of English-Canadian Reformers, were appointed to the Executive Council. Despite the relative strength of Reformists in both Upper and Lower Canada, political groups such as the republican-leaning *Rouges* and the Tories worked to undermine the new administration—through ideological and sometimes physical means.

Les Rouges, on the one hand, used a republican understanding of popular sovereignty and rights to criticise the Act of Union, which had united Lower and Upper Canadas into the Province of Canada in 1841, and Responsible Government. According to them, these two arrangements politically subjugated French Canadians by imposing on them Upper-Canadian debts and short-changing them with seats in the Assembly (both Upper and Lower Canada had 42 seats). Strengthening their arguments by using the European revolutionary context in 1848, *les Rouges* argued that the new *status quo* (after the arrival of Responsible Government) in Lower Canada needed to be changed in order to achieve true progress. The Tories, on the other hand, opposed Responsible Government because they saw it as a tool of French-Canadian domination, which the new Governor General failed to curtail. Their

dissatisfaction found an explosive outlet after the Assembly passed the Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849, which indemnified Lower Canadians whose properties were damaged in the 1837-38 Rebellions. In addition to severe public and private property damage, tory groups burned the Parliament in Montreal and attacked politicians in the streets. Both *les Rouges* and the Tories supported the annexation to the United States in 1849, moreover: the latter because they felt abandoned by Britain and the former because they believed that republican institutions would better protect French Canadians.[1]

In analysing these turbulent events during the 1840s in Lower Canada, most Canadian historiography, with some important exceptions, remains segregated along regional and linguistic lines.[2] The central concern of the existing historiography on Lower-Canadian ideologies, moreover, revolves around analysing local responses to the Union, Responsible Government, the annexation movement, and the April 1849 troubles in Montreal. Scholars often apply labels to the groups that they study in order to classify and summarise their political stands in regards to those issues. Using such an approach, *les Rouges*, for instance, have been described as "liberals," a left-leaning party, "radical nationalists," "partisans of republicanism," "agrarian republicans," and "moderate republicans"[3]; the supporters of La

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[1] This summary is taken from J. C. Dent, *The Last Forty Years: The Union of 1841 to Confederation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 175-216.

[2] For classic works that adopt a local and often linguistically divided perspective in studying nineteenth-century Canada, see Jacques Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot: A Study of French-Canadian Nationalism, 1837-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); Jean-Paul Bernard, *Les Rouges: libéralisme, nationalisme, et anticléricalisme au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1971); Fernande Roy, *Histoire des idéologies au Québec aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (Montréal: Boréal, 1993); Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec, 1760-1896*, vol. 1 (Québec: Fides, 2000); J. M. S. Careless, *The Union of Canadas: The Growth of Canadian Institutions, 1841-1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967).

[3] Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec*, 298; Bernard, *Les Rouges*, 57; Denis Monière, *Ludger Duvernay et la révolution intellectuelle au Bas-Canada* (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1987), 200, 206; Stéphane Kelly, *La petite loterie. Comment la couronne a obtenu la collaboration du Canada français après 1837* (Montréal: Boréal, 1997), 108; Dzavid Dzanic, "'*Le germe de la liberté*': les républicains du Bas-Canada

Fontaine and Baldwin as the "Liberal party" which abandoned radicalism after 1837, "reformists," and "liberal-conservatives"[4]; while the journalists working for the *Montreal Gazette* were allegedly "tory" in the beginning of the 1840s, but later became "conservatives."[5] These conclusions, to be sure, have significantly expanded previous understandings of Lower-Canadian political debates and accomplished the important work of explaining the major political divisions in Lower Canada. The present study, however, will move away from classifying and labelling the political stances of Lower-Canadian political groups. Considering the wider debate between French and English Canadians, I will analyse the underlying and guiding principle adopted by *les Rouges* (*L'Avenir*), the ministerial press (*La Minerve* and *The Pilot*), and the conservative-leaning English Canadians (*Montreal Gazette*) in their reactions to major political questions in the colony. I argue that they defined that principle primarily by addressing the possibility or impossibility of interethnic harmony in Lower Canada.

When treating questions of group belonging in Lower Canada, much of the existing scholarship on the 1840s employs terms such as "nationality," and sometimes "nationalism," interchangeably for the mid-nineteenth-century and present contexts.[6] In an attempt to avoid such an anachronistic approach while studying the question of ethnic harmony and disharmony in Lower-Canadian political debates, I will use Anthony Smith's concept of

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et les révolutions européennes de 1848," Mens: Revue d'histoire intellectuelle de l'Amérique française 9, no. 1 (2008): 56. All translations from French are mine, unless otherwise stated.

[4] Monière, *Ludger Duvernay*, 205; Éric Bédard, "*Le moment réformiste: la pensée d'une élite canadienne-française au milieu du XIXe siècle*" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2004), vii; Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec*, 303; Bernard, *Les Rouges*, 57.

[5] André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, *La presse québécoise: des origines à nos jours*, vol. 1 (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973), 6; André Lefebvre, *La Montreal Gazette et le nationalisme canadien* (1835-1842) (Montréal: Guérin, 1970), 205.

[6] For an example of such usage, see Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec*, 300, 303; Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot*, 302.

ethnie in order to simultaneously understand how Lower Canadians strategically exploited group feelings and avoid anachronistically imposing modern notions of nationality and nationalism on the past. Moving away from the "modernist" school of though (which stresses that nationalism dates to the late-eighteenth century) and the "primordialist" school (which claims that national communities are "natural units of history and integral elements of the human experience"), Smith argues that some—but not absolute—continuity exists between old feelings of communal belonging and modern nationalism.[7] For him, an *ethnie* is made up of the myths, memories, values, and symbols which existed both prior to and after the advent of modern nations.[8] Communities that constitute an *ethnie*, according to Smith, have a shared name, myth of descent, history, culture, religion and language (in most cases), territory (whether possessed, or longed-for), and a sense of solidarity.[9] Since it is precisely these concerns that Lower-Canadian political groups addressed in the 1840s, I will use Smith's concept of *ethnie* to show that Lower Canadians used terms such as "nation" and "race" not as they are understood in the twenty-first century, but as a tool to promote the political objectives of French- and English-Canadian ethnic groups.

A consideration of the manner in which *les Rouges*, the ministerial press, and the *Montreal Gazette* used the 1848 European Revolutions in arguing against one another will also be useful. Although mid-nineteenth-century Lower Canada experienced a period of relative instability, the scale of political struggles in Europe dwarfed the events in Lower Canada. Widespread failure of crops and the effects of economic recession shook Europe by the end of the 1840s. Violent outbreaks and demonstrations began first in Sicily, and then in

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[7] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 9-13.

[8] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 13.

[9] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22-30.

Piedmont-Savoy and Tuscany, where constitutions were granted by the rulers. In France, struggles between the opposition and the government over the holding of political banquets gave rise to a full-blown revolution in February 1848. Moderate Republicans ended the monarchy of Louis-Philippe by proclaiming a Provisional Government in the same month. They also confronted and contained a civil revolt by radical Republicans in June 1848. The republican and revolutionary fervour continued to spread across Europe in, among other countries, Italy, Germany, and the Habsburg Empire, but the counter-revolutionary momentum also gained strength and by 1850 most of the concessions given by European rulers were reversed. In France, for example, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte won the December 1848 presidential election and gradually led the Republic away from republicanism, finally proclaiming the Second Empire in December 1851.[10]

In considering the way in which Lower Canadians added strength to their arguments by using the European revolutionary context, this study takes inspiration from Reinhart Koselleck's concept of metahistorical revolutionary future. Koselleck argued that after the 1789 French Revolution, a completely novel understanding of time arose. In each subsequent European revolution, according to him, revolutionaries adopted a new view of the future: one that was fast-approaching, and which could be planned and used to immediately start restructuring society by erasing the past and present political, economic, cultural, and social

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[10] For recent studies on the 1848 European Revolutions, see William Fortescue, *France and 1848: The End of Monarchy* (New York: Routledge, 2005); R. J. W. Evans et al., ed., *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Dieter Dowe et al., ed., *Europe in 1848: Revolution and Reform*, trans. David Higgins (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001); Pierre Lévêque, *Révolutions et républiques: la France contemporaine* (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2005); Axel Körner, ed., *1848—A European Revolution? International Ideas and National Memories of 1848* (London: Macmillian Press, 2000).

structures.[11] For those who adopted revolutionary future as their organising political principle, in other words, political legitimacy rested in a planned future—and political arguments, therefore, had to be constructed in terms of that future. Even though this view of metahistorical future became widely available in Lower Canada in 1848—for the first time since the 1789 and 1830 French Revolutions—the existing historiography lacks a treatment of the impact that revolutionary metahistorical concepts had on Lower-Canadian political debates.[12] Through a consideration of local reactions to revolutionary future, therefore, I will unveil the way in which Lower Canadians exploited the European context in order to buttress their own visions of Lower Canada's future and the relationship between French and English Canadians.

