Of Balance Wheels and Bodies Politic:
Arthur Lower and the Liberal Vision of Canadian History[1]

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Abstract

Arthur Lower was one of the most prominent historians of Canada in the middle of the twentieth century. Throughout his illustrious career, he presented a narrative of Canadian history that emphasized evolution, growth, and progress, despite the appearance of several obstacles and setbacks in the general plot. But what underlying assumptions structured the manner in which he fashioned the narrative? This paper challenges the predominant understandings of Canadian liberal historiography by dissecting the thought of one of its most prominent spokespersons. At its core, his vision of Canada reflected a set of deterministic interpretations of social and political change. For Lower, history unfolded according to a series of natural laws and forces that acted upon the body politic; deviation from these inevitably led to social ruin. The following pages trace the implications of this theoretical framework upon the manner in which Lower conceived of the Canadian past.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, English Canadian historians collectively sought to re-frame Canadian national identity and adapt it to the altered social, political, and diplomatic relationships in which the young country was enmeshed. Arthur Lower, one of the most prominent among this cohort, positioned contemporary Canada at a crossroads. He contended that the vision of Canada as a British country had lost its appeal and relevance. Instead, Lower believed the time had come for his compatriots to unite under the common tent of a new Canadian nationality — the independent, liberal, dynamic, and firmly rooted in the terrain of northern North America. However, he himself surmised that, even in 1948, this notion of "a Canadian community, in control of its own life, internal and external, and making its own decisions in an absolutely independent way, has not as yet taken hold of more than a few thousand people in this country."[2]

While Lower presented bold, innovative observations about Canadian political life and the national community, these often reflected a deterministic, conservative logic. Nowhere is this tension more evident than in the metaphors he employed in his analyses. In many instances, he described the body politic in organic terms, while in others he employed mechanistic metaphors

[2] Arthur Lower, "Canada in the New, Non-British World," *International Journal* 3, no. 3 (1948): 208.

of the radical tradition to defend liberalism and a social contract theory of the state. For Lower, history unfolded according to a series of natural laws and forces that acted upon the body politic. In particular, his search for the intellectual and moral roots of liberalism reflected an attempt to draw attention to the guiding presence of this spirit in the social system. If the new Canada was to remain prosperous and peaceful, its citizens had to govern themselves according to these laws, or this liberal spirit. Deviation inevitably led to discord and decay. For this reason, Lower often expressed a concern for balance in social and political affairs. Although he believed it possible and occasionally beneficial to reform society and the economy through government intervention, the purpose of engaging in such measures was merely to keep society in working order. Hence the great contradiction in his scholarship: although a champion of free will, his theoretical framework bound individuals to a largely unalterable social order.

Scholarship in Canadian liberalism has transformed rapidly in the past two decades. Earlier studies, particularly those of S.E.D. Shortt, A.B. McKillop, Ramsay Cook, and Barry Ferguson, examine the intellectual and philosophical frameworks of prominent English Canadian intellectuals in the late Victorian era and the first decades of the twentieth century. Collectively, they trace the means by which a generation of academics and intellectuals reacted to the vast transformation of Canada from a primarily rural, agrarian society to an urban, industrial nation-state. The protagonists of these studies responded to the transformations wrought by modernity by accommodating liberal and reformist thought within the existing moral and intellectual framework.[3] In his analysis of Lower, Carl Berger follows much the same pattern, situating his scholarship within the context of the dominant intellectual trends and social forces at play in mid-twentieth century Canadian life.[4]

In 2000, historian Ian McKay proposed an alternative analytic strategy for describing the evolution of liberalism in Canada. His "liberal order framework" considers the Canadian past as a "historically specific project of rule," one which "encourages and seeks to extend across time and space a belief in the epistemological and ontological primacy of the category 'individual'."

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[3] Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Barry Ferguson, *Remaking Liberalism: The Intellectual Legacy of Adam Shortt, O. D. Skelton, W. C. Clark, and W. A. Mackintosh, 1890-1925* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); A. B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); S. E. D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal: Six Canadian Intellectuals and their Convictions in an Age of Transition, 1890-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

[4] The historiography regarding Lower consists mostly of a catalogue of his intellectual influences and research interests. Each variously cites as formative influences on his academic career his childhood home, his Methodist upbringing, his liberal philosophy, and his early experiences as a fire ranger in Northern Ontario and sailor in the British Royal Navy. For a more complete treatment of Lower and the influences in his academic work, see Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing, 1900-1970* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 112-136; Kristi Corlett, "A Dream of Homogeneity: Arthur Lower's National Vision and its Relationship to Immigrants and Immigration in Canada, 1920-1946" (MA diss., Queen's University, 2009); W. H. Heick, "The Character and Spirit of an Age: A Study of the Thought of Arthur R. M. Lower," in Roger Graham and W. H. Heick, ed., *His Own Man: Essays in Honour of Arthur Reginald Marsden Lower* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1974); and Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

Such a reading allows for a more flexible definition of liberalism, treating it as a shifting and mutable collection of principles that have historically assumed many forms.[5]

This article examines Lower in accordance with the new currents of thought regarding Canadian liberalism. Due to constraints of space, it is ultimately confined to a consideration of some of the philosophical roots of Lower's thought and their manifestation in his academic and popular work. The first section analyses his spirited defence of liberal values and traces the logic implicit in his musings on political theory. The second section examines the manner in which Lower portrayed the relationship between Canada, Britain, and the United States; Canadian national identity; and the place of the immigrant in a settler society, demonstrating the ways in which this philosophy shaped his various conclusions regarding the national community and its ideal state.

