Labour/Le Travailleur

Nineteenth-Century Collective Violence: Toward a North American Context

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Cite this article

Article abstract

The study of collective violence has generally reinforced national stereotypes that Canada is a "Peaceable Kingdom" and that the United States is extraordinarily violent. This article assesses the historiography of collective violence since the1960s and offers specific suggestions for further exploration into Canada's riotous experiences. Scholars often assume that Canada's collective violence has been infrequent and less destructive than American episodes. Future research — with a focus on nativism, the social legitimacy of the crowd, religious and ethnic conflict, the entrenchment of powerful state institutions, and vigilantism —might prove otherwise. Regardless, Canadian collective violence will be better understood if it is conceptualized in a North Atlantic context

ARTICLES

Nineteenth-Century Collective Violence: Toward a North American Context

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UNTIL ALMOST A QUARTER CENTURY AGO, the theme of violence in North American history focused primarily on the extraordinary events that definitively shaped the course of republicanism, democracy, and freedom. To most historians, violence invoked panoramic images of revolution, civil war, and rebellion. Violence in post-Conquest Canadian history, outside the parameters of the Upper and Lower Canadian Rebellions of the late 1830s and the Red River and North West Rebellions of the late 19th century, seemed to be an obvious and mildly amusing oxymoron. In the United States, on the other hand, generations of historians had concentrated their energies on those most profound and almost mesmerizing events in the American saga: the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The story of collective or group violence in North America, meaning spontaneous or planned demonstrations and confrontations outside the political arena, seemed anecdotal at best. Historians lightly touched upon those events or passed them over altogether because they appeared ill-suited to give citizens of either nation-state an enriched sense of their collective experience. The decade of the 1960s, however, kindled a modest yet vibrant anthology of historical literature on less well-known episodes of violence in each country's past.

Significantly, during the last three decades historians in both countries helped either to establish or to reinforce national self-images that still retain a tremendous popular appeal: Canada as the "peaceable kingdom" and the United States as the

"violent society."[1] For example, William Kilbourn, who considered the nature of violence in a troubled world with a sharp eye cocked on his bumptious southern neighbours, succinctly expressed the Canadian ideal in the Cold War era: "I cannot help feeling ... that Canada, merely by existing, does offer a way and a hope, an alternative to insanity, in so far as there is a way and a hope for any of us in an insane world."[2] Importantly, in the wake of the energetic historiographical activity of some of his colleagues as they pursued violence in Canada's past, Kilbourn later revisited the peaceable kingdom paradigm. Finding it under scholarly assault, he mounted a spirited defense by maintaining that it appropriately described late 20th-century Canada:

For all its faults, this country has remained blessedly free of those deadly clashes of rival ideologies, dreams, and purities with which almost every other corner of the earth is still plagued today. To say otherwise, to state in portentous tones that our recent history too has been terrible, is about as useful as proclaiming that Canada is the worst country in the world except for the others.[3]

The American ethos, as an almost perfect counterpoint, was clearly enunciated by Richard Maxwell Brown. "American life has been characterized by continuous and often intense violence," he argued, and essentially it has formed a "seamless web with some of the most positive events of U.S. history."[4] These Canadian and American ideals — espoused so eloquently in the 1960s and early 1970s — rapidly became entrenched; they continue to shape our memory of episodic collective violence in both countries.

Many scholars have crafted their ideas in light of theories of popular violence in the Western world, and the more thorough practitioners have mined the international literature on violence in order to provide a framework for their own research.[5] Still, with rare exception, most continue to view 19th-century violence in the socio-political spheres of their respective countries; their work bears the indelible watermark of national ideals. Whether they consider themselves proponents or critics of their country's domestic or foreign agendas, historians cannot escape the insistent reverberations of nationalism. Typically, Americans focus on the articu-

[1]See Judy Torrance's useful discussion of the peaceable kingdom ideal in *Public Violence in Canada, 1867-1982* (Montréal 1986), 100-6.
[2]Kilbourn, ed., *Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom* (Toronto 1970), xi.
[3]Kilbourn, "The Peaceable Kingdom Still," in Stephen R. Graubard, ed., *In Search of Canada* (New Brunswick, NJ 1989), 28.
[4]Richard Maxwell Brown, "Historical Patterns of Violence," in Ted Robert Gurr, ed., *Violence in America: Protest, Rebellion, Reform* (Newbury Park, CA 1989), 48. Hugh Davis Graham and Gurr edited the original work, published as *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York 1969).
[5]Note, for example, Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," in Gurr, ed., *Violence in America*, 62-100.

lation of democracy and the breathtaking growth of the republic; conversely, Canadians often consider the orderly and evolutionary — the Rebellions notwithstanding — emergence of political and social events that culminated in Confederation. In the mainstream of Canadian historical writings, the phenomenon of collective violence seems somehow out of place in the landscape of the past, or perhaps worse, it represents yet another revisionist variation on a theme of American cultural imperialism.[6]

This article assesses the historiography of North American collective violence, with particular emphasis on pre-Confederation Canada and the United States in the antebellum period. It includes a discussion of theoretical contexts and concludes with specific suggestions for further exploration into Canada's riotous episodes. Collective disturbances, including those triggered by a widespread and virulent indigenous reaction to immigrants, reveal important benchmarks for historians as they seek to understand social and political changes. Moreover, while the 19th century provides a convenient handle, this study's narrower chronological focus grows out of a rich and focused corpus of historical material. The decades clustered around mid-century, when American nationalism turned on the axis of Jacksonian democracy and the Canadian colonies experienced analogous political and social upheavals, were particularly tumultuous.[7]

The scholarly literature on collective violence since the 1960s matured in an environment of powerful national ideals — perhaps more appropriately labelled myths — that involved self-identification. In a broad sense, historians have oftentimes constructed jaundiced interpretations and occasionally presented specious arguments that buttress these stylized images. The abundant political, social, and ethnic violence of the 1960s helped to spawn revisionist historical trends in both the United States and Canada.[8] Canadian historians embraced, indeed they helped to refashion, the "peaceable kingdom" ideal; yet paradoxically, and in virtually the same chronological breath, a handful of historians cast a glaring light on Canada's

[6]For a deliberately idiosyncratic assessment of Canada's essentially non-violent nature, see Pierre Berton, *Why We Act Like Canadians: A Personal Exploration of Our National Character* (Toronto 1982), 17-24, 36-8. A relatively recent glimpse of Canadian fears of American cultural encroachment are found in Laurier LaPierre, ed., *If You Love This Country: Facts and Feelings on Free Trade* (Toronto 1987).

[7]Given its focus on collective violence, this paper will not explicitly consider the Upper and Lower Canadian Rebellions. While these conflicts await a comprehensive and scholarly synthesis, historians have recently provided thoughtful assessments, and in some cases, significant revisions to popular interpretations of the disturbances. See, for example, Allan Greer, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto 1993).

[8]Two illustrations of the mounting scholarly interest in North American violence that grew out of contemporary events in the 1960s are Richard P. Bowles, James L. Hanley, Bruce W. Hodgins, George A. Rawlyk, eds., *Protest, Violence, and Social Change* (Scarborough 1972); and Graham and Gurr, eds., *Violence in America* (1969).

violent 19th-century antecedents. Similarly, American historians, shocked and dismayed by contemporary violence, sought to understand violence that fell outside the traditional Revolutionary War/Civil War rubric of bloody conflict sanctioned by the laudable aspirations of gaining independence from Britain, preserving the Union, and emancipating an enslaved population. Their history was profoundly moulded by ubiquitous urban violence and a raging war in Southeast Asia. Perhaps inadvertently, they helped to coin and then cultivate the image of "America the violent."

Thus the last three decades have seen the formulation and entrenchment of two powerful ideas in North America, promulgated by national self-identification and apparently validated by contemporary domestic and foreign events. This historiographical exercise, designed in part to shape further research, maintains that we would better understand collective violence if we range more often outside the intellectual frameworks we have carefully constructed — if we identify and test more explicitly and rigorously North American, and ultimately, North Atlantic themes.[9] The international consideration of collective violence might expose more points of commonality than have previously been considered. Consider this argument a modest appeal for even freer trade in the historical marketplace.