I argue that by the end of the 1840s, *les Rouges* and the *Montreal Gazette* primarily wanted to protect the political interests of their respective *ethnies* because of their belief that inter-*ethnie* harmony was impossible, while the ministerial press believed in the possibility of such a harmony, and as a result defended Responsible Government, which it saw as a safeguard against inter-*ethnie* strife. First, I will show how Lower-Canadian groups used metahistorical projections about the future in supplementing their arguments while debating local, *ethnie*-based stakes related to the Union and Responsible Government. Second, I will demonstrate that despite the changed ideological concerns in 1849 (with the April 1849 troubles and the annexation movement), when some political groups seemed to be changing their political directions, the core importance of previous links established between

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[11] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), xxiv. For the original text, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).

[12] Although it is likely that similar ideas about revolutionary future developed in Lower Canada during the 1837-38 Rebellions, none of the existing studies treat that topic.

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metahistorical projections about Lower Canada's future and *ethnie*-based concerns remained

constant.

2 THE UNION, RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT, AND THE 1848 EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONS

Although mid-nineteenth-century Lower Canada had a population of 650,000, compared to 400,000 in Upper Canada, the Act of Union dispensed with the principle of representation by population and allotted forty-two seats to each part of the newly-created Province of Canada in 1841. An Upper-Canadian debt of five million dollars, moreover, was fused with a little over a third of a million owed by Lower Canada.[13] The first Parliament of the new colonial entity took place in Kingston on June 14, 1841, under the governorship of Charles Poulett Thomson, or Lord Sydenham. First concrete signs of the government's changed attitude toward French Canadians in Lower Canada came with Lord Elgin's introduction of Responsible Government in 1848. With this development, Lower Canadians, who continued to outnumber Upper Canadians, finally obtained the chance to control the government through an alliance between Lower- and Upper-Canadian Reformists. They continued, however, to be opposed by (among others) a small group of radical French Canadians, who were known as *les Rouges*.[14]

As a radical political group, *les Rouges* operated in Lower Canada between 1848 and 1867. They initially consisted of a group of journalists who worked for *L'Avenir*, a newspaper founded by Jean-Baptiste-Éric Dorion and George Butchelor in July 1847 and produced with thirteen young men from Montreal. With the return of Louis-Joseph Papineau (the old leader of *Parti patriote*, who rebelled against British rule during the 1837-38 Rebellions) to the political scene in 1847, *les Rouges* began adopting an increasingly radical

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[13] Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec*, 283-84.

[14] Dent, *The Last Forty Years*, 24, 182-89.

political programme. Papineau's nephew, Louis-Antoine Dessaulles, became a temporary editor at *L'Avenir* in 1848 and further radicalised *les Rouges*. By the end of the 1840s, they came to reject the Union and Responsible Government, and began making demands for radical reforms that sought to incorporate republican principles in Lower-Canadian political institutions. These republican tendencies later led *les Rouges* to join the annexation movement, due to their belief that the annexation to the United States would best serve the interests of French Canadians.[15]

In debates related to the Union and Responsible Government, *les Rouges* used a description of French-Canadian "nationality" that corresponded very closely to Smith's concept of *ethnie*: they stressed the common origins of French Canadians, their shared religion, language, and territory. Papineau proclaimed, for instance, that the "French-Canadian nationality is our first right as men and citizens"[16] and noted that if his compatriots looked deep into their hearts, "they would know how [nationality] originated, and how strong that love was in the hearts [...] of 600,000 of their brothers, with whom they form a unity in Lower Canada."[17] He then enumerated five key words through which French-Canadian children express their inherent sense of "nationality," or *ethnie*, when first learning to speak (French): "papa, *patrie*, [...] *Dieu* [God], France, Canada."[18] French language, religion, a sense of solidarity or patriotism, common origin from France, and the current territory in Canada, therefore, made up the core parameters of the French-Canadian *ethnie*, which,

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[15] This summary is taken from Bernard, *Les Rouges*, 33-73. For an analysis of republican tendencies among *les Rouges*, see Dzavid Dzanic, "'*Le germe de la liberté*,'" 35-80.

[16] "*L'union et la nationalité*," *L'Avenir*, 15 April 1848, p. 2.

[17] "*L'union et la nationalité*," *L'Avenir*, 15 April 1848, p. 2.

[18] "*L'union et la nationalité*," *L'Avenir*, 15 April 1848, p. 2.

according to *les Rouges*, was now under threat because of Responsible Government and the Union.

Les Rouges felt dissatisfied with the Union because it "drowned [French-Canadian nationality] in liberalism" and, as a result, "the principle of nationality ceased to be a sign of honour, since it was repudiated [...] and would soon finish by disappearing completely."[19] The Union, in other words, corrupted the French-Canadian *ethnie* from the inside. *L'Avenir* offered a grim assessment of the future under the Union:

> Seduced, and somewhat amused by the details, we have for a long time lost from sight the goal of that measure, which nonetheless revealed itself daily as the invasion of ideas and institutions estranged from our ideas and institutions. [...] [It] imposed on us a double nationality, tending to make one necessary and the other useless—in other words, making us lose our [nationality] by supporting the other. Such was the effect of this Machiavellian measure's success.[20]

In choosing between "nationality" and life under the Union, *les Rouges* urged their compatriots to reject the *status quo* and demand immediate reforms in order to obtain a better future for the French-Canadian *ethnie*. Bringing the revolutionary future and the European context into the discussion, *L'Avenir*'s editor exclaimed: "It is time [...] to demand its [the Union's] end. If the people are unanimous, they will not be refused. The events that are incessantly breaking out in Europe give them the guarantee of success. The French Revolution must shake the whole world."[21]

Les Rouges adopted a similar attitude toward Responsible Government. "It was with the means of a chimera," complained *L'Avenir*, "qualified in the pompous title of Responsible Government that [they] had made you accept the Union with the singular goal of annihilating

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[19] "*L'union et la nationalité*," *L'Avenir*, 15 April 1848, p. 2.

[20] "*L'union et la nationalité*," *L'Avenir*, 15 April 1848, p. 2.

[21] "*L'union et la nationalité*," *L'Avenir*, 15 April 1848, p. 2.

you politically and nullifying you morally."[22] For *les Rouges*, who closely connected the revolutionary future with the reforms that they wanted to implement in Lower Canada, true Responsible Government would be tantamount to the independence of the colony from Britain. "On what do you base your statement that the Imperial Government accorded to us the responsibility *to its full extent*?" asked *L'Avenir*'s editor rhetorically in his discussion with *La Revue Canadienne*, a ministerial newspaper.[23] "[M]y dear Editor," he continued, "it is independence that you announce there, and you reproach *L'Avenir* for trying to revolutionise the country."[24] From another angle, argued *L'Avenir*, the Union needed to be discarded because it unjustly permitted the English Canadians to govern a French-Canadian majority. The contemporary representative system, according to *L'Avenir*, remained "fraudulent" because it "gave one representative to 40,000 souls in one locality and three or four representatives for the same number in another locality."[25] As a result, "270,000 voters could decree laws for the other 800,000."[26]

In order to address this incongruity, *les Rouges* wanted drastic reforms that would simultaneously get rid of the *status quo* and propel the French-Canadian *ethnie* toward a brighter future. Among its desired reforms, most prominent were: "French Canadians first and foremost," an "electoral reform based on the population," the "repeal of the Union," the "right to universal suffrage," and the "responsibility of the power to the people."[27] Two of

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[22] Campagnard, "*Correspondance*," *L'Avenir* [*Feuille Supplementaire*], 26 February 1848, p. 2, col. 1.

[23] Campagnard, "*Correspondances*," *L'Avenir*, 3 May 1848, p. 1. (original emphasis)

[24] Campagnard, "*Correspondances*," *L'Avenir*, 3 May 1848, p. 1.

[25] *L'Avenir*, 15 July 1848, p. 2.

[26] *L'Avenir*, 15 July 1848, p. 2.

[27] *L'Avenir*, 5 August 1848, p. 2.

those reforms, the repeal of the Union and the adoption of the representation-by-population principle, targeted the Act of Union, while the demand for popular sovereignty was aimed at Responsible Government. The stress on the French-Canadian *ethnie* and universal suffrage, moreover, pointed to *L'Avenir*'s desire to see the emergence of a quasi-independent—or completely self-managing—country controlled by the French-Canadian majority.