The Philosophical Roots of the Liberal Spirit

Arthur Reginald Marsden Lower (1889-1988) was born into a family of English immigrants in Barrie, Ontario. According to Berger, the familial environment in their home was far from ideal. Lower once remarked that his parents never displayed much happiness in their relationship. Furthermore, Lower believed that the wide gulf between himself, a first-generation Canadian, and his immigrant father, whom he referred to as a life-long British exile, only exacerbated domestic tensions. He concluded that such friction was typical of the relationship between immigrants and their children.[6] Yet the rift only continued to broaden as Lower pursued his education. Originally enrolled at the University of Toronto in 1909 to study education, he also took courses in English and history. After serving as an officer in the British Navy from 1916 to 1918, he accepted a position at the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa before pursuing a PhD in history at Harvard.[7] Upon his return to Canada, he taught history at Wesley College in Winnipeg between 1929-1947, and served as Chair of the Department of History at United College, Winnipeg, before accepting a post as Professor of History at Queen's University which he held from 1947 until his retirement twelve years later. During his lengthy career, Lower wrote or provided significant contributions to eleven monographs and published dozens of journal articles, and also chaired the Canadian Historical Society in 1943 and the Royal Society of Canada from 1961 to 1963.[8]

The cohort of historians to which Lower belonged was trained by a generation of academics grappling with questions of social reform. Their confidence in the spiritual absolutes of the nineteenth century was rapidly eroding by the dawn of the twentieth century, in the face of Darwinian sociology, empirical science, and higher criticism. Canadian intellectuals responded by turning to British tradition as a source of a moral regeneration which they believed would halt the decline of conventional values, especially those associated with individual responsibility. In the process, they drew upon idealistic influences as a means of designing and preserving "a broad

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[5] Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2000): 621-626.

[6] Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 113.

[7] Ibid., 113, 116.

[8] Arthur Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967), 159-162, 272, 282.

moral code" in Canada "that would constitute the core of a way of life reconciling belief and inquiry, tradition and innovation, concern and freedom."[9] Religion was often at the centre of such moral codes. In an attempt to trace the process by which English Canada secularized, Ramsay Cook notes that liberal Protestants concerned with the displacements and injustices of the new industrial economy sought to salvage society and the faith by transforming Christianity into a social religion. They believed that Christianity "was not separate from modern culture but rather should be adapted to it."[10]

Christianity and the British connection both figured prominently in the brand of liberalism that Lower espoused, yet the greatest challenge in retracing the logic behind his particular version is that he never provided a consistent definition of the term. Liberalism was variously "the objective of any just society rooted in freedom"; a "late phase of Christianity" representing "a combination of mellow wisdom and tolerant, humanitarian attitudes"; "*the dynamic of a free society*"; and even "*the search for a just society*."[11] Here liberalism, "just society," tolerance, and freedom lack clarity. Rather, Lower habitually preferred to describe liberalism in a poetic manner, occasionally opting to give his theoretical concepts a modicum of concreteness at other points in his analyses. Nevertheless, the definitions in this brief sample commonly suggest that liberalism is a philosophy, a creed or collection of values, the discovery of which involves a search, or movement towards a particular goal.

Crucially, Lower believed that Christianity and liberalism were inseparable from one another.[12] He concluded that the purpose of both liberalism and Christianity was "to maintain man's faith in himself." Lower then reasoned that this faith in "man" was very similar to "faith in God," since both derived from a "faith in the scheme of things." Broadly, liberalism represented "that principle or principles, that body of belief, reason and usage, which reinforces man's faith in himself and strengthens his conviction in the actions which he calls 'right' are in some sense in harmony with the eternal scheme of things (which he may or may not call God)."[13] Here, Christianity — and by extension, liberalism — bore a resemblance to Pantheism, or the conviction that the universe was an expression of the Divine, and that belief in a creator god was therefore unnecessary. The emphasis on a "scheme of things" that ordered the universe was also reminiscent of the Hobbesian view of the world, in which a series of laws, discernible through reason, operate within nature and society.[14] Most importantly, the identification of liberalism with Christianity turned the former into an article of faith, thereby rendering its core tenets unverifiable.

Although this "scheme of things" remained undefined, its shape becomes apparent under further analysis. One recurring theme in his work is that of a tension between individualism and collectivism through the ages. In the Anglo-American case, he cited the "dissonant combination

[9] McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, ix, 229; S. E. D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal*, 4, 37.

[10] Cook, *The Regenerators*, 4-5, 228-229.

[11] Arthur Lower, "Liberalism, its Nature and Prospects," *Ontario Educational Association: Annual Report and Proceedings, 1948*, 73, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 14, file 28; Arthur Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1954), 24, 189. (emphasis in original)

[12] Arthur Lower, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1957), 552.

[13] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 23-24.

[14] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. A. P. Martinich (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2002), 98.

of Christian precept," the "injunction to love our neighbours as ourselves" and "selfish insistence on individual rights" as *the* formative dynamics of society.[15] But on closer examination, this dualistic opposition is a false dichotomy. Although the Christian ethic reflects an altruistic, collectivist spirit, Lower believed that it derives its legitimacy from the supremacy of rational individuals, who are ultimately ends in themselves. According to Lower, the notion of the unique, individual human being provided the very foundation of Western civilization. He traced the origins of this concept to the Scholastics, and to Thomas Aquinas in particular, fusing Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology. To these medieval theorists, the uniqueness of the human being over all other life forms derived especially from the gift of reason.[16] Evidently, the primacy of the individual lay at the base of the Christian ethic, and by extension, Western civilization.

Another complication arises when one considers the relevance of this gift of reason. Much like the Deists, Lower suggested in the conclusion to *This Most Famous Stream* that the purpose of this divine gift was to uncover the logical process of history, or an order whose application yields tangible benefits to humanity. But such reason is useless unless the individual acquires a measure of freedom, or the ability to consider a series of alternatives and choose a particular course of action.[17] Herein lies the contradiction. Lower believed in free will,[18] acknowledging that the individual retains the option of rejecting the Christian ethic and the philosophy from which liberalism acquires its legitimacy. But since liberalism and the Christian ethic — and by extension Western civilization — necessarily embody the very ordering principle of the universe, the rejection of these values entails the destruction of society and the rights and freedoms of the individual. Ultimately, humankind was realistically free only to live according to a given set of "logical processes" derived from the greater "scheme of things."