Nationalistic goals in domestic and foreign policies, as well as an almost mystically defined self-image, have typically combined to shape the interpretations of historians in the United States. However, since the 1960s scholars have vigorously assaulted the national consensus paradigms of post-war luminaries such as Daniel Boorstin, David Potter, and Louis Hartz. Ranks of "New Leftists," swept up in the breathtaking furor over civil rights, urban violence, and foreign wars, boldly displayed the nation's dirty historical laundry. One historian noted the historiographical gloom experienced by American scholars as they experienced the stresses of the terrifying and apocalyptic Cold War, as well as a grave and seemingly insurmountable social malaise: "In the decade of the 1960s, poverty, racism, and various urban problems were inescapable for the historian as they were for everyone else."[10] To cite only one of the revisionist avenues taken, historians concentrated on the glaring hypocrisy that was implicit in the republic-slave culture of the United States.[11] The quintessential metaphor of persistent racism, manifested in segregationist Jim Crow laws, belied the notion that the American saga was best characterized by positive, progressive themes.[12]

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[9]An excellent example of a monograph that defies national barriers is Peter Way's *Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals, 1780-1860* (Cambridge 1993).
[10]Edward N. Saveth, "A Decade of American Historiography: The 1960s," in William H. Cartwright and Richard L. Watson, Jr., eds., *The Reinterpretation of American History and Culture* (Washington, DC 1973), 17.
[11]Consult, for example, Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York 1975).
[12]C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd edition (New York 1974).

The subject of violence typically underscored this historiographical shift. During the 1960s American historians enthusiastically mined material on collective violence, clearly in reaction to disturbing urban riots, a stalled civil rights movement that was growing restive, a cluster of political assassinations, and the increasingly volatile student movement that sought reforms in campus politics and a termination of the draft and the hostilities in Vietnam. Significantly, the first comprehensive academic study of violence in American history was attributed exclusively to the work completed by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. As a tribute to the alarms being triggered in urban settings, one volume of *Violence in America*, a collective enterprise of historians and social scientists, was devoted entirely to group violence.[13] Scores of historians turned their sights on the antecedents of late-20th-century violence. They understood 18th- and 19th-century collective violence as protean elements of the Revolutionary War, as primitive forms of popular political expression, and as a traditional outlet for ethnic conflict.[14] Many of their efforts focused on the antebellum decades in general, and the Jacksonian Era of the 1830s, a period noted for the high frequency and intensity of its collective disturbances, in particular.[15]

[13]The subtitle of the work by Graham and Gurr, eds., is *Protest, Rebellion, Reform*; the companion volume is subtitled *The History of Crime*.

[14]For a good analysis of political crowds during the American Revolution, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Political Mobs and the American Revolution, 1765-1776," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 99 (1955), 244-50. Bernard Bailyn argued that crowds held a "powerful political potential" for protesting against laws that they perceived to be unjust, in *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1775-1776*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA 1965), 582. Jesse Lemisch, in a study of sailor crowds in the 1760s and 1770s, found that their actions had a political thrust, in "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 25 (1968), 371-407. One study also compared and contrasted European and American political crowds of the 18th century: Lloyd I. Rudolph, "The Eighteenth Century Mob in American and Europe," *American Quarterly*, 11 (1959), 447-69.

[15]See Iver Bernstein's solid historiographical discussion of the riot literature of the antebellum period, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York 1990), 5-6. For specific studies of collective violence, see Carl E. Prince, "The Great 'Riot Year': Jacksonian Democracy and Patterns of Violence in 1834," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 5 (1985), 1-19; Michael Feldberg, "The Crowd in Philadelphia History: A Comparative Perspective," *Labor History*, 15 (1974), 323-36; Michael Feldberg, "Urbanization as a Cause of Violence: Philadelphia as a Test Case," in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller, eds., *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia 1973); David Grimsted, "Rioting in its Jacksonian Setting," *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972), 361-97; Paul J. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill, NC 1987). Other works that explore the political utility of crowds include Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia 1968); and David Montgomery, "The Shuttle and the Cross: Weavers and Artisans in the Kensington Riots of 1844," *Journal of Social History*, 5 (1972), 411-46.

While American historians sought to fathom collective violence, most essentially abandoned the rather stylized image that crowds were unruly and irrational "mobs" — and therefore a phenomenon anathema to republican ideals — only to embrace a more sophisticated theory that recognized the complex nature of group conflict.[16] Scholars in the United States thus confronted historical episodes of collective violence during and after the 1960s in obvious response to contemporary events. In doing so, they helped to construct and entrench an ethos that American history was replete with violence. Collective disturbances grafted with relative ease onto the violent periods that already loomed large as the virtual icons of the American experience: the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

At essentially the same time that American scholars were attempting to strike a mortal blow to the work of consensus historians, many Canadian historians set about the exhilarating business of constructing a pan-Canadian sense of nationalism. This endeavour would be grounded upon tolerance of different cultures, in shorthand, "multiculturalism," or at least the duality ideal as enshrined in various statutes of the 1960s and 1970s.[17] The "peaceable kingdom" image coursed with great speed into the mainstream of Canadian thought. The ideal, a positive piece of self-imagery that neatly gave a contemporary mandate to a nostalgic locution, appeared in the works of the country's most renowned authors and historians.[18] Paradoxically, this period saw the consensus builders formulate one of the bonding agents for nationalism at the same time that a smattering of scholars confronted conventional historical wisdom by exposing some of Canada's seamier historical patterns and episodes.[19]

The obvious and attractive comparison to the intensifying violence in the United States led many historians to conclude that Canada had a more peaceable and tolerant society. For example, in one of the first attempts to gather material

[16]A useful discussion of the ways in which American historians have borrowed from and revised the work of 19th-century European crowd theorists, such as Hippolyte Taine, is found in Gregory W. Bush, "Heroes and the 'Dead Line' Against Riots: The Romantic Nationalist Conception of Crowd Behavior, 1840-1914," *Hayes Historical Journal*, 8 (1989), 34-57.

[17]Note Carl Berger's discussion of the impact of multiculturalism on historical scholarship in *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Writing since 1900*, 2nd edition (Toronto 1986), 307-8.

[18]Ironically, the image was expropriated from a 19th-century American artist. For the classic articulation of the peaceable kingdom ideal and a discussion of its impact on the Canadian psyche, see Northrup Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto 1971). See also Kilbourn, ed., *Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom*. Note the American application of the term in Michael Zuckerman's *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York 1970).

[19]For an excellent analysis of the historical antecedents of Canadian consensus history, see M. Brook Taylor, *Promoters, Patriots, and Patricians: Historiography in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Toronto 1989).

together on the theme of violence in Canadian history, the authors noted that "Canadians often describe their country's history as 'non-violent,' particularly when they compare it to the turbulent past of the United States. They frequently congratulate themselves on their civilized methods of effecting change, and assert the superiority and stability of their institutions and traditions."[20] The surge of Canadian interest in violence was also linked to indigenous factors, most notably the activities of militant Québec separatists and the shocking events of the October Crisis in 1970.[21] Canada's pacific self-image, at least to some observers, was badly eroded as a result.[22]

Thus contemporary Canadian historiography mirrored in important ways the American experience, and yet, given the national compulsion to identify and highlight all things unique in the Canadian saga, historians charted a distinctive course. The intellectual meandering of historians since World War II has been powered largely by the fuel of an old theme: that Canadians are indeed distinct from Americans. This debate has been shaped by several dynamics. Nationalistic histories sprang forth, tracing footprints indelibly set by towering Canadian historians such as George Wrong, Adam Shortt, and Donald Creighton. Textbooks of the period, including Arthur Lower's *Colony to Nation* (1946), W.L. Morton's *The Kingdom of Canada* (1963), and even consciously multicultural enterprises such as *Canada: Unity in Diversity* (1967) by Paul Cornell, Jean Hamelin, Fernand Oeullet, and Marcel Trudel, underscored Canada's nationalistic progress and celebrated its unique contributions to North American history.[23]

Also significant for the shaping process has been the intellectual tidal wave of multiculturalism that has washed over Canada, leaving in its wake a powerful imagery that cuts across political agendas, social behaviour, literary themes, popular culture, and even history.[24] It is a concept rooted to time. Spawned by a popular drive for biculturalism and a recognition of French language rights in the 1960s, it developed a symbiotic relationship with the Liberal governments of Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau. Politicians and cultural leaders alike belatedly at-

[20]Bowles, *et al.*, eds., *Protest, Violence, and Social Change*, 131.