Not all French Canadians, however, accepted this new vision. The clash of *les Rouges*' radical revolutionary future and the ministerial newspapers' stress on the *status quo* boiled down to a question of demographic growth. French-Canadian ministerial newspapers (among them the editorial team of *Le Journal de Québec*) judged *L'Avenir*'s demands counterproductive because English Canadians had a higher rate of demographic growth, which implied that they could later use the reforms meant for French Canadians and monopolise political power. Full of reformist optimism for the future, *L'Avenir* dismissed *Le Journal de Québec*'s fears about an English-Canadian majority by underlining that "all his [*Le Journal*'s editor] lacunae in examining *approximately* the population of Lower Canada must guarantee to us a superiority of 100,000 people."[28] The extra French-Canadian representatives yielded by this segment of the population, continued *L'Avenir*, would become "powerful means to obtain justice and protect [French-Canadian] interests."[29] In other words, the French-Canadian *ethnie* could adequately thrive only once it gained political control of a future state.

Les Rouges also buttressed their arguments by appealing to the European context. In describing how the Russian authorities forbade news of the French Revolution to circulate in

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[28] "Le Journal de Québec," *L'Avenir*, 20 September 1848, p. 2. (original emphasis)

[29] "Le Journal de Québec," *L'Avenir*, 20 September 1848, p. 2.

Poland, for instance, *L'Avenir* asked rhetorically whether "the English newspapers of [Montreal] would like to do the same for the news of the Irish Revolution."[30] Hearing about the events in Ireland, in other words, had the potential to arouse French Canadians to revolt, and *les Rouges* hinted at the possibility that some of the competing English-Canadian political groups might feel the need to control news circulation in Lower Canada for that reason. In another instance, *L'Avenir* quoted Papineau's demand for immediate reforms in Lower Canada, where the latter declared: "Let the government hurry to coordinate the practice with the phrases, so that the fateful words, it is too late, do not become real; let it hurry, if it does not wish to quickly destroy all belief in fallacious promises."[31] Papineau's use of the expression "it is too late," which ushered in the revolutionary violence in France, showed clearly that he used the French revolutionary context in order to implicitly threaten British power in Lower Canada.

These revolutionary tendencies, to be sure, remained controlled in *L'Avenir*, which had to protect itself from being accused of attempting to start another rebellion. For that reason, *les Rouges* openly denied wanting to see a revolution occur in Lower Canada.[32] "Far from us, far from our compatriots all anarchical ideas, all impulse to violence," reassured the editor.[33] Instead of a violent revolution, argued *L'Avenir*, Lower Canada needed a "purely moral revolution of ideas."[34] That revolution, nonetheless, had to adhere to the example of the

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[30] *"Révolution en Irlande," L'Avenir*, 8 April 1848, p. 7.

[31] L. J. Papineau, *"Assemblée du marché Bonsecours, discours prononcé par l'honorable L. J. Papineau," L'Avenir*, 15 April 1848, p. 2.

[32] *"L'union et la nationalité," L'Avenir*, 3 May 1848, p. 3.

[33] *"Le 24 février," L'Avenir*, 24 February 1849, p. 3.

[34] *"Dîner donné aux collaborateurs de L'Avenir par des amis du journal (suite du discours de M. Papin)," L'Avenir*, 2 September 1848, p. 2.

revolutionary future set by France in 1848, and contribute toward creating better conditions for the French-Canadian *ethnie*. The editor explained the link:

> For a long time we not only had the desire and ambition, but a soft imaginary dream to establish with France fraternal links, which, despite the time and distance, [would] tie in a single thought, in a single heart, *the souls of the two fraternal peoples*. This fraternity, we neither seek it in the family of our ancient masters, nor in the steps of another throne, nor in the popularity of a name; but in the class where all generous ideas are born and where all sublime projects are formed...whence—finally—the Republic of [18]48 sprung.[35]

While commemorating the 1848 February Revolution, moreover, *L'Avenir* underlined that "in remembering February 24, 1848, we desire to see a purer and more brilliant prospect open before our *patrie*, we believe at the same time that such a change in our institutions will be brought about without serious disruption."[36] The metahistorical concept of a fast-approaching revolutionary future, in other words, provided *les Rouges* with a discursive device that they used to argue for the need to construct a new kind of Lower-Canadian future, one where the French-Canadian *ethnie* would finally be able to flourish.

Rejecting both the revolutionary future and the contemporary *status quo*, conservative-leaning English Canadians instead preferred the *status quo ante* in Lower Canada, when they held the real political power. They expressed their opposition to the La Fontaine-Baldwin administration and Responsible Government via a number of newspapers. Among them, the *Montreal Gazette* assumed a leading role. Fleury Mesplet, a printer originally from Lyon, founded the *Gazette* in 1778 and published it in a bilingual format. From 1844 to 1850, Robert Abraham, an Englishman from Liverpool, bought the newspaper and moderated its

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[35] "*À la Ruche Populaire*," *L'Avenir*, 4 November 1848, p. 2. (added emphasis)

[36] "*Le 24 février*," *L'Avenir*, 24 February 1849, p. 3.

earlier hard-line "tory" political inclination.[37] In December 1848, James Moir Ferres became the *Gazette*'s editor and used the newspaper to criticise free trade and the Rebellion Losses Bill. He also expressed a controlled sympathy for the annexation movement in 1849, but later rejected it due to a preference for Canadian independence.[38]

Similarly to *L'Avenir*, the *Montreal Gazette* based its political commentary on a belief in the inherent tensions between the French- and English-Canadian *ethnies*. Contrary to *les Rouges*' belief that the Union and Responsible Government subjugated French Canadians, however, the *Gazette*'s editor rejected both the Union and Responsible Government as tools of French-Canadian domination in Lower Canada. In his opinion, it was Papineau who by his "arrogance and infatuation, in 1837, had forced the Union upon the country."[39] In explaining the political rise of La Fontaine, the *Montreal Gazette* criticised him—as well as the rest of French Canadians—first for adopting the "paralysing" politics of "all or nothing" and, second, for uniting with "the most violent Radicals of Upper Canada" in forming the La Fontaine-Baldwin government.[40] According to the *Montreal Gazette*, the administration used Responsible Government to subjugate English Canadians. "Painful and humiliating as it is to all her Majesty's loyal subjects," bewailed its editor, Responsible Government amounted to nothing more than "a crude republicanism, devoid of all the safeguards, such as an elective senate and an elective president."[41] Among "loyal" subjects, the *Montreal Gazette* included those English Canadians who previously helped the Governor General govern the colony.

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[37] Beaulieu and Hamelin, *La presse québécoise*, 4-6.

[38] Renaud Séguin, "*Un loyalisme incendiaire: étude sur le « torysme » montréalais de 1849 à partir de journaux de l'époque*" (master's thesis, Université de Montréal, 2002), 45-46.

[39] *Montreal Gazette*, 21 May 1849, p. 2.

[40] *Montreal Gazette*, 21 May 1849, p. 2.

[41] *Montreal Gazette*, 10 May 1848, p. 2.

After the arrival of Lord Elgin, "whose 'interference' with the functions of his government is scouted as an impertinence," however, such a relationship ceased to exist.[42]

In addition to this disparaging view, the *Montreal Gazette* equated Responsible Government with the monarchical despotism of Louis Philippe, the ousted King of France who was forced into exile by the French revolutionaries. The latter, explained the editor, "having learned that the Queen of England is possessed of a 'subject' eminently successful in hoodwinking the 'French,' has asked her Majesty, as a 'particular favour,' to lend him the loan' of Mr. Baldwin to teach 'Responsible Government' in Paris."[43] The juxtaposition of the French and Lower-Canadian contexts implied that the administration in Lower Canada corresponded to the monarchical despots in France, and that the populace in the two regions could be collapsed into one collective: the "French." According to the *Montreal Gazette*, therefore, Responsible Government represented a tool of social control (exploited largely by French Canadians), whose veneer of liberty was not to be taken at face value.

Further targeting Responsible Government by contrasting the new political reality under Elgin with Lord Metcalfe's refusal "to reduce the authority of the office [of the Governor General] to a cypher," the editor exclaimed, in an outraged tone, that since

> the Governor is irresponsible for the exercise of the powers of which he is divested— we think that it would be as well, to advertise in the Official Gazette, especially when any particular outrage is to be committed, that his Excellency is not to be considered accountable, either to his Sovereign, or to the Imperial Parliament, or to those whom he is sent to preside over, for acts which he does not control, and which are exclusively those of persons vulgarly and erroneously called *His* Ministers.[44]

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[42] *Montreal Gazette*, 10 May 1848, p. 2.