These logical processes provided a necessary check on human nature, as Lower considered "natural man" to be egotistical and selfish.[19] He argued that most of the history of Western civilization actually represented the prevention "of nature from taking its course," suggesting that the lack of individual restraint characteristic of the *laissez-faire* creed ultimately "leads to the slave society."[20] Paradoxically, Lower concluded that the means of combating this "nature" was to follow the logical "scheme of things," itself an expression of the very "nature" of which "civilization" was the embodiment. In describing this civilization, Lower cited Aristotle, arguing that "man is a political animal" and that "the group supports the individual, expands him," and

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[15] The mechanics of this distinction appear in other works in his bibliography. In 1938, Lower argued that the tension between two forces in British history — here labelled "individualism" and "humanitarianism" — had produced several contradictions in its past, out of which arose "the motive power for great accomplishments." In the post-war period, Lower replaced "humanitarianism" with "collectivism," likely reflecting predominant anxieties over Soviet Communism. Arthur Lower, "The Product of Revolutions: Basic Factors in English History," *Annual Report of the Canadian Historical Association* (1938): 32, 39; Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 24, 183.

[16] Ibid., 23, 25-26.

[17] Ibid., 26, 183.

[18] Nevertheless, he believed that structural constraints inhibited its exercise and limited the ability of individuals to govern their lives by reason. Arthur Lower, "Determinism in Politics," *Canadian Historical Review* 27, no. 3 (1946): 247-248.

[19] Lower followed Thomas Hobbes in this conclusion, arguing that since "the life of man is nasty, brutish and short," individuals "come together and found a civil society, subject to law." Lower, "Liberalism, its Nature and Prospects," 75.

[20] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 188-189.

"enables him to transcend himself." The resulting community was multi-layered, including "everything from the family to the universal empire or universal Church," all without "submerging the individual in the process."[21] Many modern organicists also conceive of society as a hierarchical series of social allegiances.[22] For example, Nancy Christie notes that an influential group of post-war Canadian intellectuals, among whom she names Lower, envisioned society in terms of a hierarchical framework. The individual integrated into society through the family and by living according to a "Christian 'way of life'," fostering a consensualism which would deflate ethnic and class strife in the national community.[23] In this model, individuals form the centrepiece of society and must enter into community and collaborate so as to realize their potential. Yet at the core of the organic model is an acknowledgement that the sum is greater than its parts, an observation inimical to social models that defend the primacy of the individual.[24]

Lower frequently warned against an excessive embrace of such collectivism, just as he did of individualism, albeit without providing a precise indicator of where exactly the balance lay between the two. Instead, he relied on the concepts of tolerance and compromise to do so, arguing that the protection of liberty depended upon the dispersal of power among as many individuals as possible. For this reason, Lower often focused upon various checks and balances — especially between the interests of the individual and those of the community — in his works regarding English legal tradition and its influence on liberal society. For instance, he presented the settlements reached in the multiple conflicts between the King and the barons of Norman England as compromises that not only re-affirmed the existing balance of power, but also provided the basis upon which the rights of subjects eventually became universal.[25]

These compromises, values, and rights became embodied in institutions such as parliaments and bills of rights. Although they emerged as the result of "accident and design" in the Anglo-American world, these institutions not only came to embody the Christian ethic, but also supported the individual in adhering to it. Lower insisted that "institutions reflect the genius of a civilization," their "embodied experience," the accumulation and refinement of practice, and therefore the product of social progress. They provided the reinforcements and constraints that ultimately prevented the destruction of the "free form of government" in times of crisis, maintaining the whole in balance.[26] This narrative represents an organic evolution, one in which society develops gradually according to a set of natural laws within the confines of which it must remain. Institutions both embodied these laws and maintained society in alignment with them.

While completing his PhD at Harvard, Lower studied a great deal of British history, and it was likely here that he adopted the narrative of the organically-developing English constitution

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[21] Ibid., 14, 26-27.

[22] In particular, see G. R. G. Mure, "The Organic State," *Philosophy* 24, no. 90 (1949): 205, 207-208.

[23] Nancy Christie, "'Look out for Leviathan:' The Search for a Conservative Modernist Consensus," in Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie, eds. *Cultures of Citizenship in Post-War Canada, 1940-1955* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 72; Lower, "Liberalism, its Nature and Prospects," 74.

[24] Phillip Goggans acknowledges that the welfare of the state is more important than that of its components in defending organic theory, while still attempting to reconcile society and the individual in his work. Phillip Goggans, "Political Freedom and Organic Theories of the State," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 38 (2004): 535-537.

[25] Arthur Lower, letter to the Senate Committee on Human Rights, 1950, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 9, file 41; Lower, "Liberalism, its Nature and Prospects," 68-75.

[26] Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 532; Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 8-9, 11-12, 183.

as his own. Among other subjects, he studied seventeenth-century English history under his supervisor, Wilbur C. Abbott, as well as the history of medieval England and political thought under C.H. McIlwain.[27] The latter in particular taught and wrote English constitutional history along the lines of the organic narrative.[28] He also encountered the "frontier thesis" while studying under Frederick Merck, who had been a student of its author, Frederick Jackson Turner.[29] Lower later adapted it to a Canadian context, noting the similarity of conditions in both New England and New France before the Conquest.[30]

In addition, a great deal of his Canadian historical work fits within the "liberal" mould of history as described by Hayden White.[31] In *Colony to Nation*, one of his most renowned works, he presented the various milestones in Canadian history as "fine-tunings"[32] to the *status quo*. True to form, Lower characterized the *Quebec Act, 1774*, the adoption of Responsible Government, and Confederation as compromises that, although not resulting in any great resolution to major crises, sufficiently surmounted the impasses of the day and allowed political life to resume. In addition, his portrayal of Canada at a crossroads corresponds well with the "liberal" pattern of history. Although he believed that the establishment of a cohesive Canadian nation was an achievable goal, its ultimate realization lay far ahead in the future and was far from certain. Nation-building was a long journey of collective discovery that no law or fiat was capable of conjuring into being.[33]

The core ideas that undergird this concept of liberalism reflect the instability of the era in which Lower rose to prominence as a historian, in addition to the academic training he received. In *My First Seventy-five Years*, Lower acknowledged his debt to Adam Shortt, who gave him significant direction as he researched his MA thesis and under whom he worked at the Public Archives of Canada from 1919 to 1925. Not only did Shortt guide him towards the study of economic history in the early years of his career, but he also imparted Lower with a "hard-headed, down-to-earth common sense (applied to historical interpretation as well as to current affairs)."[34]

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[27] Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years*, 151, 153.