[21]Consider, for example, Marc Laurendeau, *Les Québécois Violents* (Montréal 1990); and Jean Pariseau, "Les mouvements sociaux, la violence et les interventions armées au Québec, 1867-1967," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 37 (1983), 67-79.

[22]Kenneth McNaught, "Collective Violence in Canadian History: Some Problems of Definition and Research," in *Workshop on Violence in Canadian Society* (Toronto 1975), 165-77.

[23]Certainly McClelland and Stewart's multi-volume "Canadian Centennial Series," designed to celebrate the emergence of the Canadian nation-state, is the most outstanding example here.

[24]This is not to suggest that the barriers between French-Canadian and English-Canadian history have broken down; indeed, the two streams rarely converge despite the diligent efforts of some professional historians. For dramatic evidence of this, consult Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and its Historians: The Twentieth Century* (Montréal 1985); Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*.

tacked John Diefenbaker's guiding principle that Canada's ideological glue should be its British orientation. Profoundly affected by the Quiet Revolution and rekindled immigration, the Pearson and Trudeau governments turned their backs on Diefenbaker's struggle to suppress the ethnic self-identification that many Canadians preferred. Historians helped to frame this impulse as well by casting their work in the light of an emerging mosaic of peoples, with each group capable of making distinctive contributions to Canadian history.[25]

A strain of anti-Americanism, or certainly a suspicion of American encroachment, ever-present in some form in Canadian self-definition, has also been one of the dynamic's key ingredients. Nationalism overshadows the work of many of Canada's foremost historians, including francophones. Often their inference is that historical themes of the United States, while interesting, remain distinctly American in their provenance. For example Arthur Lower, indisputably one of the nation's deans of the historical discipline, observed that Canadian history written by non-Canadians, with rare exception, "does not have much sparkle of life about it." Lower continued his unabashedly nationalistic tone by asserting that the histories of nation-states are best if constructed by "natives of the areas about which they [write]."[26]

Canadian historiography in this period shares some similarities with the American literature, yet it displays important variations that are based largely on unique socio-political concerns and different national self-perceptions.[27] Canadian scholars, prodded on by the measured arguments from the likes of Kenneth McNaught, ventured afield from late 20th-century nationalistic ideals and revisited known collective disturbances.[28] Moreover, they essentially unearthed, at least in a scholarly fashion, a striking number of violent episodes that ran counter to the popular — and decidedly Procrustean — axiom of "peace, order and good govern-

[25]One does not have a lengthy search to discover the increasing centrality of ethnic studies in Canada's history. See Howard Palmer's useful review: "Canadian Immigration and Ethnic History in the 1970s and 1980s," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17 (1982), 35-50.

[26]A.R.M. Lower, "Nationalism and the Canadian Historian," *Canadian Historical Review*, 66 (1985), 541-9.

[27]For example, one social scientist argued that Canadians have reluctantly considered violence in their history because it does not suit their national self-image. Unlike the Americans, with their glorious revolutionary experience, Canadians lack "positively valued" models. See Torrance, *Public Violence in Canada*, 101-2.

[28]Important examples of scholarly assessments of collective violence that predate McNaught's comments are H.C. Pentland, "The Lachine Strike of 1843," *Canadian Historical Review*, 29 (1948), 255-77; G.R.C. Keep, "The Irish Adjustment in Montreal," *Canadian Historical Review*, 31 (1950), 39-46; Martin A. Galvin, "The Jubilee Riots in Toronto," Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Annual Report* (1959), 93-107; Robert Sylvain, "Le 9 juin 1853 à Montréal: encore l'affaire Gavazzi," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique française*, 14 (1960), 173-216.

ment."[29] Contrary to the notions of defenders of Canadian mythology, the weak and strong waged their battles on British North American soil with a fervour that conceivably matched that of their southern neighbours. Violent popular disturbances frequently erupted in the 19th century, focusing variously on ethnic divisions, political rebellions, religious strife, immigrant-native disputes, and labour issues.[30] Indeed, historians argued that Canada suffered violent and traumatic episodes that equalled in magnitude and spawned a legacy as profound as those riots that rocked American communities. In fact, if the analysis is broadened, it becomes clear that powerful forces buffeted the Western world in general in the decades surrounding 1850.[31] Many scholars have noted that people throughout Europe and North America perceived it their "right" to take to the streets, protest injustices, and pursue their goals. As a result, members of all social stratifications were inclined to confront change or injustice collectively, be they of a cultural, economic, denominational, or political nature.[32]

[29]K. McNaught, "Violence in Canadian History," in John S. Moir, ed., *Character and Circumstance: Essays in Honour of Donald Grant Creighton* (Toronto 1970), 66-84.
[30]For some of the most important studies of 19th-century collective violence, see Michael Cross, "The Shiners' War: Social Violence in the Ottawa Valley in the 1830s," *Canadian Historical Review*, 54 (1973), 1-26; Michael Cross, "Stony Monday, 1849: The Rebellion Losses Riots in Bytown," *Ontario History*, 63 (1971), 177-90; Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism 1867-1892* (Toronto 1980); Allan Greer, "From Folklore to Revolution: Charivaris and the Lower Canadian Rebellion of 1837," *Social History*, 15 (1990), 25-43; Terence Crowley, "'Thunder Gusts': Popular Disturbances in Early French Canada," Canadian Historical Association, *Papers* (1979), 11-32. For crowd studies that focus on the narrative, see Scott W. See, "Polling Crowds and Patronage: New Brunswick's 'Fighting Elections' of 1842-3," *Canadian Historical Review*, 72 (1991), 127-56; George F.G. Stanley, "The Caraquet Riots of 1875," *Acadiensis*, 2 (1972), 21-38; A. Jeffrey Wright, "The Halifax Riot of April, 1863," *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*, 4 (1974), 299-310; E.C. Moulton, "Constitutional Crisis and Civil Strife in Newfoundland, February to November 1861," *Canadian Historical Review*, 48 (1967), 251-72; J.K. Johnson, "Colonel James Fitzgibbon and the Suppression of Irish Riots in Upper Canada," *Ontario History*, 58 (1966), 139-55; Ruth Bleasdale, "Class Conflict on the Canals of Upper Canada in the 1840s," *Labour/Le Travail*, 7 (1981), 9-39; and John N. Grant, "The Canso Riots of 1833: 'the lawlessness of these people is truly beyond...comprehension,'" *Nova Scotia Historical Review*, 14 (1994), 1-19.
[31]See E.J. Hobsbawm's argument in "From Social History to the History of Society," *Daedalus*, 100 (1971), 39-40.
[32]A representative sample of studies of these riots includes George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730-1848* (New York 1964); Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present*, 59 (1973), 51-91; George Rudé, "The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and Their Victims," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, (1956), 93-114; John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1870* (London 1979); John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales 1790-1810* (Cambridge

The study of collective violence in the context of the period in which it occurred provides important historical insights.[33] Canada's riots, typically steeped in ethnic and religious tensions and hinting at deeper class divisions, were almost certainly manifestations of larger North American and transatlantic issues. While the production of Canadian literature on collective violence remains relatively modest, ultimately the significance of these episodes will best be comprehended by a systematic comparison with other tumultuous events. As one British historian suggested, "impressionistic" and nationally-oriented surveys yield less understanding than "systematic comparisons of different kinds of communities having different experiences with riots."[34] The nexus between community and riot remains central, yet a richer appreciation emerges when the riots are subjected to transregional, national, and international comparisons. They gain greater significance when exposed to the American and Western European contexts of the 19th century.