[43] "Responsible Government in France," *Montreal Gazette*, 24 March 1848, p. 2.

[44] *Montreal Gazette*, 2 September 1848, p. 2. (original emphasis)

According to the editor, moreover, French Canadians who controlled the mechanisms of the state ruled by gaining "control over the revenues and patronage."[45] Quoting an article from *Le Journal de Trois Rivières*, whose editor claimed that "the Union [has] made us [French Canadians] masters of those to whom the Union intended to assign us for slaves," the *Montreal Gazette* warned that "Upper Canadians will see that all the ideas of French Canadian Members hinge not upon questions of policy for the country, but upon narrow contracted views of nationality."[46] "There is not a move made by the French leaders," he continued, "that has not '*notre langue, nos lois et nos institutions*' for its mainspring."[47] Responsible Government, in other words, opened wide the doors of French-Canadian political control in Lower Canada (and, by extension, the Province of Canada). Rejecting both the *status quo* and the revolutionary future envisioned by *les Rouges*, therefore, the *Montreal Gazette* reminisced about the *status quo ante*, or the period when Governors General were mindful of English-Canadian needs and when they held a firm grip on power in Lower Canada.

In proposing its own view on the relevance of the European context for Lower Canada, the *Montreal Gazette* used the revolutionary events to criticise both *les Rouges* and the ministerial press. It refused to believe that France could govern itself, for instance, and bewailed: "It is not the nature of the people; they have no moderation. France always was a military despotism, and never will be anything else."[48] The editor then mocked "Papineau's doctrine of France being the instructress of other nations in the path of liberty" by claiming

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[45] "Canadian Intelligence," *Montreal Gazette*, 4 August 1848, p. 2.

[46] "The benefit of a solid mass of unanimous supporters," *Montreal Gazette,* 15 January 1849, p. 2.

[47] "The benefit of a solid mass of unanimous supporters," *Montreal Gazette*, 15 January 1849, p. 2.

[48] "Revolution in France—Expulsion of the Royal Family," *Montreal Gazette*, 20 March 1848, p. 2.

that "Papineau's idea of liberty is a revolution and a slaughter every ten years."[49] While

explaining the political dynamics in France, in addition, the *Montreal Gazette* targeted the

ministerial press by pointing out that moderate republicans wanted an executive resembling

that of the United States, while

> the other, or ultra-party, wish for a government closely resembling in principle the idea of the Lafontaine-Baldwin [*sic*] party here [in Lower Canada],—an executive which shall be in the nature of a committee of the popular Chamber; the only difference [...] that, instead of a nominal Governor or President and subservient Second Chamber, there shall be neither Governor, President, nor Second Chamber at all.[50]

Lower-Canadian Reformists, in other words, acted much like radical Republicans in France

because of their unreasonable demands and wrongheaded political programme.

The *Gazette*'s interpretation of the revolutionary future also contained a strong *ethnie*-

based bias. While observing the increasingly unstable situation in France, its editor claimed

that the "French are again proving themselves utterly incompetent to conduct a free

representative Government of any description."[51] In his opinion, the French populace in

France and Lower Canada were identical; he in fact presented their shared political inabilities

as almost genetic. "The French character never was, and perhaps never will be fitted,"

exclaimed the *Gazette*'s editor, "for that reasonable forbearance which is requisite to carry on

representative institutions. We have a 'touch of their quality' in Lower Canada; in this

respect climate has not changed them."[52] In addition to disparaging the revolutionary events

in Europe and using them to criticise the Lower-Canadian *status quo*, the *Montreal Gazette*

unconditionally discarded the metahistorical concept of revolutionary future adopted by *les*

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[49] "Revolution in France—Expulsion of the Royal Family," *Montreal Gazette*, 20 March 1848, p. 2.

[50] "Arrival of the Hibernia," *Montreal Gazette*, 31 May 1848, p. 2.

[51] "One week later from England," *Montreal Gazette*, 17 July 1849, p. 2.

[52] "One week later from England," *Montreal Gazette*, 17 July 1849, p. 2.

Rouges. The *Gazette*'s editor had "no hope whatever of that people [the French] working out a constitutional government; nor, in futurity, any prospect of France ever being anything but [...] a perpetual volcano, either dormant or active."[53] Implicitly, therefore, the alternative to the instable *status quo* and the hopeless future could only be found in the *status quo ante*, for both Lower Canada and Europe.

Rejecting the arguments of *les Rouges* and the *Montreal Gazette*, the ministerial press focused on expressing its support of the *status quo*. For supporters of the La Fontaine-Baldwin administration, Responsible Government, for which both English- and French-Canadian Reformers fought throughout the 1840s, ushered a new era in Lower-Canadian politics. Thenceforth, the Reformers hoped, inter-*ethnie* conflicts and animosities would gradually disappear due to the more balanced political approach adopted by Lord Elgin. *La Minerve* and *The Pilot* represented two of the main newspapers supporting the administration in Montreal. Augustin-Norbert Morin, a law student, founded *La Minerve* in 1826, which later came under the ownership of Ludger Duvernay, a supporter of the *patriotes* during the 1837-38 Rebellions. By the end of the 1840s, however, Duvernay rejected the old radical ideology and began actively supporting the La Fontaine-Baldwin administration.[54] In those efforts, he was joined by English Canadians working for *The Pilot*, a newspaper founded by Francis Hincks (a Canadian politician and supporter of La Fontaine and Baldwin) in 1844.[55] Together, the ministerial newspapers worked to refute the arguments put forth by *les Rouges*

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[53] "Arrival of the Hibernia," *Montreal Gazette*, 31 May 1848, p. 2.

[54] Beaulieu and Hamelin, *La presse québécoise*, 57.

[55] Beaulieu and Hamelin, *La presse québécoise*, 136.

and the conservative English-Canadians, with the goal of further strengthening the new *status quo* under Responsible Government.[56]

In that overarching strategy, the ministerial newspapers put to work a metahistorical concept of a future centered on the *status quo* and adopted the inverse view of inter-*ethnie* relationships. While *les Rouges* constantly stressed the oppressive measures imposed on them by English Canadians (such as the Union and Responsible Government), the ministerial press claimed that these measures had in fact created the optimal political situation in Lower Canada by harmonising the co-existence of French- and English-Canadian *ethnies*. In its initial assessment of the new arguments introduced in Lower Canada through *les Rouges'* employment of revolutionary future, *La Minerve* professed its dissatisfaction with the "newly-born" and "aggressive" party that needlessly treated the questions of "Union and nationality."[57] Agreeing that the Act of Union had numerous negative effects on French Canadians, the editor nonetheless emphasised that the "liberal" party

> knew how to ward off the blows that were thrown at us [French Canadians] with that Act, and that those same representatives who fought so well to overthrow the corrupt power are now in position to rectify the negative consequences and thereby do us justice. Moreover, it is useless to clamour, get irritated and agitated; instead, people should have hope and be confident.[58]

All the negative consequences of the Union, according to *La Minerve*, had been counterbalanced by the advent of Responsible Government, with which French Canadians could finally obtain full justice in Lower Canada. Arguing against *les Rouges*, whose outlook it saw as politically destabilising, *La Minerve* claimed that "agitation and irritation can only have a positive effect when we have an enemy to fight, but at present, since we have

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[56] For a detailed discussion of these developments, see Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot*, 252-353.

[57] *La Minerve*, 1 May 1848, p. 2.

[58] *La Minerve*, 1 May 1848, p. 2

obtained victory, they can only bring about impatience, and thereafter a lack of confidence and hopelessness."[59]

According to the ministerial newspapers, therefore, the contemporary *status quo* represented the ideal political situation, and, as a result, they criticised all political programmes that had the potential to destabilise the achieved political benefits and inter-*ethnie* harmony. "In order to better succeed in causing a sensation, some call on the strongest, most deep-rooted, and indestructible sentiment among the people: that of nationality," complained *La Minerve*.[60] Its then editor denied claims that the French-Canadian "nationality" was becoming lethargic by enumerating the various outlets where it constantly found a voice, such as during the annual "national" celebrations. "Discussion of that question [nationality] would be much too vague," continued the editor, "and would not contribute toward any practical result, since there is no race-based war" in Lower Canada.[61] Without discarding questions about the future of the French-Canadian *ethnie*, therefore, *La Minerve* proposed an interpretation of the *status quo* that presented the question of inter-*ethnie* relationship as a solved issue. Consequently, it favoured a discussion that moved away from *ethnie*-based arguments, since the representative principles underpinning Responsible Government, it believed, represented the key to political stability and social order in Lower Canada.