[28] McIlwain taught his class in medieval English history in part by referring to *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History* by William Stubbs, the introduction to which describes the development of English legal institutions along organic lines. Decades later, Lower still referred to both McIlwain and Stubbs, among others, as experts on *Magna Carta* and English constitutional history. Arthur Lower, draft letter to the Attorneys-General of the provinces of Canada, 1954, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 8, file 15; Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years*, 153; C.H. McIlwain, *The High Court of Parliament and its Supremacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1910); C.H. McIlwain, *Constitutionalism: Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940); William Stubbs, ed., *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1881).

[29] Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years*, 152-153.

[30] Lower concluded that New France fell in the middle of a spectrum between freedom and authoritarianism, According to his reasoning, the hardships of life along the St. Lawrence and the ever-present option of leaving the community and settling further inland acted as a check upon the weakly entrenched political institutions of New France. Arthur Lower, "The Origins of Democracy in Canada," *Annual Report of the Canadian Historical Association* (1930): 66.

[31] White borrows his ideological classifications largely from those of Karl Mannheim in his "Prospects of Scientific Politics." Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 22-29.

[32] In this context, the phrase "fine-tuning" comes from White. White, *Metahistory*, 24.

[33] See Lower, *Colony to Nation*.

[34] Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years*, 129-130; Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 116.

Like Lower, Shortt and his generation of reform liberals rejected pre-determined blueprints for society and sought a more equitable distribution of the fruits of the existing market economy.[35]

Barry Ferguson writes that Shortt believed that the work of the surgeon best exemplified the role of the social scientist. "Just as 'the surgeon's injecting needle [introduced] into the proper tissues' of the body the means for recovery, so too would the advice of social scientists enter the body politic and 'diffuse itself by way of the proper channels throughout the whole system'."[36] The surgeon, like the social scientist, operates in a reactive capacity to treat specific ailments. Just as surgeons cannot operate to re-arrange the organs and limbs of their patients, social scientists could not use the power of the state to re-order society according to their own master plans. In this line of thought, Shortt echoed the unique blend of empiricism and organicist idealism dominant in contemporary Canadian intellectual circles.[37] Like his mentor, Lower believed that the only solution to social ills was the pragmatic application of reason to isolated and manageable tasks. The alternative — a "blueprint" society — required a collective approach, one enforced from above that inevitably smothered individual freedom.[38]

This attitude explains his flirtation with the socialist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and its politics. Throughout his career, Lower displayed a conflicted relationship with the party. At times, he described it and its leaders in flattering terms, calling "the indomitable idealist" J. S. Woodsworth "a kind of political saint."[39] Lower even thought of it as a potential ally of the Liberal Party. But to him, the CCF was "too doctrinaire." Its appetite for "cure-all" remedies to social problems and its "splendid blueprint" for economic planning clashed with his belief that society must grope its way towards solutions based on the situation at hand.[40] Thus, Lower sided with the Liberals. On the other end of the spectrum, Lower attempted to distance capitalist economics from liberal theory, even as Cold War tensions mounted in 1948. Specifically, he was unable to fit capitalism "into the conventional economic definitions which associate it with individualism, and both it and individualism with liberalism," as it represented "the old human instinct for power and pelf, which can be associated with any type of organization of society whatsoever."[41] Lower concluded that *laissez-faire* capitalism in particular was the expression of a destructive individualism which invariably led to the domination of the many by the few.[42] Moreover, it was a manifestation of some deeper human nature, which Lower believed savage and base. Although the Christian ethic — itself a reflection of a deeper natural order — was to serve as the tempering force to this excessive, instinctual individualism, it ultimately upheld the primacy of the individual.

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[35] James Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6.

[36] Adam Shortt, "Aims of the Association," *Proceedings and Papers,* Canadian Political Science Association 1 (1913): 10; in Ferguson, *Remaking Liberalism*, 28.

[37] S. E. D. Shortt notes that the thought of Adam Shortt reflected a fusion of the idealism of John Watson and Edward Caird with the empiricism of John Stewart Mill. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, 206; S. E. D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal*, 4, 141-142.

[38] Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years*, 139; Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 190.

[39] Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 513.

[40] Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years*, 177-178.

[41] Lower, "Liberalism, its Nature and Prospects," 73.

[42] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 188-189.

Lower exhibited an increasing concern with excess and temperance in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. While the basic elements of his brand of liberalism — individualism, the emphasis on negative rights, the evolving nature of the liberal constitution, and *ad hoc* interventionism — appear consistently throughout his work over the years, his preoccupation with the subject intensified at this time. A glance at the list of titles that Lower published over the span of his career reveals a dramatic increase in the number that deal specifically with themes of freedom, liberalism, and democracy after 1945. Moreover, the tone in which he treated such themes changed drastically after the Second World War, shifting from a dry, scholarly analysis of an imperfect system[43] to a passionate call to rally around ancient rights and liberties. The rise of totalitarianism and the outbreak of the Second World War worried him tremendously and shook his faith in liberalism. As he confided to fellow historian James Shotwell in 1938, civilization was already in the grips of a "second world war," in which "the fate of western civilization" hung in the balance.[44] In a similar vein, Christie explains the same shift by situating Lower and other intellectuals within a broader reaction to the challenges posed to the social order by war and Depression. Specifically, these social conservatives feared that the anticipated interventionist state would mark the end of liberal democracy by diminishing the role of the family and the church in society. To these intellectuals, a mass democracy based on majority rule and a welfare state guided by notions of positive rights ultimately stifled individual liberty.[45]

Certainly, Lower expressed a number of conservative assumptions in his scholarship. While not a Tory like Donald Creighton, nor a socialist-turned-liberal-continentalist like Frank Underhill, his framework bore a number of similarities to that of Harold Innis. Both expressed distaste for extensive state control of the economy, reflecting their common grounding in a traditional individualism.[46] But for Lower, liberalism was the "social balance wheel" that sought "the widest range of benefits to all, but not committing itself to any pre-conceived theory of society: at one time it is against unbridled individualism and at another against repressive collectivism. Liberalism . . . is of the spirit. It is human decency."[47] These contradictory depictions of liberalism as both a machine and a spiritual force are comprehensible if one considers that machines function according to certain laws of physics. Many, such as Hobbes, depicted these laws as the manifestation of a greater cosmic order or spirit that drove the universe. This "balance wheel," which was itself the product of a social evolution according to some greater force, operated on society to refine it and deliver a more equitable distribution of material and spiritual benefits.