Historians have already experimented, by varying degrees and with mixed success, with applying so-called "American" ideas to Canadian history. A subject that has been intricately linked to collective violence is nativism, a powerful social and political force in the last two centuries of American history. An American historian, John Higham, pioneered a useful paradigm for interpreting nativism, and while he relied upon American movements to construct his model, it applies equally well for any nativist response. Higham defined nativism as the "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign ... connections," or a "defensive type of nationalism." Though Higham cautioned that the word "nativism," of 19th-century derivation, over time assumed pejorative connotations, his definition provides a durable intellectual construct for analysing people's reactions to immigrants.[35] Nativism has been variously applied to American history, but with particular rigor to political parties, such as the Know-Nothings, and to emerging definitions of American nationalism.[36] The nativist idea has been enshrined in

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1983); Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York 1980).

[33]See Lawrence Stone's discussion of this point in "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past and Present*, 85 (1979), 23.

[34]Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, 26.

[35]John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*, 2nd revised edition (New Brunswick, NJ 1988). Higham rigorously scrutinized his own work in "Another Look at Nativism," *Catholic Historical Review*, 44 (1958), 148-50; and "The Strange Career of *Strangers in the Land*," *American Jewish History*, 76 (1986), 214-26. For another history of nativism in the United States, see Ray Allen Billingham, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York 1938).

[36]See John R. Mulkern, *The Know-Nothing Party in Massachusetts: The Rise and Fall of a People's Movement* (Boston 1990); Jean H. Baker, *Ambivalent Americans: The Know-Nothing Party in Maryland* (Baltimore 1977); Judith A. Hunter, "Before Pluralism: The Political Culture of Nativism in Antebellum Philadelphia," PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1991. Note also Elliott J. Gurn, "'Good-bye Boys, I Die a True American': Homicide, Nativism,

American political lore; it has been embraced by various students of history as they attempt to understand persistent themes of suspicion and rejection of immigrant groups because of their race, language, religion, cultural traits, and political beliefs.[37]

Higham and others obliquely helped to kindle a debate in Canadian history that has led to some fruitful interchanges. The late Howard Palmer laboured to apply the nativist theme to enhance our view of the reaction of native Albertans to immigrant ethnic minorities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[38] Palmer well understood the nationalistic propensity of historians to reject the application of nativism to Canadian history; still he found the term a "useful tool."[39] Western reactions against readily identifiable groups, such as Mennonite, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants, provide the clearest examples of nativism according to its classic definition.[40] Also notable are studies of anti-Catholicism, a virulent and recurrent issue in Canadian history.[41] In 20th-century studies, nativism has been applied adeptly to the rise of anti-Semitism and fascism.[42]

While the nativist theme has achieved a certain resonance in Canada's historical literature, it is not without its sharp critics. Detractors tend to focus on the absence of a clear linkage between nationalism and nativism, a dynamic that is readily identified in the United States. Lovell Clark, for example, maintained that without a strong sense of nationalism, Canadian nativism becomes an impossible

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and Working-Class Culture in Antebellum New York City," *Journal of American History*, 74 (1987), 388-410.

[37]For a masterful analysis of historical literature on nativism, see James M. Bergquist, "The Concept of Nativism in Historical Study Since *Strangers in the Land*," *American Jewish History*, 76 (1986), 125-41.

[38]Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto 1982).

[39]Howard Palmer, "Strangers in the Land: A Canadian Perspective," *American Jewish History*, 76 (1986), 122.

[40]See Marilyn Barber, "Nationalism, Nativism and the Social Gospel: The Protestant Church Response to Foreign Immigrants in Western Canada, 1897-1914," in Richard Allen, ed., *The Social Gospel in Canada* (Ottawa 1975), 186-226; W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy towards Orientals in British Columbia* (Montréal 1978); Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of Japanese Canadians* (Toronto 1976); Ann Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism* (Toronto 1981).

[41]James T. Watt, "Anti-Catholic Nativism in Canada: The Protestant Protective Association," *Canadian Historical Review*, 48 (1967), 45-58; A.J.B. Johnston, "Popery and Progress: Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia," *Dalhousie Review*, 64 (1984), 146-63.

[42]Examples include David Rome, *Clouds in the Thirties: On Antisemitism in Canada 1929-1939*, 3 vols. (Montréal 1977); Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948* (Toronto 1982); Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada* (Toronto 1992); Alan Davies, ed., *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo 1992).

intellectual construct.[43] Perhaps he was right, but it is also arguable that the insistent attempt to forge linkages between nativism and nationalism obfuscates other forms of nativism. The two might not be as exclusively symbiotic in Canada as they appear to be in the United States. Therefore, one might plausibly assert that nativism in the Canadian case might best be understood by disentangling the two ideas.

Indeed the rejection of nativism by Clark and others emerges from the ethos of nationalism in the late 20th century, and a chasm separates the various nationalistic definitions of the last two centuries.[44] British North America, excepting Québec, adopted and promulgated British cultural ideals.[45] Common themes underscore immigration and the indigenous reaction to immigrants in Britain, Canada, and the United States in the 19th century; these included anti-Catholicism, class inequities, and the emergence of secret fraternal societies such as the Orange Order.[46]

Historians in both Canada and the United States ought to cast extremely large nets as they consider North Atlantic ideals of Anglo-Saxon superiority and anti-Catholicism. These themes transcended national self-definitions and pursuits; they fostered the contemporary belief that Canadians and Americans should join forces to ward off their perceived, common enemies.[47] Put bluntly, the context of nationalism might not be the most constructive one to employ in an investigation of 19th-century collective violence. We will know the probity of this statement only after more rigorous comparative studies are completed. One hypothesis offered here, clearly an idea that requires more testing, is that the greatest distinction between nativism in the two countries is found in the manifestations of rejection. In the United States, nativists collected in political parties, social groups, and paramilitary organizations. In Canada one finds contemporary nativism in

[43]Lovell C. Clark, "Nativism - or Just Plain Prejudice?" *Acadiensis* 10 (1980), 163-71.

[44]For a convincing critique of nativism as it applies to Canada see R. Bruce Shepard, "Plain Racism: The Reaction Against Oklahoma Black Immigration to the Canadian Plains," *Prairie Forum*, 10 (1985), 365-82.

[45]See Carl Berger's compelling assessment of imperialism for a discussion of some of those British adaptations to Canadian nationalism, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto 1970).

[46]For examples, note Scott W. See, *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s* (Toronto 1993); J.R. Miller, "Anti-Catholic Thought in Victorian Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, 66 (1985), 474-94; and J.R. Miller, "Bigotry in the North Atlantic Triangle: Irish, British and American Influences on Canadian Anti-Catholicism, 1850-1900," *Studies in Religion*, 16 (1987), 289-301.

[47]The Protestant Protective Association is an obvious example. Moreover, the Orange Order, despite its loyalty oath to the British monarchy, enjoyed modest success in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. See Watt, "Anti-Catholic Nativism in Canada"; and Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, "Transferred Loyalties: Orangeism in the United States and Ontario," *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, 14 (1984), 193-211.

indigenous organizations, such as the Protestant Protective Association, and imported ones, such as Ireland's ultra-loyal and zealously Protestant Orange Order. Unlike their counterparts in the United States, Canadian nativists might have encountered greater obstacles to enshrining their ideas in political parties. At any rate, Canadian nativism coincided with the American phenomenon and its antecedents should be definitively located early in the 19th or perhaps even the late 18th century.[48]

Other suggestions for future research on Canadian collective violence that should be conducted in an international and theoretical context focus on the following themes: individual beliefs and behaviour, the social legitimacy of the crowd, religious conflict, economic stresses, the political and constitutional emergence of the state, the development of professional police forces, the role of gender, and even vigilantism. To a greater or lesser degree, these broad categories have been explored in the context of national development; they might also be considered generic themes that touched the lives of many in the Western world of the 19th century.

For example, individual attitudes and beliefs clearly contributed to the emergence of collective violence in North America, as they did in Europe. At the most basic level, many individuals displayed a "willingness" to use collective action to display cultural and religious sentiments or to achieve a desired goal. Independent of the locale, each crowd participant was, as historian Charles Tilly asserted, a "repertoire" of collective behaviour.[49] Thus in late 18th- and early 19th-century Canada, for example, descendants of the Loyalists perhaps retained the bitter lessons of successful crowd activity during the American Revolutionary War. Similarly, British and Irish immigrants may have participated in or witnessed a collective disturbance before they settled in North America. For whatever reasons, enough people believed in the utility of crowds to make collective violence a common phenomenon in the 19th century.