In contrast to *les Rouges* and the *Montreal Gazette*, who used the revolutionary context to express their *ethnie*-based frustration and concerns, *La Minerve* explained that the *status quo* (namely Responsible Government) in Lower Canada represented the very ideal fought for in

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[59] *La Minerve*, 1 May 1848, p. 2.

[60] *La Minerve*, 1 May 1848, p. 2.

[61] *La Minerve*, 1 May 1848, p. 2.

Europe. *La Minerve* proclaimed, to be sure, that "politicians, statesmen, legislators, magistrates, jurisconsults, journalists, men of war, [and] citizens [all] had in the French Revolution an enlightening source."[62] But unlike *les Rouges*, *La Minerve*'s measured enthusiasm for the revolutions in Europe failed to radicalise the newspaper. Its editor praised, for instance, the crumbling of a "hypocritical monarchy" that degraded representative government in France and in the same breath observed that "thanks to the Providence, the revolutions that shook the Old World, and which continue to perturb it, have not reached us [in Lower Canada]; better than any previous period, we currently enjoy the benefits of order and public tranquility."[63] *La Minerve* also associated *les Rouges* with the radical republicans in France, and the politics of the La Fontaine-Baldwin administration with that of Alphonse de Lamartine, a French politician who succeeded (if only temporarily) in creating an orderly *status quo* with his involvement in the Provisional Government.[64] The editor explained that the "liberal" party legally obtained the power to do justice to the people of Lower Canada by "persevering in the moderate and sage way."[65] Using the European context, the editor exclaimed that "the moderate and sage politics of Lamartine are better and garner more applauders than the turbulent and inconsiderate politics of Ledru-Rollin [a French politician

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[62] "*La révolution française*," *La Minerve*, 6 April 1848, p. 2.

[63] "*À nos patrons*," *La Minerve*, 2 January 1849, p. 2.

[64] Alphonse de Lamartine was born on October 21, 1790 in the Mâconnais district of Burgundy. He first visited Paris in 1812 as a young man. During the 1840s, he developed a strong sympathy for the "French Left," which later led him to become a founding member of the Provisional Government formed after the 1848 February Revolution in France. Acting as the Minster of Foreign Affairs, Lamartine represented the moderate republican voice in the Provisional Government, which became the dominant political force in France by the end of the 1840s. After going through severe financial problems toward the end of his life, Lamartine died on February 28, 1869 in Paris (William Fortescue, *Alphonse de Lamartine: A Political Biography* [London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983], 11-271).

[65] "*Les deux manifestes*," *La Minerve*, 22 May 1848, p. 2.

and radical republican]."[66] He then added: "Papineau is the Ledru-Rollin of Canada."[67]

According to *La Minerve*, therefore, the contemporary *status quo* in Lower Canada

represented the optimal political situation, while the revolutionary context and the local

projections about a revolutionary future offered no viable political alternatives for Lower

Canadians.

The Pilot's interpretation of the Lower-Canadian *status quo* corresponded very closely to

La Minerve's version. In his initial assessment of *L'Avenir*'s arguments, the editor of *The*

Pilot accused *les Rouges* of "endeavouring to stir up an agitation for a repeal of the union

between the two Provinces—to raise the war-cry of 'French Canadian nationality'—[and] to

keep alive and perpetuate a feeling of ill-will and hostility between the two races that inhabit

the colony."[68] Baffled by the political programme of "hot-headed and unstatesmenlike

politicians" and "restless demagogues," *The Pilot* rhetorically asked why radical demands

were made "[a]t a time like the present—when, after a long and eventful struggle, we have at

last triumphed—when, after long years of conflict and opposition, victory smiles upon us—

when Responsible Government in reality and truth, not in name only, has been accorded to

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[66] "*Les deux manifestes*," *La Minerve*, 22 May 1848, p. 2. Alexandre-Auguste Ledru-Rollin was born in 1807, studied law as a young man, and later worked as a lawyer. He had strong sympathies for republicanism and radical politics, and was elected as a representative for the city of Le Mans in 1841. During the 1848 February Revolution, Ledru-Rollin worked to make republicanism the dominant ideology of the new regime. In the Provisional Government, he represented the radical, left-wing republican voice and obtained the post of the Minister of Interior. He presented himself as a candidate during the December 1848 election, but garnered very little electoral support. Due to a clash with Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, moreover, Ledru-Rollin was forced into exile to London, where he continued associating with other revolutionaries, but came back to France in 1870, where he died in 1874 (Robert Schnerb, *Ledru-Rollin* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948], 5-72).

[67] "*Les deux manifestes*," *La Minerve*, 22 May 1848, p. 2.

[68] *The Pilot*, 2 May 1848, p. 2.

us—when we are at the threshold of [...] a brighter era in the history of Canada."[69] For *The Pilot*, in other words, the contemporary present *was* the future of Lower Canada.

Some differences between French- and English-Canadian supporters of the ministry did nonetheless continue to linger in regards to the question of the Union. To some extent, it reflected the remnants of an *ethnie*-based discourse among French-Canadian supporters of La Fontaine and Baldwin. *La Minerve*, which completely rejected the Union, but in light of the new situation under Responsible Government did not want to dwell on it, criticised *The Pilot*'s slightly more positive view of the Union. In its defence, *The Pilot* reasserted that "the Union of the two Provinces was, under the circumstances existing at the time, a measure indispensably necessary to the welfare of the people of both Provinces."[70] To be certain, the editor admitted that forcing "upon Lower Canada such a measure without the consent of the people was an injustice."[71] He then agreed with *La Minerve* that the issue of the Union ought to be abandoned because the new political order in Lower Canada rendered such discussion useless.[72] Even though the ministerial press was somewhat divided over past inter-*ethnie* conflicts (with *La Minerve* slightly more *ethnie*-sensitive than *The Pilot*), therefore, all agreed that the present *status quo* (under Responsible Government) had finally harmonised all previous tensions, which were now only exploited by power-hungry radicals who threatened to throw the colony back into disorder.

Reflecting the opinions of *La Minerve* in regards to the 1848 European Revolutions, furthermore, *The Pilot* believed that Lower Canadians already attained the future aspired to

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[69] *The Pilot*, 2 May 1848, p. 2.

[70] *The Pilot*, 27 May 1848, p. 2.

[71] *The Pilot*, 27 May 1848, p. 2.

[72] *The Pilot*, 27 May 1848, p. 2.

by the revolutionaries and *les Rouges*. "[W]e have [...] secured our civil and political rights by means of a high moral power," exclaimed *The Pilot*, and "prudently, judiciously, temperately and patiently exercised, without the serio-comic merry-andrew display of the King of Prussia and his '*dear Berliners*,' or the mad fury of a Parisian mob [our]" responsibilities.[73] The editor then stressed that the ultimate goal of the revolutionaries—and their projections about the future—was something that Lower Canada already had: "the responsibility of the governing power to the governed."[74] The 1848 European Revolutions, in other words, consisted of a struggle between governmental responsibility and irresponsibility, a struggle already resolved in Lower Canada because of the introduction of Responsible Government. The counter-revolutionary wars that continued to shake Europe, stressed *The Pilot*, represented a "conflict of the irresponsible with the constitutional. Despotism and oligarchy [...] on one side—self government on the other."[75] For the ministerial newspapers that supported the La Fontaine-Baldwin administration, in sum, the 1848 European Revolutions and the metahistorical revolutionary future that they promised consisted of nothing more than a failed attempt to implement governmental responsibility, a reform that Lower-Canadians fought for peacefully and finally obtained in 1848.

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[73] Scrutiny, "Responsible Government," *The Pilot*, 8 May 1848, p. 2.

[74] Scrutiny, "Responsible Government," *The Pilot*, 8 May 1848, p. 2.

[75] "The European Struggle," *The Pilot*, 5 June 1849, p. 2.

3 THE TROUBLES OF APRIL 1849 AND THE ANNEXATION MOVEMENT

Even more divisive than the Union and Responsible Government, the Rebellion Losses Bill and the Annexation Manifesto—two of the most important political developments in Lower Canada in 1849—tore apart the colonial society. The Losses Bill, which indemnified all those (except convicted rebels) whose properties were damaged during the 1837-38 Rebellions in Lower Canada, deeply angered many English Canadians. According to them, "loyal" subjects were insulted with this measure because rebels who were not convicted could now demand monetary recompense. The situation reached a boiling point in April 1849, when a group of English Canadians burned the Parliament and openly attacked politicians who they believed supported the "rebel Government." Largely unimpeded by the troops, angry mobs roamed Montreal for a few days and destroyed the property of leading politicians. Lord Elgin, despite being personally attacked, stood firm in his resolution to continue working with the La Fontaine-Baldwin government.[76] After seeing Elgin persist in such a way, many English Canadians shifted their strategy and increasingly demanded an annexation to the United States. *Les Rouges* joined this call for annexation to the American Republic. Most supporters of the La Fontaine-Baldwin administration (including a section of conservative-leaning English Canadians), however, rejected the annexation and warned about the negative political, cultural, and economic effect that it could have on Lower Canada.[77]

Seeing the events of April 1849 as the epitome of English-Canadian hatred for French Canadians, *les Rouges* believed that the eruption of violence confirmed the need for the

[76] Summary taken from Dent, *The Last Forty Years*, 199-211.