In this respect, Lower especially resembled Herbert Spencer, who argued that society developed organically, according to a set of natural laws, into an ever-more sophisticated,

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[43] In "Democracy and Parliament," Lower linked democracy to autocratic rule, concluding that in its pure form, it contains no bulwarks against the will of the majority. As all citizens are equal and all institutions of privilege are dissolved, there exist no barriers between the government and the masses. One ultimately dominates the other. Nevertheless, the Canadian parliament was a "device for getting the business of the nation done," and a "very old" and "dependable" machine. Arthur Lower, "Democracy and Parliament," *Dalhousie Review* 14, no. 1 (1934): 11, 15.

[44] Arthur Lower to James Shotwell, April 10, 1938, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 1, file 10.

[45] Christie, "'Look out for Leviathan'," 63-64.

[46] Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 85, 101.

[47] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 192.

complex, and balanced system.[48] Moreover, this particular conception of the social structure echoed that of Adam Shortt, who himself had trained under both John Watson and Edward Caird, two key figures in the construction of an idealist philosophy tailored to the "Anglo-Canadian moral imperative." Watson, along with other contemporary intellectuals such as Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, conceived of society as an evolving organism. Caird believed that "individual freedom and duty to the collectivity were reconciled in the necessity of coming to know and act in accord with the eternal spirit of reason."[49] But if society developed as a result of the application of natural laws to the social setting, then deviation from this "scheme of things" brought the entire structure down. According to Lower, this was exactly what happened in Revolutionary France and the Soviet Union. Each broke with its legal "tradition" or "genius" and attempted to rewrite its constitution so as to expand the rights of the citizen.[50] The result, however, was chaos, destruction, and tyranny; the machine ceased to function.[51] History was therefore the chronicle of those who either swam along or against the currents of "this most famous stream."[52]

"A Son Coming to Manhood": Lower and the Vision of a Canadian Community

Such patterns of thought weighed heavily upon his historical research relating to Canadian history. Especially in the 1930s, Lower, along with other academics such as Innis and Underhill, began to experiment with more deterministic interpretations of history, focusing on the economic structures and geographic constraints that had shaped the development of the modern Canadian nation-state. In the article "Democracy and Parliament," Lower assessed the development of the parliamentary system of government as it had evolved in British North America. He despairingly concluded that "the truth, however unpalatable it may be, is that political power will always reside in the hands of the few, and generally it will reside in the same hands as does economic power."[53] When historian William L. Grant challenged this position, Lower nonetheless insisted that structural constraints usually prevented the opinions of the average citizen from reaching parliamentarians. Moreover, he reasoned that their social position effectively barred them from reaching the upper echelons of the political system. As a result, it proved "almost impossible for

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[48] David Wiltshire, in his analysis of the organic social philosophy of Herbert Spencer, observes a similar pattern in the work of the nineteenth-century scholar. David Wiltshire, *The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 235-242.

[49] McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence* , 206; S. E. D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal*, 4, 141-142.

[50] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 6.

[51] Curiously, Lower unflinchingly integrated moments in which the British constitutional framework ceased to function into the greater narrative of its evolution. In fact, he actually represented the English Civil War and its corresponding revolutionary philosophy as pivotal developments in the evolution of liberal democracy. The upheavals of the seventeenth century, in fact, represented "the cradle of liberty." Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 76, 155; Lower, "The Product of Revolutions," 31.

[52] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, x.

[53] Lower, "Democracy and Parliament," 13-14.

a young man to come to the front and places in Parliament continue to go to grey beards who either have private means or who have 'earned' a seat by years of faithful service to the party."[54]

In *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest*, Lower depicted the development of the lumber trade in Canada as a consequence of the economic forces and geographic structures at play in the wider world of the nineteenth century. The structure of the monograph also implicitly reflects a deterministic orientation. The first three chapters examine North American geography, transportation technology, and the various species of tree that were suitable for harvest, while the fourth and fifth chapters consider the evolution of industrial techniques in the timber trade. Only much later does Lower delve into the particular historical details of the subject and fashion them into narrative form.[55]

Despite his adoption of a materialistic determinism, Lower nonetheless qualified it with a measure of idealism as a means of attempting to provide individuals with a measure of discretionary space within which they might exercise free will. Even before his turn towards idealism after the Second World War, Lower wrote in the introduction to a sourcebook on economic history that material forces indeed accounted "indirectly for the present dominion in rough outline." But these alone failed to explain how such a heterogeneous country managed to survive and flourish in spite of the inherent contradictions of its history. Consequently, he remarked that in interpreting the Canadian past, "account must always be taken of both sides of the shield, the one side environment, the other, what it may be called, for want of a better designation, spiritual forces."[56]

A deterministic conception of social and historical change also subtly manifested itself in much of his writing on the Canadian constitutional framework. For instance, Lower believed that the federal system in Canada played a necessary role in defending the liberal way of life, as it provided "the means of balance and elasticity" necessary for the functioning of a complex society.[57] Although the version of federalism that Lower championed was hardly balanced (it centralized most power in Ottawa), it nevertheless echoed the organicist conception of the state. The creation of a powerful federal government held great appeal to interventionist liberals such as Lower because it allowed for rapid, direct, and universal action on behalf of every Canadian, negating the prospect of negotiating first with nine provinces, heterogeneous in ambitions and interests. Along with J.B. Coyne and Dr. Ronald Oliver MacFarlane, he argued in 1937 that:

> Essential to national unity, or in formal language, to the organic view of the
> state, are found to be certain basic factors. These factors consist in individual
> rights which the national of Canada must have in common with others
> throughout the Dominion if he is to be really a citizen of Canada: they embrace

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[54] W. L. Grant to Arthur Lower, April 17, 1934, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 1, file 6; Arthur Lower to W. L. Grant, April 29, 1934, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 1, file 6.