A measure of social legitimacy that crowds and even riots enjoyed in the 18th and 19th centuries reinforced this propensity to participate in collective action. To many people in Western Europe and North America, a worthy cause might provide justification enough for collective violence. For example, Britain and France experienced ubiquitous and popularly supported food riots to lower bread prices during this period.[50] Moreover, Americans regularly engaged in collective activity

[48]Two studies wherein the term nativism is mentioned in the analysis of events and movements of the early to mid-19th century are Terrence M. Punch, "Irish Halifax: The Immigration Generation, 1815-1859," *Canadian Ethnic Heritage Series*, 5 (1981), 69; and Hereward Senior, *The Fenians and Canada* (Toronto 1978), 139.

[49]Charles Tilly, "Introduction," in Louise A. Tilly and Charles Tilly, eds., *Class Conflict and Collective Action* (Beverly Hills, CA 1981), 15-23.

[50]E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), 77-8; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York 1963), 62-5; Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," 4-6.

in the 18th century, despite the tendency of some historians to paint this era in relatively benign hues in light of the turbulent century that followed.[51] Riots were used as a social or moral weapon, a tool to insure the rights of the common folk. Canadians shared this impulse. In the Maritimes, for example, Orangemen used processions and risked conflict because of their "preservatist" attitudes.[52] Their response, as was typical among North American nativists, was an essentially conservative attempt to maintain social, religious, and economic hegemony. Undoubtedly many Irish-Catholic immigrants, the Orangemen's primary enemy, perceived collective activity as the only viable defense against a hostile reception in a foreign land. Like their counterparts in the United States and in Europe, both groups clearly employed crowds to express solidarity and to achieve goals. Similarly in Québec, a less calamitous form of collective gathering — charivaris — served to enforce moral values when individuals exhibited aberrant behaviour or ran afoul of a community's social mores.[53]

British North America and the United States had a willing pool of crowd members and rioters because of the fundamental role religion played in its social and cultural life. In an over-arching sense, religious fervour marked the 19th century in North America and Europe. Religion often proved a more compelling determinant of an individual's social, economic, and political status than did secular considerations. In both the United States and Canada religion cannot be understated as an important cultural and social backdrop for the Victorian age.[54] Religious beliefs, significant enough for all of British North America, became intensified in the areas suffering from the harshest environments. The evangelical revivalism of sects such as Methodists and Baptists found fertile soil for converts in the frontier regions of North America. In rigorous environments, such as the Maritime colonies, religion provided a comforting refuge.[55] Religious orientation served as a keystone

[51]Thomas P. Slaughter offered a thoughtful critique of the "serendipitous" nature of discovering violence in the 18th century, not because outbursts did not occur with regularity, but because contemporary observers might have been "self-conscious" about identifying and analyzing violent episodes. See "Crowds in Eighteenth-Century America: Reflections and New Directions," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 115 (1991), 3-34.

[52]See, *Riots in New Brunswick*. Michael Feldberg explored this "preservatist" concept in *Turbulent Era*, 5-8, 33-7, 126-8.

[53]René Hardy, "Le Charivari dans la sociabilité rurale québécoise au XIXe siècle," in Roger Levasseur, ed., *De la sociabilité: spécificité et mutations* (Montréal 1990), 59-72; Greer, "From Folklore to Revolution"; Crowley, "Popular Disturbances in Early French Canada." To place the phenomenon into a broader context, see Bryan Palmer's imaginative "Discordant Music: Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth-Century North America," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 3 (1978), 5-62.

[54]W.L. Morton, "Victorian Canada," in W.L. Morton, ed., *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age* (Toronto 1968), 314-6; William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montréal 1988).

[55]William H. Elgee, *The Social Teachings of the Canadian Churches* (Toronto 1964).

for both self and community identification; for the Catholic and Protestant immigrants to North America it comprised the most conspicuous piece of "cultural baggage" that they transported to the new world.[56]

Undeniably, religious conflict underscores the history of virtually all human experience. In the Western world religious riots, permeated by ritualism and often occurring on symbolic holidays, evolved into perennial events in many localities.[57] Some historians believe religious violence to be one of the most primitive forms of combat between opposing groups.[58] The history of Western Europe is fraught with examples of group conflict defined by religious affiliation. In Great Britain this problem was manifest in a centuries-old struggle between Protestants and Catholics.[59] Canada's patterns of social violence in the mid-19th century mirrored this feud. For example, fervent Protestants, defending their religion against "encroachment," combated Irish immigrants who clung tenaciously to Catholicism in a hostile atmosphere. Religious conflict — violence with a tradition — was an important element in Canada's riots in all of the colonies. Similarly, religion provided an essential underpinning of some for the most dramatic riots in antebellum America. Anti-Catholic rioting in the Boston vicinity, for example, erupted in the 1830s.[60] These Canadian and American disturbances, shaped by religious controversy, deserve more rigorous comparative assessment.

Economic stresses caused by rapid transformation, though insufficient explanatory antecedents in and of themselves, have also been clearly linked to collective violence. Many historians have traced the nexus between change and violence, especially in the United States and England. The Jacksonian period lent particular credence to the pattern; a relentless transition to industrialism, coupled with Irish immigration and the economic and social dislocation of native-born Americans, provided the structural factors conducive to collective violence.[61] Similarly, Great Britain experienced a dramatic increase in crowd activity as it shifted to industrialism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[62]

[56]Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge 1956), 10.

[57]Natalie Davis, "The Rites of Violence," *Past and Present*, 59 (1973), 51-91.

[58]Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," 12-15.

[59]For examples, see Rudé, "The Gordon Riots," 93-114; and Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England*, 137-42, 276-7.

[60]Theodore M. Hammett, "Two Mobs of Jacksonian Boston: Ideology and Interest," *Journal of American History*, 62 (1976), 845-68. See also Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Violence in Philadelphia in the 1840's and 1850's," *Pennsylvania History*, 36 (1970), 381-410.

[61]Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia 1968), 125; Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*.

[62]Consult E.J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (New York 1968); Malcolm I. Thomis, *The Luddites: Machine Breaking in Regency England* (London 1970); David Williams, *The Rebecca Riots: A Study in Agrarian Protest* (Cardiff 1955); Gwyn A. Williams, *The Merthyr Rising* (London 1978).

The transition from pre-industrialism to industrial capitalism is a pivotal phenomenon for theoreticians of crowd behaviour. The pre-industrial crowd, Eric Hobsbawm's "primitive rebels," dispensed a sort of rough justice through collective activity. These crowds tended to be apolitical and loosely organized; conversely, a measure of coordination and political rhetoric characterized the crowds in industrial societies. Over time the relatively sophisticated gatherings of labour and political organizations supplanted the pre-industrial crowd, with its emphasis on traditional justice. Industrialism, a revolutionary event in the Western world, altered the traditional patterns of collective expression.[63] As with the above subjects, the construction of a more generic North American framework for the transition to industrial capitalism would enrich our understanding of both Canadian and American riots in the 19th century.

Thoroughly intertwined with the process of industrialization was the formulation of political and constitutional infrastructures. While theorists have long argued that the state flourished, governed by a liberal ethos to benefit all citizens, revisionist historians maintain that the concentration of power in state agencies led to a diminution of rights in the 19th century. In fact, the state moved aggressively to erect prescriptive bulwarks to limit individualism.[64] Collective violence accompanied the amalgamation of state powers in British North America; indeed, a symbiotic relationship between the codification of laws designed to quash disturbances and riotous outbursts existed in all of the British colonies. While clearly the Rebellions failed to disengage the Canadas from their imperial masters and fell short of fundamentally altering inherent inequalities in the colonial power structure, statutes, penal codes, and judicial systems materialized to the cacophonous accompaniment of a skeptical and often unruly population.[65] While state formation was

[63]George Rudé, "The Study of Popular Disturbances in the 'Pre-Industrial' Age," *Historical Studies*, 10 (1963), 457-60; E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York 1959), 1-7, 108-14, 122-5. See also Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr., eds., *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914* (Manchester 1983).