[77] Summary taken from Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot*, 334-345.

French-Canadian *ethnie* to reject the *status quo* and focus on creating a more promising reformist future. *Les Rouges* characterised the Montreal mobs as the Tory-party "rubble," which committed a completely barbarous act.[78] *L'Avenir* also sent a message to French Canadians: the April 1849 events ought to show to them, claimed the editor, that the politics of collaboration with English Canadians did not work—the Tories did in 1849 what they did not dare do in 1837 because of the support provided to them by the Union. *Les Rouges* also began urging the creation of a local defence force in Lower Canada. "The Tories are few in number in Lower Canada," observed *L'Avenir*, and "due to their small number they can organise easily and efficiently. But we can and should do likewise—it is necessary."[79] Explaining his opposition to the type of future proposed by the Tories, *L'Avenir* stressed that people "should not be mistaken: it is not a revolution that the Tories desire, but the reign of terror in which they would hold the iron sceptre."[80] In reacting to the April 1849 events, therefore, *les Rouges* continued stressing a non-harmonious view of inter-*ethnie* relations in Lower Canada and denied that the rebellious English-Canadians had sympathies for a "real" revolutionary future. For them, the Tories represented a reactionary force—buttressed by French Canadians who attempted to work with English Canadians—that threatened both the French-Canadian *ethnie* and the construction of a reformist future for Lower Canada. *L'Avenir* concluded that the "Union with Upper Canada, which quadrupled the forces of the Tory party among the French population in Lower Canada, [was] the principal cause of the dangerous situation toward which the country finds itself irresistibly drawn."[81]

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[78] *"Grande Émeute!" L'Avenir*, 28 April 1849, p. 2.

[79] *"Organisation," L'Avenir*, 5 May 1849, p. 2.

[80] *"Organisation," L'Avenir*, 5 May 1849, p. 2.

[81] *"La dernière émeute," L'Avenir*, 9 May 1849, p. 3.

Reflecting *les Rouges' ethnie*-based concerns, the *Montreal Gazette*, in support of the rebellious masses, rejected both the *status quo* and the reformist future, claiming that both gave too much ascendancy to French Canadians and hurt the interests of English Canadians. The La Fontaine-Baldwin administration's adoption of the Losses Bill, according to the *Montreal Gazette*, amounted to nothing less than the "indemnification [of] the Lower Canadian Rebels."[82] "When the Governor General affixes his signature to the Bill, and makes it Law," continued the editor, "the act [will] become the corner stone of an independence, which the French Canadian leaders have panted for. They hate the British Government, the British name, and the British race."[83] The *Montreal Gazette* also opposed the administration's reforms, such as their attempt to increase the size of representation for each part of the colony (while keeping the ratio between them equal). Reporting the defeat of the new representation scheme (due to Papineau's vote against it), the *Montreal Gazette* proclaimed that the "country [was] saved from a civil war."[84] When appearances of a civil war materialised in April 1849, however, the editor defended those who took to the streets and burned down the Parliament. Blame, according to him, was due to the Losses Bill. "It is but humility in a Government to forgive the misdeeds of individuals who may have unjustifiably risen in Rebellion against it," affirmed the editor, but "it is positive destruction to repay them for the losses their Rebellion had brought upon them."[85]

In a surprising reversal of its earlier view of the European revolutions, the *Montreal Gazette* now used the revolutionary context to defend those who caused the troubles in

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[82] *Montreal Gazette*, 2 March 1849, p. 2.

[83] *Montreal Gazette*, 2 March 1849, p. 2.

[84] *Montreal Gazette*, 23 March 1849, p. 2.

[85] *Montreal Gazette*, 27 April 1849, p. 2.

Montreal, but only due to its underlying wish to promote the interests of the English-Canadian *ethnie*. The editor first expressed his regret at reporting the "sudden outbursts of popular passion, which it is as impossible to foresee as to prevent," but then contrasted the Lower-Canadian events with those that occurred in Europe.[86] "Whether our little Canadian Government will learn anything from the examples—as its greater compeers have done—remains to be seen," carefully warned the editor.[87] Not learning from the European example, in other words, implied that English-Canadian rebels would replicate in Lower Canada what the revolutionaries did in Europe. Tying the eruption of violence to the question of *ethnie*, the *Montreal Gazette* explicitly cautioned that "[t]his country must henceforth be English, and the wily, as well as the silly, of the French members of the Assembly must understand that the Anglo Saxon is no longer to be tempered with."[88] The expressed need to protect the English-Canadian *ethnie*, therefore, explained the *Gazette*'s changed outlook toward revolutionary struggle. To be certain, the *Montreal Gazette* at this point simply used the revolutionary context to give the English-Canadian struggle a point of reference and its exclamation that "Canada is henceforth English, and the cry is onward" meant not that the *Montreal Gazette* had accepted a revolutionary future on par with that of *les Rouges*, but that Canada needed to revert to the *status quo ante*—when English Canadians held real power—through the use of revolutionary violence. The interests of the English-Canadian *ethnie*, therefore, superseded all other concerns—most notably, the question of what political direction the *Montreal Gazette* decided to embrace. Protecting the *ethnie* represented the

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[86] *Montreal Gazette*, 27 April 1849, p. 2.

[87] *Montreal Gazette*, 27 April 1849, p. 2.

[88] "French Domination," *Montreal Gazette*, 30 April 1849, p. 2.

ultimate duty, regardless of whether that was done as a loyal subject, a revolutionary rebel, or, later, as an independence seeker.

The ministerial press, although deeply dismayed by the April 1949 events, discarded the *ethnie*-based interpretations and stressed the viability of the contemporary political order. *La Minerve* described the tory crowds as "disorderly," "wild," "without control," and "seditious" "vandals."[89] According to the editor, they acted "without law, limits, or moderation."[90] Defending the political *status quo*, *La Minerve* underlined the resilience of the new political order in Lower Canada by claiming that "the latest events have neither changed [the Governor's] determination, nor his convictions; he did all that was required of him by his Sovereign [and] by the country he governed [...]. If he had to redo everything, he would do the same, regardless of the consequences."[91] The editor also stressed that the troubles in Montreal failed to prove that a lack of inter-*ethnie* harmony existed in Lower Canada. "The tory newspapers want to excite the anger of their ignorant readers," explained *La Minerve*, "with invectives against the alleged French domination; and in order to inspire them with confidence in their strength, they are made to believe that the honour of their race is involved, and that *all* Anglo-Saxons are rallying behind them against the French race in other to assure their supremacy."[92] Refusing to take this situation at face value, as was done by *les Rouges*, *La Minerve* reassured its readership that these "racial" calls were hypocritical and not widely espoused by English Canadians. "We have for us the best part of the Anglo-Saxon population. The liberal Anglo-Saxon population of Upper Canada is 470,000, [while]

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[89] "*Suites des dégâts et apparences de paix*," *La Minerve*, 1 May 1849, p. 1.

[90] "*Suites des dégâts et apparences de paix*," *La Minerve*, 1 May 1849, p. 1.

[91] "*Suites des dégâts et apparences de paix*," *La Minerve*, 1 May 1849, p. 2.

[92] "*Force des partis*," *La Minerve*, 7 May 1849, p. 2. (original emphasis)

the whole tory population, including the 130,000 in Lower Canada, is only 370,000. Our Anglo-Saxon friends, therefore, number 100,000 more than our adversaries," claimed the editor.[93]

The Pilot adopted an almost identical view of the relationship between French- and English-Canadian *ethnies*, before and after the April 1849 events. Addressing tory claims that the administration, which they labelled as "radical," pitted French and English parts of the population against another, *The Pilot* rhetorically asked whether it was "not astonishing that the organs, forsooth, of the great Conservative party—the men who are so fond of boasting the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race—should seem so nervously apprehensive of being swamped by the descendents of Frenchmen."[94] The editor then accused the "Tories" of insulting the intelligence of their fellow countrymen with such *ethnie*-based arguments, and highlighted that "they well know that the question is not one of race; they know that if the Province were polled from one extremity to the other, the Liberals have in their ranks a vast majority of each race."[95]

While reporting the April 1849 events, moreover, *The Pilot* described them as "one of the most wanton and scandalous riots that has ever taken place in any civilized country."[96] Addressing the editor of the *Montreal Gazette*, who encouraged the riots, *The Pilot* accused him "of being one of the ringleaders of a mob which has committed arson, a crime of the deepest dye."[97] Supporting the contemporary administration, moreover, *The Pilot* continued

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[93] "*Force des partis*," *La Minerve*, 7 May 1849, p. 2.