[55] Arthur Lower, *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest: A History of the Lumber Trade Between Canada and the United States* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1938), xxii.

[56] Harold Innis and Arthur Lower, eds., *Select Documents in Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1933), 7-8.

[57] Arthur Lower, "Some Reflections on a Bill of Rights," *The Fortnightly Law Journal* 16, no. 15 (1947): 235; see also Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 159-168.

a minimum of Canadian-wide CIVIL RIGHTS over which it is improper for
any province to exercise control.[58]

They insisted that the provinces "cease to regard themselves as organic unities apart from, and almost outside the structure of which they are in fact portions: they must remember that they are limbs of a living body."[59] Only through maintaining the integrity of the organism could the federation function properly and thereby guarantee those civil liberties at the core of his version of liberalism. By creating an imbalance of power in favour of the provinces, the federal government allowed the premiers — William Aberhart of Alberta and Maurice Duplessis of Quebec in particular — to violate basic civil liberties.[60] The provinces were merely organs and not organisms in their own right, because he concluded that they lacked the sovereign authority of the Crown, without whose consent they could not enter into union in the first place.[61]

In many of his works, Lower displayed an apparently conflicted attitude regarding the complex relationship between Canada and Britain. While he frequently urged his fellow Canadians, especially those of British descent, to abandon their old attachment to the Empire and take part in the development of new, home-grown loyalties, he simultaneously emphasized the British origins of Canadian institutions. Although Canadians derived their political system and laws from Great Britain, they employed this legal framework independently. He added that "the Queen of Canada stands for the idea of continuity," that she symbolizes ancient traditions, and that "Canadians, preferring to have it so, take all public action in the name of the Queen."[62] To Lower, the Crown and other British political institutions represented that crucial link with the past which rendered the contemporary order legitimate; they represented the safeguards which maintained the Canadian culture of freedom. Consequently, the abandonment or total renovation of these institutions remained inconceivable. Loud echoes of the British legacy resounded within the vision of Canada that Lower promoted.

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[58] Arthur Lower, J.B. Coyne, and R.O. MacFarlane, Brief Presented to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, December 8, 1937, 26, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 12, file 41 (emphasis in original).

[59] Lower, Coyne, and MacFarlane, Brief Presented to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, 27. Yet Lower had no problem whatsoever with dicing the limbs. In "What This Country Needs Is 10 New Provinces," he advocated the division of the existing entities into smaller political units so as to curb their influence and make them more rational communities of a local nature. Arthur Lower, "What This Country Needs Is 10 New Provinces," *MacLean's*, October 15, 1948, 7, 77-79.

[60] See Lower, Coyne, and MacFarlane, Brief Presented to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations; Lower, *My First Seventy-five Years,* 212.

[61] In *Colony to Nation*, the matter of sovereignty receives a detailed treatment. Lower wrote that it made no sense to argue that the provinces created Canada, and that the federal government should therefore subordinate itself to their will, as in the American federation. At one point, he even referred to the compact theory of Confederation as "heretical." Since Westminster and the Crown were the ultimate sources of power in the British Empire, he believed that Confederation could not possibly be considered a simple treaty between provinces, for each would have to be sovereign in order to conclude such an agreement and render it binding. But later in the same piece, he remarked that Saskatchewan and Alberta were "children" of the Canadian "sovereign will," and "not in any sense its parents," since the federal parliament created both by statute in 1905. Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 328, 428.

[62] Arthur Lower, "The Crown in Canada," *Canada National Magazine*, June 1953, 13.

Yet Britain was not the only country whose influence weighed heavily upon Canada. Unlike Innis, whose economic determinism led him to emphasize the British connection as formative of Canadian national character,[63] the emphasis on those same structures led Lower to explore the north-south axis along which most Canadian trade had historically run. The political, and especially economic, relationship with the United States exerted a "natural" pull upon Canada. Lower concluded that demand from Britain, and later from an industrializing and urbanizing United States, provided the impetus for the expansion of logging in Canada. More importantly, the timber trade contributed to the "imbalance" in Canadian federalism, since the "heavy, bulky character of lumber stressed regionalism and emphasized the power of the provinces in the federal structure."[64] Here, American economic forces subtly and indirectly shaped the development of the Canadian constitutional framework.

Although he sometimes struck a tone of superiority when writing about the United States,[65] Lower often compared it favourably with Canada, referring to it variously as the "second motherland," "stepmotherland," "teacher," and spouse of the Dominion.[66] He also depicted the relationship between Britain, the United States, and Canada in other familial terms. In *Colony to Nation*, he commented on the typical jealousy and fear that Canadians harboured for Americans, referring to the Republic as the "elder brother" who, although "too successful," was nevertheless "estranged" from the family.[67] Lower reckoned that many Canadians viewed the American Revolution with sadness because it meant "for the Canadian of English speech the breaking up of the family in which he was born, and the departure of the eldest son, loudly slamming the door behind him."[68]

This "family," entailing overlapping and occasionally incestuous roles, was less than perfect. In accordance with his views on liberalism, Lower remained critical of certain aspects of American life, especially of what he perceived to be its excessive individualism. He associated this individualism with social ills he thought endemic to American society — divorce, feminism, alcohol abuse, and a high murder rate.[69] Lower believed that in Canada, this individualism

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[63] Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 401.

[64] Lower, *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest*, xvi-xvii.

[65] For one such example, see Arthur Lower, "As We Appear to our Neighbor," *The Quarterly Journal of Inter-American Relations* 1, no. 3 (1939): 104-111.