[64]For a persuasive collection of essays that pursue this line of reasoning, see Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto 1992).

[65]Studies that consider the intersection of state formation, legal codes, and violence include: Michael S. Cross, "'The Laws are Like Cobwebs': Popular Resistance to Authority in Mid-Nineteenth-Century British North America," in Peter Waite, Sandra Oxner, Thomas Barnes, eds., *Law in a Colonial Society: The Nova Scotia Experience* (Toronto 1984), 103-23; Leo A. Johnson, "The Gore District 'Outrages,' 1826-1829: A Case Study of Violence, Justice, and Political Propaganda," *Ontario History*, 83 (1991), 109-26; Paul Romney, "From the Types Riot to the Rebellion: Elite Ideology, Anti-Legal Sentiment, Political Violence, and the Rule of Law in Upper Canada," *Ontario History*, 79 (1987), 113-44; and Jack Little, "Popular Resistance to Legal Authority in the Upper St. Francis District of Quebec: The Megantic Outlaw Affair of 1888-89," *Labour/Le Travail*, 33 (1994), 97-124.

at best an epiphenomenon, the relationship between violence and coercive state instruments — political, constitutional, and legal — merits closer scrutiny.

Designed to fortify the emerging state, professional police forces found their taproots in the widespread perception that endemic and barely controllable collective disturbances represented a mortal threat to the colonies. While British regular troops and Canadian militia were typically given the task of restoring order on an ad hoc basis when riots broke out, by mid-century larger communities across British North America were mobilizing to create formal and permanent police detachments.[66] Numerous historians have considered this process in North America, and they have wisely located these organizations in an international impulse as states sought to protect themselves against disruptive citizens.[67] Some studies have explored the relationship between crime rates and the evolution of police in various Canadian localities; others have concentrated on the symbiosis of courts and law enforcement.[68] In spite of these worthy endeavours, a more definitive correlation between episodic collective violence and the timing of the birth of professional cadres to reinforce the powers of the state awaits. As Allan Greer recently argued, the police, created at least in part to curtail the threat of insurrection in the late 1830s, were telling illustrations of "aggressive programs of social transformation" in British North America.[69] The role played by violent group disturbances in determining the shape and extent of these nascent regulatory forces beckons as an intriguing path for future research on a North Atlantic scale.

Another potential course of exploration would be to determine the nature of the relationship between gender and collective violence in Canadian history. Admittedly the task would be daunting, for as scholars have pointed out, an analysis of masculinity and femininity in historical perspective necessitates a thorough

[66]Histories of British troops and militia that often assisted civil authorities are Elinor Senior, *British Regulars in Montreal: An Imperial Garrison, 1832-1854* (Montréal 1981); David Facey-Crowther, *The New Brunswick Militia, 1787-1867* (Fredericton 1990); and Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power: The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order, 1867-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, 51 (1970), 407-25.

[67]Greg Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century: A History of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police* (Toronto 1993); R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman, eds., *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto 1994). For important American studies, see Roger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1885* (Cambridge, MA 1967); and Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (Cambridge 1981).

[68]Note John C. Weaver's imaginative synthesis of several important themes in his study of Hamilton, Ontario: *Crimes, Constables, and Courts: Order and Transgression in a Canadian City, 1816-1970* (Montréal 1995). See also Peter McGagan, *Crime and Policing in Maritime Canada* (Fredericton 1988).

[69]Allan Greer, "The Birth of the Police in Canada," in Greer and Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan*, 43.

grasp of "relations among race, class, gender, and other forms of social power."[70] In this theoretical arena, studies of gender and violence in Canadian history have focused primarily on individual crimes, prostitution, rape, domestic abuse, and delinquency. As one historian argued, for example, beginning in the 18th century women were most typically involved in crimes against persons and property.[71] A desperate reality of poverty and abuse for many women and their children under-scored violence in 19th-century Canada: rough life on the mean streets of numerous cities, dismal jails and poorhouses, and restrictive laws against vagrancy served to frame the relationship between gender and violence.[72] Despite the important inroads made in gender studies, the linkage between gender and collective violence remains essentially unexplored in Canadian history. Indeed, the same observation holds true for European and American studies.[73] Women were active crowd participants in myriad British North American riots in the years around mid-century. They received wounds and were sometimes apprehended, yet they appear as shadowy images in the histories of collective confrontations. The impulses that brought them to these expressive conflicts remain essentially undetermined; they await a systematic analysis.

Finally, a belief in the justification of extralegal movements provided yet another factor that contributed to collective violence in North America. Vigilantism, a tradition long assumed to be a unique aspect of the American frontier experience, evolved when individuals banded together, usually in the absence of an effective peacekeeping force, to protect their traditional rights and self-interests against real or perceived lawlessness by outsiders.[74] Vigilante episodes were also experienced in 19th-century Canada, but as of the present, they have not been

[70]Lykke de la Cour, Cecilia Morgan, and Mariana Valverde, "Gender Regulation and State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Canada," in Greer and Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan*, 165.

[71]André Lachance made this point in "Women and Crime in Canada in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1712-1759," in R.C. Macleod, ed., *Lawful Authority: Readings on the History of Criminal Justice in Canada* (Toronto 1988), 19.

[72]Judith Fingard offers a poignant example of these dynamics at work in *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Porters Lake, NS 1989).

[73]One study that does explore these themes is John Bohstedt, "Gender, Household and Community Politics: Women in English Riots 1790-1810," *Past and Present*, 120 (1988), 88-122.

[74]For a comparative assessment of vigilantism, see H. Jon Rosenbaum and Peter C. Sederberg, eds., *Vigilante Politics* (Philadelphia 1976). For American vigilantism, consult Richard M. Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York 1975); William E. Burrows, *Vigilante!* (New York 1976); Philip J. Ethington, "Vigilantes and the Police: The Creation of a Professional Police Bureaucracy in San Francisco, 1847-1900," *Journal of Social History*, 21 (1987), 197-227; Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 73-5.

well-recorded.[75] Prior research by this author, which remains suggestive at this stage, pointed to the fact that Maritime Orangemen displayed classic vigilante behaviour against Irish-Catholic immigrants. During the 1840s they marched in armed processions to "preserve" their rights, to "defend" the Crown, and to "ensure" the ascendancy of British law in the colony. The Saint John region, where Orangemen habitually marched through the Irish-Catholic ghettos in York Point and Portland, exhibited the most virulent vigilante impulse.[76] Fervent Protestants found the violence that erupted as a result of these processions both rational and justifiable. The campaign to crush lawlessness among the Irish-Catholics, with the explicit or tacit approval of local and provincial authorities, was routinely deemed a noble endeavour by contemporaries.[77] In fact, the behaviour of New Brunswick's Orangemen, and probably those in other Maritime provinces, as they targeted all Irish-Catholics as ruffians and villains, mirrored the actions of American vigilante groups who attacked newer, weaker, and competitive peoples in times of economic and social distress.[78]

Vigilantism in the United States appears most credible in classic cases such as San Francisco's committees to oppose lawlessness.[79] In Canada, the term might be broadened effectively to encompass paramilitary — or extralegal — organizations that buttressed government agencies and mirrored the beliefs of those who held socio-economic power. Some of these groups, while they may not have been formed to pursue specific goals, in fact exhibited vigilante characteristics. Notable episodes in Canadian history that might be rethought with more explicit attention to vigilante behaviour include British Columbia's response to Asian immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[80]

The foregoing suggestions tend to be sweeping and theoretical in nature, and are perhaps most useful for conceptualizing synthetic works on the history of collective violence in 19th-century Canada. More discrete research agendas, ones that might replicate the spirit of some of the studies mentioned in this essay, would serve as important spadework for improving our understanding of group confrontation in an international context. Comparative studies would potentially involve

[75]One notable exception would be Cross, "Shiners' War," 17-18. An organization that closely mirrored American vigilante groups is assessed in Ian Ross Robertson, "The Posse Comitatus Incident of 1865," *The Island Magazine*, 24 (1988), 3-10.