[94] *The Pilot*, 20 April 1849, p. 2.

[95] *The Pilot*, 20 April 1849, p. 2.

[96] "Disgraceful Riot and Arson," *The Pilot*, 27 April 1849, p. 2.

[97] "Disgraceful Riot and Arson," *The Pilot*, 27 April 1849, p. 2.

to argue that despite the recent violence, the Lower-Canadian political system continued to work well. The Losses Bill, according to the editor, "was carried by a majority of the members of British origin, which entirely disproves the assertion that the question has any connection with national distinctions."[98] The two *ethnies*, in other words, governed the colony peacefully, efficiently, and without discrimination. Speaking for the supporters of La Fontaine and Baldwin, *The Pilot* declared: "We hate the distinction of sects and races. In our social and political arrangement they should be entirely unknown."[99] "Reform—progress—equality—utility:" concluded the editor, "Responsible Government, as now enjoyed in this Province, embodies them all."[100] The contemporary *status quo* under governmental responsibility, therefore, represented for the ministerial press the essential tool for the upholding of an orderly society in Lower Canada. And it would continue arguing the same logic when the annexation movement gained momentum in Lower Canada.

Even though Lower-Canadian political groups discussed the annexation to the United States throughout the period between 1848 and 1850, it was in 1849 that the issue really exploded onto the political scene. *Les Rouges* figured as the most ardent supporters of the annexation because they saw it as a crucial tool for the implementation of a progressive, revolutionary future in Lower Canada. In an article defending the French-Canadian *ethnie*, *L'Avenir* proclaimed:

> We are daily insulted as French Canadians, and have to silence our nationality [...] and suffer quietly when it is undermined, destroyed, and sometimes stigmatised, while at the same time we are supposed to work for the general good, harmonising our system with the principles of Upper Canada, refraining from hurting their ears with the word nationality because our party recruited men of all origins in its ranks. Is

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[98] "The Late Riots," *The Pilot*, 30 April 1849, p. 2.

[99] *The Pilot*, 3 May 1849, p. 2.

[100] *The Pilot*, 3 May 1849, p. 2.

that not tantamount to repressing and stifling the nationality with words, drowning it in liberalism?[101]

L'Avenir then rhetorically questioned whether "in the presence of a precarious well-being, a society ought to hold fast to the *status quo*—despite the quasi-certitude that a bigger, more real well-being" can be obtained."[102] Exhibiting its early desire for annexation, *L'Avenir* indicated that as soon as the British rule in Canada becomes seriously antithetical to the French-Canadian *ethnie*, people of French origin in Lower Canada would start looking "south of the forty-fifth degree," where they will find "a society with which they could easily fuse, where they will discover most sympathy, and least antipathy, and [where] the French name is respected."[103] Put differently, the whole rationale for annexation was *ethnie*-based. Preserving the French-Canadian *ethnie* represented the ultimate political goal, and *les Rouges* embraced the cause of annexation precisely because they believed that French Canadians would be best protected under a republican government.

In replying to those opposed to the annexation, *L'Avenir* reiterated the *ethnie* question. "For what reason," asked the editor, "would our nationality be in more danger with universal suffrage than it is today with our *famous Responsible Government*, a Colonial Office, and the immediate claw of the glorious British lion?"[104] The editor then proceeded to express his belief that the American republican form of government would better protect the Roman Catholic religion of French Canadians, without giving details on how that would come

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[101] "*L'union, la nationalité et la Revue*," *L'Avenir*, 22 April 1848, p. 2.

[102] "*L'union, la nationalité et la Revue*," *L'Avenir*, 22 April 1848, p. 2.

[103] "*L'union, la nationalité et la Revue*," *L'Avenir*, 22 April 1848, p. 2.

[104] "*L'annexion*," *L'Avenir*, 28 July 1849, p. 2. (original emphasis)

about.[105] *L'Avenir*'s view of the future after the annexation, therefore, corresponded very closely to its earlier projections about Lower Canada's future. Even though their *ethnie*-based goals remained the same, *les Rouges* slightly readjusted their immediate political demands. The progressive and reformist future, which would redress the wrongs committed against the French-Canadian *ethnie* in the past and offer them full protection in the future, according to *L'Avenir*, could now only be achieved with the annexation to the United States. Criticising those who continued to defend Responsible Government, moreover, *L'Avenir* declared that "the people must defy all enthusiasts of the *status quo* and repudiate them as false and treacherous prophets."[106] Metahistorical concepts and projections about the future, or prophecies, therefore, represented key discursive tools in debates, while the underlying political problem consisted of protecting the *ethnie*.

Conservative-leaning English Canadians adopted a similar *ethnie*-based political strategy, and worked to promote the interests of the English-Canadian *ethnie* through their new demands. Although it shortly flirted with the idea of annexation, the *Montreal Gazette* ultimately adopted Canadian independence as its new political programme. In doing so, it jettisoned its old British loyalty and adopted the revolutionary future as discursive tool—but still with the goal of returning to the *status quo ante*, when English-Canadian ascendency was at its apex. "Tories! Tories! Tories!" editor exclaimed, "what will the Ministerial [*sic*] press do, now that Tories and Toryism are extinct?"[107] Identifying the Losses Bill as the root cause for the change in political direction, the editor underlined that the "[B]ill made the loyalist of Canada,—we speak at least for Lower Canada,—what the rebels of yore were.

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[105] "*L'annexion*," *L'Avenir*, 28 July 1849, p. 2.

[106] "*Impuissance du régime colonial et avantages de l'annexion*," *L'Avenir*, 8 January 1850, p. 2.

[107] *Montreal Gazette*, 6 July 1849, p. 2.

There is now no difference between them, respecting British rule."[108] The *Montreal Gazette*

argued that the Bill "has made every inhabitant of Canada a Canadian," and that "[i]t will not

take long to unite them into one great party seeking to discover what is for the benefit of

Canada, apart from that of Great Britain and all other nations."[109] However, this new

"Canadian" identity, as will be shown, was pronouncedly English Canadian.

Rejecting the annexationist arguments for the need to join the United States, moreover,

the *Montreal Gazette* claimed: "We do not think that Annexation [*sic*] is to be any such

benefit to Canada, as some people in conversation urge."[110] While refuting the

Annexationists' comments that Canada remained economically poor, the *Montreal Gazette*

blamed French Canadians for the underdeveloped state of some parts of Lower Canada. The

editor urged the readers, for instance, to compare the French- and English-Canadian sections

of any given seigniory, assuring them that the former "make a country to be like a waste,"

while the latter make it "'blossom as the rose.'"[111] He followed this comment with a litany of

complaints against French-Canadian popular ignorance, superstitious attitudes, non-

industrious nature, and general backwardness.[112] This implied, in other words, that if Lower

Canada were to become an independent country, English Canadians would need to take

charge in order to assure its prosperity. In the beginning of 1850, however, the *Gazette*'s

radicalism somewhat softened and it started to warn conservative newspapers (with which it

now ceased to identify) that annexationist ideas were not embraced "by the British

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[108] *Montreal Gazette*, 6 July 1849, p. 2.

[109] *Montreal Gazette*, 6 July 1849, p. 2.

[110] *Montreal Gazette*, 6 July 1849, p. 2.

[111] *Montreal Gazette*, 14 January 1850, p. 2.

[112] *Montreal Gazette*, 14 January 1850, p. 2.

inhabitants of the country, and that there are British inhabitants in it who will resist the scheme to the utmost, yes, if need be, with arms in their hands."[113]

To be sure, despite its stress on the "British" feeling, the *Gazette* still wanted to discard the old loyalist politics, and freely admitted that it was swept by the revolutionary feeling circulating among the "Tories" after the Losses Bill was passed. "We confess to having written warmly on the Rebellion Losses Bill," confessed the editor, "and possibly in a revolutionary style. Who did not? [...] It was a measure for a revolutionary object, and calculated to excite revolutionary feelings and speech."[114] Reiterating his changed ideological position, the editor confessed that "those [revolutionary] feelings remain; loyalty is not what it was."[115] "We now advocate Canadian interests before all others, British or Yankee," he concluded.[116] In sum, by February 1850, the *Montreal Gazette* embraced the metahistorical concept of a revolutionary future—with rapid changes and a swift move toward Canadian independence—within which English Canadians would regain the force that they previously had in the *status quo ante* (before the arrival of Elgin). The question of *ethnie*, in other words, consistently reigned supreme in the *Gazette*'s discourse: Canada now needed to become an independent nation and operate revolutionary changes in its political system *so that* English Canadians could restore their leading role and bring the country out of ruin. "Look round you," insisted the *Gazette* in its discussion with *The Pilot*, "and regard the progress of the Anglo-Saxon race, which, like the roll of a mighty ocean, is sweeping resistless over the Continent of America. Is it that energetic, powerful and sleepless race, that

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[113] *Montreal Gazette*, 18 January 1850, p. 2.