[66] Arthur Lower, draft of "As We Appear to our Neighbor," Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 13, file 1; Arthur Lower, "Canada and the Americas," *Dalhousie Review* 17, no. 1 (1937): 17-21.

[67] Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 441.

[68] Lower, "The American Revolution as It Appears from a Canadian Point of View," *University Extension Broadcast* Madison, Wisconsin, February 19, 1956, transcript, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 20, file 174.

[69] Lower disapproved of feminism, a creed he associated with a selfish individualism that distorted the social equilibrium and led to dangerously low birth rates, as it encouraged women to leave the household, become preoccupied with themselves, and forget their obligations to their families and to society. For a fuller critique of feminism, see Lower, "As We Appear to our Neighbor." In a speech to the Women's Canadian Club in Brandon, Manitoba, Lower stated that "Man is an adventurer and a creator, woman preserves and stabilizes the gains that men make." Women played an auxiliary social role to that of men, and as such, their place was at home. The working world was therefore a definitively masculine space. Arthur Lower, "Strengthening Confederation," Speech to the Women's Canadian Club of Brandon, Manitoba, February 12, 1931, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 20, files 187 and 188.

manifested itself in a startlingly low birthrate, as its citizens of British descent had become overly materialistic, sacrificing the option of raising large families to personal fulfillment through economic prosperity.[70] Lower also railed against power imbalances in the relationship, observing in *This Most Famous Stream* that "the two mighty oaks, the United States and Great Britain, so overshadow the rest of the English-speaking world that the very existence of [Canada] is often forgotten." With a hint of bitterness, he added that Canada, to the "seniors" of the association, was at best an afterthought, at worst a "vague, frigid wilderness."[71] Therefore, Canadians had to assert themselves as a sovereign political community so as to give a voice to their own opinions and interests.

The contours of this triangular relationship greatly resemble those of an earlier Anglo-Saxonism. Like many researchers in the early twentieth century, Lower tended to racialize this ethnic group and use it as the standard by which to judge others.[72] Anglo-Saxonists, including Lower, also described their common way of life and heritage in liberal, bourgeois terms, generally reflecting the ideological and class backgrounds of its main adherents.[73] Although liberalism was "of the spirit" and the embodiment of a universal "human decency," Lower gave the impression in his work that only the Anglo-Saxon peoples had perfected this system of government and made it their own. He believed that the Anglophone world and its liberal institutions provided the core of Western civilization. The hypothetical extraction of "English-speaking Protestantism and its derivatives from the modern world" left only Soviet Communism as the sole contemporary "creative force."[74] The Anglo-Saxon peoples and their political institutions therefore provided the greatest bulwark against the advance of Communism.

This sense of superiority emerges in the often caricatured and conflicted manner in which he portrayed Catholic Francophones. In *Colony to Nation*, he remarked that "the association of English and French is like that of a badly mated man and woman. When trouble comes — and when does it not? — the woman sulks while the man bullies." He continued to characterize Francophones as "a feminine people" whom Anglophones must skilfully woo; yet "all the English Canadian can do is to shout."[75] In this case, Lower presented "the English" as the husband and the dominant partner. Yet by assigning them the worst traits associated with that gender — aggression, misuse of strength, and dominance — he displayed his dismay at the manner in which they exercised the power they derived from their numerical superiority. Conversely, he associated "the French" with very negative traits traditionally deemed feminine: passivity, poutiness, and unrestrained emotion.

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[70] Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 131.

[71] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 142.

[72] Edward Kohn remarks that Anglo-Saxonists portrayed the connection between English-speaking whites in terms of a bond of blood, the result of which was that they excluded all those not of Anglo-Saxon descent from the community and claimed an inherent superiority over them. Edward Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 4-6.

[73] Thomas Holt explains that to the British in particular, "the nature of the bourgeois man *was* human nature; all else was at worst deviant and savage, at best primitive and undeveloped human potential." Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 8.

[74] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, viii.

[75] Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 467.

Throughout his work, Lower consistently referred to the English peoples as the bearers of liberal political culture and the champions of a free society in Canada. This observation corresponded with the narrative of "white civility," a common trope in early twentieth century Canadian fiction that emphasized in particular the magnanimous treatment of non-British peoples by Anglophones.[76] In reality, however, Lower concluded that Anglophones did not live up to their historical mission, eschewing magnanimity[77] and behaving in a manner unbecoming of ambassadors of white civility. French Canadians, as the less dominant and more insular of the linguistic communities, become the wife in *Colony to Nation*, as their perceived unwillingness to engage with the modern world reflects images of feminine domesticity. Yet Lower encouraged Francophones to abandon the isolation of house and home and take their rightful place in the modern world. He concluded that Quebec could not "have her due place in Confederation" until "she unfolds her arms and accepts life willingly."[78] Francophones, and especially the Québécois, had to let go of what he perceived to be their unfounded fear of assimilation and engage with the wider world. Only by accepting "life" and merging into the liberal stream could they then modernize and engage the Anglophones as equals.

The assignment of gender roles to the two linguistic communities reveals core assumptions regarding both his conception of who qualified as an individual and who was therefore capable of leading the Canadian nation. Within this schema, Lower suggested that women inherently were not full liberal individuals, since their natural place was within the home and outside the public sphere. When Lower metaphorically extended such gender roles to national politics, he implicitly asserted the natural right of the Anglophones to govern the country. The insular and effeminate Francophones consequently must follow the lead of the masculine Anglophones, adopt a virile zest for life outside of their local community, or face the wrath of the husband as punishment for their recalcitrant rejection of liberal individualism.[79]

Although Lower often claimed that Francophones in Quebec never identified with Canada as a political or national unit, he nevertheless argued that the two main linguistic groups in the country shared many common traits from which they could build a new national identity. "Common nationality" to him meant a unified political community. Furthermore, "if a people — or several peoples," could "find enough in common to enable them to *live by consent* (the phrase is crucial) under a common form of government in reasonable harmony, then they may be

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[76] Daniel Coleman studies the common practice in early twentieth century Canadian literature of employing allegories of manly maturation as a device to "shore up British normativity" and disseminate "the image of [w]hite civility." This code emphasized in particular the magnanimous treatment of non-British, non-Anglophone peoples, including French Canadians, who became the recipients of "Christian social activism" and liberal civilization. Narratives that included stories of young British men discovering their noble obligation to other, less-enlightened peoples matched those of the historical development of Canada, in which a colonial society matured into a responsible, self-governing adult. By pairing the imagery of a healthy nation with that of what contemporaries considered a healthy masculinity, authors normalized the dominant hierarchies of gender, nationality, and race. Daniel Coleman, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 172.