[76]See, *Riots in New Brunswick*, especially 205-6.

[77]For a discussion of rational violence, see Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York 1969), 64-5.

[78]Richard M. Brown, "The American Vigilante Tradition," in Graham and Gurr, eds., *The History of Violence in America*, 188-201; Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 112-13.

[79]For example, see Robert M. Senkewicz, *Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco* (Stanford 1985).

[80]See Patricia E. Roy, *White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver 1989); Hugh J.M. Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar* (Delhi 1979).

literally hundreds of identified violent episodes from the Atlantic region to the developing west in the early to mid-19th century, and doubtless they should incorporate established Canadian, American, and European themes.[81] A remarkable number of exploratory routes beckon for these more targeted studies, so chronological, geographical, and topical approaches might be the most sensible and realistic categories to employ as researchers seek ways to channel their energies.

While choosing to limit comparative research strictly on a chronological basis might appear rather arbitrary and perhaps even pedantic at first blush, it makes a great deal of empirical sense. Quantification should prove useful here, if for no other reason than to achieve a more concrete determination of the frequency of collective violence in both the United States and Canada during the same period. The approach is manifestly problematic, for dramatic population differences need to be factored into any such endeavour.[82] In addition, the question of what constitutes a genuine — and thus countable — episode of collective violence needs to be addressed at the outset. Once they are articulated, definitions must be uniformly and impartially applied on either side of the boundary. To raise only one potential conundrum, should the state's use of force be included under the rubric of collective violence if the militia, constabulary, or police were responsible for triggering bloody confrontations with crowds? These challenges are not insurmountable, however, and several periods invite intensive comparison. As has been argued above, the decades of the 1820s to the 1850s, an era that encompassed Jacksonian democracy, the Canadian Rebellions, and the struggle for responsible government, were rich in evidence of disruptions on both sides of the border. Other years that should lend themselves to interesting conclusions include those of the late 19th century, especially if historians wish to focus on western development, and those of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries for researchers who are inclined to scrutinize labour confrontations in an international context.

Geographical comparisons, both national and international, constitute tenable themes for pursuing concentrated research on group violence. Urban disturbances beg comparison, for as the above citations abundantly attest, most of the existing studies of North American violence focus on cities. In Canada, disorders in Toronto, Montréal, Ottawa (Bytown), Saint John, Halifax, and Hamilton have been critically assessed in various stages of each city's development. Similarly in the United States, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and assorted smaller cities have

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[81]Note Michael Cross's list of over 400 riots from 1800-1850, cited in appendix form in Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (Toronto 1983).

[82]An example of the problems encountered when researchers try to quantify and categorize episodes of violence according to the boundaries of nation-states is found in Melvin Small and J. David Singer, "Patterns of International Warfare, 1816-1965," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (1970), 145-55.

been intensely examined. The same point holds true for dozens of cities in 19th-century England, Ireland, and France. Questions that should tease sound inferences from this material would concentrate on the frequency of collective episodes, the issues that provoked confrontations, the involvement of various social and ethnic groups, and the response of municipal governments to contain and eventually to prevent future disturbances. Along similar lines, urban violence could be subjected to a more definitive comparison within national boundaries. The ethnic and religious orientation of those who participated in riots, rates of growth and population densities, housing and settlement profiles, local economies, and immigration patterns must all be considered as researchers compare incidents of Canadian urban collective violence to one another.[83]

Another plausible research agenda would be to shift attention to rural comparisons, either within national boundaries or in an international framework. Here the emerging literature on frontier violence would prove useful for establishing analytical guidelines. For example, Canadian frontier studies inevitably identify manifold examples of both personal and group violence, but they invariably conclude that these incidents were neither as virulent nor as frequent as those experienced on the American frontier. Yet these investigations still shy away from overt cross-border analysis; their conclusions about comparative disorder remain suggestive at best.[84] In general, questions designed to illustrate the similarities and dissimilarities of violence in rural regions would necessarily concentrate on the factors that led to collective confrontations, the nature and extent of official attempts to restore order, and the degree to which episodes in one region affected the peace in other areas.

Finally, various topical approaches might be employed to rationalize the study of collective violence in national and international perspectives. These would assuredly parallel the theoretical themes addressed above, in that most should be located in the community's cultural and social milieus, the disruptive and protracted transition to industrial capitalism, the emergence of political parties, and the concentration of state powers. A substructure of localized studies in Canada and the United States, one that would easily support the weight of these comparative exercises, already exists. To cite only one example, election turmoil in Canada has been assessed in various regions in the mid-19th century.[85]

[83]Many of these issues are addressed in Weaver, *Crimes, Constables, and Courts.*

[84]Louis A. Knafla, "Violence on the Western Canadian Frontier: A Historical Perspective," in Jeffrey Ian Ross, ed., *Violence in Canada: Sociopolitical Perspectives* (Don Mills, ON 1995), 10-39; Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871* (Toronto 1994), 4-5; Thomas Thorner, "The Not-So-Peaceable Kingdom: Crime and Criminal Justice in Frontier Calgary," in Anthony W. Rasporich and Henry C. Klassen, eds., *Frontier Calgary: Town, City, and Region, 1875-1914* (Calgary 1975), 100-13.

[85]France Galarneau, "Election partielle du quartier-ouest de Montréal en 1832: analyse politico-sociale," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* (1979), 565-84; Gregory S. Kealey, "Orangemen and the Corporation: The Politics of Class in Toronto during the Union

The most compelling topical themes for understanding collective behaviour in a comparative perspective involve ethnicity and religious identification. These twin factors, so thoroughly intertwined in the skein of self-identification for 19th-century peoples, comprise the most powerful catalyst for collective conflict in the period under discussion. Researchers need to grapple more explicitly with international immigration patterns and with contrasting the reactions of North America's resident population to newcomers. A debate concerning the role that ethnicity played in spawning group conflict is already underway in Canada; it raises questions and kindles new ideas that will inevitably improve our understanding of immigrant-native issues, as well as of the disturbing clashes between aboriginal peoples and those of European ancestry.[86] To summarize, discrete comparative agendas such as the ones outlined above would rest on a platform of existing studies while researchers delve into copious archival evidence found in government documents, troop and militia reports, newspapers, court records, and personal accounts in the form of letters, journals, and pamphlets.

More historians should follow the signposts that have been planted by students of collective violence, many of whom are social scientists who are especially interested in contemporary patterns of personal, collective, and state violence.[87] Many scholars continue to obscure or gloss over the fact that Canada experienced social violence that matched the virulence of episodes in England, Wales, France, Ireland, and the United States in the same period. Determining either quantitatively or qualitatively the relative impact of riots is indeed daunting, especially for comparative purposes. Still, collective gatherings in Toronto, Montréal, or Saint John probably unleashed forces as tumultuous as those found in New York City's anti-abolition riots and Philadelphia's anti-black episodes.[88] If living in most large American cities in the 19th century was a dangerous proposition, as one historian observed, then certainly the same held true for British North America's larger communities.[89] The current impulse to embrace and strengthen multiculturalism, perceived in many quarters of Canada to be a laudable idea, should not be used to

of the Canadas," in Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History* (Montréal 1995), 163-208; See, "Polling Crowds and Patronage."

[86]For recent discussions of the relationship between ethnicity and violence in Canadian history, see Greer, *The Patriots and the People,* 156-9, 183; and Way, *Common Labour,* 167-73, 197-202. A 20th-century example is found in Cyril H. Levitt and William Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits* (Toronto 1987).

[87]The most recent example is Ross, ed., *Violence in Canada.*

[88]See John Runcie, "'Hunting the Nigs' in Philadelphia: The Race Riot of August 1834," *Pennsylvania History,* 39 (1972), 187-218; Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York 1970).

[89]Donald H. Akenson, *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1815-1922: An International Perspective* (Montréal 1988), 148; Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailor-towns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto 1982); Greg Marquis, "'A Machine of Oppression Under the Guise of the Law': The Saint John Police Establishment," *Acadiensis,* 16 (1986), 58-77.

obscure or suppress the study of structural inequities.[90] An enriched sense of Canada's past would emerge by exposing even its most traumatic, reprehensible, or lamentable moments.