[114] *Montreal Gazette*, 18 January 1850, p. 2.

[115] *Montreal Gazette*, 18 January 1850, p. 2.

[116] *Montreal Gazette*, 18 January 1850, p. 2.

is to pale the star of its destiny before the rushlight of an insignificant French nationality in a corner of Canada?"[117]

By retaining their concerns for an orderly *status quo* under Responsible Government, the ministerial newspapers came to very different conclusions about the annexation project. *La Minerve*, for instance, published a letter that attacked the *Institut National*, a literary association created in Montreal in 1844, for propounding "a discourse in favour of the anglification of French Canadians and their union with the Americans."[118] The editor also appeared concerned with the sudden shift in tory politics. "They now hate," he observed, "all that they previously loved, cherished, and extolled."[119] For him, the "Tories" became "something completely different from Conservatives."[120] To be sure, *La Minerve* did not take the Tories' expressed desire for republican institutions at face value, but instead saw their political tactics as an attempt to usher "the division of the Province, in order to separate the English masses [...] from the French ones."[121] The main tory goal, according to the reports published in *La Minerve*, consisted of crushing the French-Canadian *ethnie*. The tory motto—"'[a]nnexation, or any thing [*sic*] else, so that we may put down the d—d Canadians.'"—clearly showed, according to *La Minerve*, that the call for annexation amounted to nothing less than the call to oppress the French-Canadian *ethnie*.[122]

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[117] *Montreal Gazette*, 21 February 1849, p. 2.

[118] *Un membre de l'Institut, "Pour la Minerve," La Minerve*, 9 March 1848, p. 2.

[119] "*La presse et l'annexion," La Minerve*, 12 July 1849, p. 2.

[120] "*La presse et l'annexion," La Minerve*, 12 July 1849, p. 2.

[121] "*La presse tory et l'annexion," La Minerve*, 4 October 1849, p. 2.

[122] "*Erreurs (!!) démagogiques," La Minerve*, 15 October 1849, p. 2.

Voicing its support for an orderly *status quo*, *La Minerve* also reproached the tory Annexationists for their attempts to get rid of the La Fontaine-Baldwin administration.[123] Instead of presenting Canada as a country in ruins, continued *La Minerve*, the Annexationists ought "to nobly present Canada as a grown-up child, who does not need the tutelage of his parents any more."[124] *La Minerve*'s editor praised, moreover, Baldwin's comment that "the mother country has given us [...] the power to govern ourselves, in a more extended manner than we asked for, and it appears as an impious act to choose such a time for asking an eternal separation from [the mother country]."[125] Taken together, therefore, *La Minerve*'s description of the annexationist movement depicted it as a cluster of radical political groups who wanted to re-introduce inter-*ethnie* conflicts into the colony and destroy the stable and orderly *status quo* achieved after the advent of Responsible Government.

English-Canadian supporters of La Fontaine and Baldwin espoused an almost identical view of the annexation cause. *The Pilot* primarily questioned the logic of arguments put forth by *les Rouges*, targeting their proclamations that the annexation's goal consisted of protecting the French-Canadian *ethnie*. "It is singular enough that any man of intelligence," remarked *The Pilot*, "should be credulous enough to believe that by such a junction French Canadian nationality would be preserved; and yet Mr. Papineau is sparing no efforts to convince his countrymen that his object is to maintain their nationality. The Papineau party are evidently not practical men."[126] Arguing against *les Rouges*, *The Pilot* claimed that even if annexation was realised, French Canadians would not be able to match the ascendancy that

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[123] "*La discorde dans le camp*," *La Minerve*, 18 October 1849, p. 2.

[124] "*La banqueroute et la ruine*," *La Minerve*, 5 November 1849, p. 2.

[125] "*Les ministres et l'annexion*," *La Minerve*, 22 October 1849, p. 2.

[126] *The Pilot*, 16 May 1848, p. 2.

they had under British rule.[127] Furthermore, the "Tories," according to the editor, desired annexation out of a thirst for power, which they intended to satiate by overturning the contemporary system and replacing it by "the tyranny of the minority over the majority."[128] Despite the threatening situation, however, *The Pilot* expressed its confidence in the *status quo*. Its editor observed that the greatest political objection to the contemporary political system was that "it work[ed] in harmony with the 'well understood wants and wishes of the people,'" which guaranteed that "it [would] be difficult [...] to induce the people to wish for a change—they are not very likely to be tempted to deprive themselves of power—to commit political suicide."[129] Therefore, it was the contemporary ideology of governmental responsibility, according to both *La Minerve* and *The Pilot*, that represented the ultimate obstacle to the success of the annexation movement. For the ministerial press, Responsible Government buttressed a system that institutionalised inter-*ethnie* harmony. That, according the supporters of La Fontaine and Baldwin, represented the only viable political option in Lower Canada, since those who championed the interests of one *ethnie* over all others (such as *les Rouges* and the *Montreal Gazette*) could never help form a stable and effective government.

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[127] *The Pilot*, 25 May 1848, p. 2.

[128] *The Pilot*, 3 July 1849, p. 2.

[129] *The Pilot*, 3 July 1849, p. 2.

4 CONCLUSION

Through their use of projections about the future of Lower Canada between 1848 and 1850, Lower-Canadian political groups addressed a common question: could the French- and English-Canadian *ethnies* live harmoniously in Lower Canada or not? For *les Rouges* and the *Montreal Gazette*, such a harmony remained impossible, while for the ministerial press, that harmony was a reality created by Responsible Government. *Les Rouges*, moreover, adopted the revolutionary future as a guiding principle in Lower Canada, and argued for the need to dissolve the Union and Responsible Government in order to adopt republican institutions, and thereby better protect the French-Canadian *ethnie*. The *Montreal Gazette*, in contrast, saw a need to revert back to the *status quo ante*, when English Canadians held real power in Lower Canada. The ministerial press, furthermore, deplored the revolutionary violence in Europe and only praised those who, according to them, fought for that which Lower Canada already had: Responsible Government.

The local disturbances in April 1849 and the annexation movement exacerbated tensions between the opposing views of Lower Canada's future, but the overarching stress by *les Rouges* and the *Montreal Gazette* on inter-*ethnie* disharmony and reforms and the ministerial newspapers' stress on inter-*ethnie* harmony and governmental responsibility remained constant. For *les Rouges* and the *Montreal Gazette*, moreover, political discourses represented useful, but dispensable, tools: *les Rouges* adopted the annexationist demands (even though they were rejected by most other French-Canadian groups) and the *Montreal Gazette* became willing to reject its old ideology of British loyalty in order to adopt a revolutionary interpretation of Canada's future, which they now wanted to see become an

independent nation led by English Canadians. In espousing governmental responsibility as a guiding political principle, in contrast, the ministerial press refrained from altering its political discourse.

This study has shown that the underlying discursive dynamic in Lower-Canadian political debates by the end of the 1840s revolved not exclusively around questions related to the Union and Responsible Government, but in large measure around the possibility (or impossibility) of inter-*ethnie* harmony and the future of Lower Canada. The relevance of the European revolutionary context and the use of metahistorical projections about the future between 1848 and 1850, moreover, point to the need to re-evaluate the wider dissemination of political ideas in Canada during the nineteenth century. Scholars could enhance our understanding of this period, for instance, by analysing the responses to the 1848 European Revolutions put forward by other subgroups within the larger Reformist and Conservative movements, as well as the more radical elements in Upper Canada, who might have had strong sympathies for republicanism. More importantly, scholars could also trace the *longue durée* impact of revolutionary metahistorical concepts in Canada by studying local reactions to the European Revolutions of 1789, 1830, 1848, the 1871 Paris Commune, and the 1917 Russian Revolution. An evaluation of these dynamics has the potential to drastically improve our understanding of the manner in which international intellectual developments affected parallel processes in Canada. Such an approach might even underscore the relevance of Canada to the international context, and contribute to a much-needed reversal of Canada's historiographical isolation.

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