The national self-imagery in the United States and Canada should be critically revised, if not jettisoned. In fact Canadians have warred often and warred well; perhaps not as much as their cousins, and certainly not as frequently as the British or French in the same time frame. Yet they have fought with an effectiveness and vigour that compares favourably with virtually any modern nation-state in the 20th century. Arguably, no sane observer would claim that Canadians do not enjoy relative serenity when collective violence is used as the measure, conscription riots during both World Wars and Mohawk warriors at the barricades notwithstanding. However, in the tremendous socio-economic adjustments of the 19th century, Canadian cities and even rural areas were anything but geographical pinpricks on the map of the peaceable kingdom. It is important to acknowledge the fact that recent textbooks on Canadian history have, with varying degrees of rigour, incorporated research on the country's collective violence, yet understandably they avoid couching the subject in comparative language.[91] In the United States, on the other hand, 19th-century violence might be overemphasized by scholars who are eager to make sense of the tumultuous 1960s and its aftermath. Collective violence should more accurately evoke the metaphorical image of a resilient fabric of traditional behaviour in the 19th century; it is only partially understood when conceptualized in strictly national or colonial frameworks rather than in sweeping, international patterns.

Perhaps most fundamentally this article suggests a closer inspection of the stylized ideas that have profoundly underscored historical research in both Canada and the United States. Deserving of a rigorous inspection is the "peaceable kingdom" myth, a nationalistic legacy growing out of 19th-century convictions as Canadians sought to draw important distinctions between themselves and their behemoth neighbour.[92] The idea flourishes and infuses the interpretations of Canada's most esteemed scholars. In its extreme form, the "peaceable kingdom" ideal relegates the malignancies of ethnic, cultural, or racial discrimination to the status of mere aberrations in Canadian history.[93] Even non-nationalistic scholars,

[90]Heribert Adam argued this point in "Combatting Racism," *Queen's Quarterly*, 89 (1982), 789-91; Donald H. Akenson, *Being Had: Historians, Evidence, and the Irish in North America* (Port Credit, ON 1984), 116, 141-2.

[91]J.M. Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada: A Pre-Confederation History* (Toronto 1992); David J. Bercuson, Kerry Able, Donald H. Akenson, Peter A. Baskerville, J.M. Bumsted, John G. Reid, *Colonies: Canada to 1867* (Toronto 1992); J.L. Finlay, *Pre-Confederation Canada: The Structure of Canadian History to 1867* (Scarborough, ON 1990); R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, Donald B. Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation* (Toronto 1988).

[92]Ted Robert Gurr, "Foreword," in Ross, ed., *Violence in Canada*, viii-xvii.

[93]For an example of this interpretation, see Akenson, *Small Differences*, 101.

indeed foreigners, have perpetuated this idea. For example, in his magisterial treatise on Irish immigration, Kerby Miller concluded that Canadian nativism represented but a "pale reflection" of the American version.[94] Perhaps Miller made a valid point. But we cannot possibly know that now, for the phenomenon has barely been recognized in the Canadian context, much less studied in a systematic fashion.[95]

In fairness to the guardians of the peaceable kingdom notion, the imagery suits 20th-century Canada far better than it does its 19th-century predecessor, when collective violence often erupted and Canadian communities experienced traumatic episodes that equalled in magnitude, if not frequency, various riots that rocked American cities. Thus the history of violence in North America should be considered as much for identifying points of commonality, rather than for exclusively focusing on nuances shaped by local environments and national interpretations. Similarly, the "violent society" rubric in the United States needs to be more aggressively challenged. This negative metaphor obviously has not been lionized in the national agenda, along the lines of Canada's peaceable kingdom ideal; nonetheless it has profoundly moulded historical writing since the 1960s. Twentieth-century crime rates and ubiquitous weapons in the hands of an alarmed citizenry might give credence to this imagery, yet these contemporary trends obfuscate our vision of the past.

The historiography of collective violence in 19th-century Canada and the United States suggests that useful historical concepts — on both sides of the border — have infrequently enjoyed free interplay. Admittedly, the issue slices across the border in both directions. Given the inescapable fact that the North American scales of power are tilted heavily in favour of the United States, who would dare to imagine the day when Americans enthusiastically borrow Canadian paradigms so that they might better understand their own past? The chuckle, or perhaps the gasp, from Donald Creighton is almost audible here. But why not dare to imagine it? Americans, typically insular in their world view, cultural traits, and political behaviour, rarely even consider the applicability of Canadian perspectives to their historical problems.[96] What is equally striking, on the other hand, is that Canadian historians often spurn, or perhaps are unaware, of so-called "American" historical concepts that might serve to illuminate more sharply Canada's past. Without a sensitivity to those ideas — labelled "Canadian" or "American" — and a serious

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[94]Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York 1985), 323.
[95]A path-breaking guide for changing this situation would be Palmer's *Patterns of Prejudice*.
[96]Seymour Martin Lipset, whose work has been much criticized for its thin empirical underpinning, would be an important exception. For an illustration of his argument, see *Continental Divide: Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (Washington, DC 1989).

consideration of them when they in fact might apply, the historical record on both sides of the border will be the poorer.[97]

One important caveat remains: the preceding arguments should not be interpreted as an invitation for historians to engage in an iconoclastic frenzy. We should studiously avoid shattering one myth — the peaceable kingdom ideal, for example — only to replace it with another hastily-constructed concept. When Terry Chapman considered the frequency of crime in Canada's past, he issued a cautionary note that aptly applies to this essay's themes:

> While it is readily apparent even by a cursory glance through newspapers, periodicals and government publications that 19th-century Canada had its share of rapes, murders, assaults, burglaries, thefts, riots and strikes, the historian should not use this information to reconstruct a society which was totally lawless and violent. This is just as disheartening and dangerous as the popular interpretation that has come down to us.[98]

Historians would do well to retain Chapman's point as they consider violence in a North American framework.

Underscoring the applicability of non-Canadian theories of violence to Canadian history is the fundamental clash of national mythologies. On the one hand the melting pot rests on the American stove, fuelled in part by abundant episodes of violence and social unrest. Conversely, the Canadian mosaic — multiculturalism — projects a more sanguine approach. Formidable challenges loom, for we need to know more about the source of the mosaic ideal, just as we do the equally compelling notion of the peaceable kingdom, an idea that thoroughly infuses the country's literature and history. Canadian and American historians should enthusiastically embrace, without fear of cultural repression or irrelevancy, ideas from each other's past. Kenneth McNaught's almost quarter-century old call for more comparative work still rings with clarity: "Any reassessment of the role of violence in Canadian history might well start by considering some of the ways in which our experience has been similar to the experience both of Europe and the United States — rather than by emphasizing only the apparent differences."[99] Once the intellectual blinders have been completely removed and historians have telescoped their assessments beyond boundaries, then we will know with more certainty whether an impressive frequency of collective violence, previously thought to be an

[97]An articulate case for the value of comparative study is found in Robin W. Winks, *The Relevance of Canadian History: U.S. and Imperial Perspectives* (Toronto 1979). Also see Béatrice Craig's sensible plea for North Americans to break free of nationalistic molds when they consider historical problems: "Pour une approche comparative de l'étude des sociétés rurales nord-américaines," *Histoire sociale-Social History*, 23 (1990), 249-70.
[98]Terry Chapman, "The Measurement of Crime in Nineteenth-Century Canada; Some Methodological and Philosophical Problems," in Louis A. Knafla, ed., *Crime and Criminal Justice in Europe and Canada* (Waterloo 1981), 147.
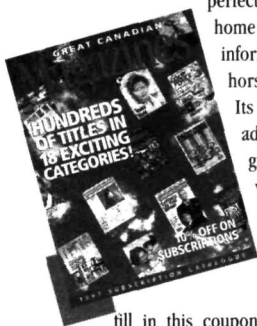[99]McNaught, "Violence in Canadian History," 69.

especially American phenomenon in the 19th century, might be more accurately located in a North American, or better still, North Atlantic context.

A version of this article was delivered to the Canadian Historical Association meetings at the University of Calgary in June 1994. The author thanks Allan Greer and three anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions and criticisms.