[77] Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 559.

[78] Arthur Lower, "In Unknown Quebec," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (1936): 96.

[79] Although beyond the purview of this paper, a discussion regarding the manner in which gender intersected with both nationalism and liberalism in the works of mid-twentieth century Canadian intellectuals would prove useful in interpreting the intellectual frameworks dominant in the era.

thought of as a nation."[80] For Lower, two centuries of shared experiences unified the two peoples and had left their mark on national political institutions and traditions, thereby forging a new society that was neither French nor English, but uniquely Canadian.[81] To Lower, such institutions reflected the particular "genius" of this new nationality and the means by which it dealt with the particular geographic and demographic circumstances it faced. Still, the English strain predominated here too, for he remarked that it was "from England [that] we have derived our public institutions, our free method of government, our law."[82] In fact, Lower granted only a notional space within this "uniquely Canadian" society for the French legacy. Apart from a few token compromises to French legal tradition in the province of Quebec,[83] the new Canada that Lower championed remained thoroughly British.

Although he believed that English and French Canadians had created a common political community, he concluded that the likelihood of the two linguistic groups forming a common *cultural* community remained remote.[84] He identified the cornerstones of French Canadian life as "religion, the home and family, the language, and the simple, non-materialistic way of life that flourishes in rural communities."[85] Yet he concluded that this lifestyle was responsible for the relative backwardness of their society when compared to that of the Anglophones. In fact, Lower wrote that before the Conquest, New France "had not a single institution which did not depend directly on the French monarchy or the [C]hurch, the two historical expressions of authority."[86] When the British first established government in Canada, he added, the *habitants* had to "undergo a generation of apprenticeship" in the culture of representative government.[87] Nearly two centuries later, Lower doubted very much that a liberal democratic spirit had become "the bone and fibre of the community" as it had for English Canadians.[88]

Precisely because of its perceived unwillingness to part with the illiberal Church, and by extension its particular culture, Lower believed that French Canadian society lagged behind that of English Canada. In fact, his writing occasionally gives the impression that the Francophones were merely a dead weight tied to the necks of the Anglophones.[89] Still, Carl Berger believed that

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[80] Arthur Lower, "Two Nations or Two Nationalities?" *Culture* 4 (1943): 471 (emphasis and parentheses are in the original quotation).

[81] Arthur Lower, "Whence Cometh our Freedom," *Food for Thought* 11, no. 5 (1951): 5.

[82] Lower, "The Crown in Canada," 4.

[83] Typical to his style of interpretation, Lower presented the Quebec Act, 1774 as a great compromise that allowed the French Catholic *habitants* to continue their way of life while recognizing British control over the colony. In fact, he described it as "a great constitutional land-mark in Canadian history and the history of the British Empire," as it both allayed the fears of the conquered peoples and "inaugurated the era of parliamentary supremacy in Imperial affairs." Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 72-75.

[84] Lower, "Two Nations or Two Nationalities?", 481.

[85] Arthur Lower, "French Canada and the World of Business," *Réalisations canadiennes françaises: University of Manitoba Published Broadcasts*, 1941, transcript, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 13, file 24.

[86] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 94.

[87] Ibid., 100-101.

[88] Arthur Lower, draft letter to the Senate Committee on Human Rights, 1950, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 9, file 41.

[89] Lower believed that the Catholic Church was partly to blame for the inability of French Canadians to compete effectively in a modern society, as the clergy refrained from teaching its disciples "how to think" and instead taught them "what to think." In addition, he believed the emphasis on the law and theology in the clerically dominated system

French Canada embodied to Lower an idyllic model of social stability and unity, representing the antithesis of the heterogeneity, fragmentation, and individualism of English Canada.[90] Hence, Lower simultaneously criticized the overbearing collectivism of one people and lashed out at the self-destructive individualism of another. The pursuit of both extremes upset the balance of the body politic and impaired the nation-building project. Although he claimed that cultural unity between the two peoples was both unlikely and unnecessary for the foundation of a national community, his analyses tended to suggest that national unity required some convergence. The Francophones had to adopt many of the dominant values of the Anglophones so as to participate as equals within the greater political and social structures of the country.

Not only did his views on the place of Francophones in Canada reflect a concern with balance and harmony, but so too did his opinions on immigration, race, and ethnicity. Commentators previously have noted his obsession with the quest for ethnic homogeneity within English Canada. Lower believed that heterogeneity led to disunity and the unravelling of any sense of common community necessary for national development.[91] Furthermore, Lower himself expressed an unabashed dislike of ethnic groups whose cultural traits he found repugnant; he even maintained contact with groups and individuals that lobbied for an exclusively white Canada.[92] One group towards which he was particularly venomous was the Japanese community. In 1943, he claimed that in the areas where they settled, they "had a knack for getting disliked. They were aggressive. They had large families." They rapidly gained a disproportionate share of the business in resource-based industries.[93] To Lower, the Japanese behaved in a manner that upset the balance of the existing community through connivance and aggression, thereby threatening the consolidation of a Canadian presence in British Columbia. In contrast, Lower portrayed the Chinese as model immigrants who played the appropriate social role and created few problems for the community. He noted that they, unlike the Japanese, settled more evenly throughout the country. In addition, he observed that "quite a number" of Chinese married white wives, thereby hastening their assimilation into the existing national community.[94]

While it is possible that Lower was merely toeing the line of wartime policy in distinguishing between the Chinese and Japanese, the rationale by which he made this distinction is emblematic of a greater pattern in his work, whereby he assessed a given nationality on the basis of its compatibility with English Canadian life and liberal culture.[95] Even though Lower praised the

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inhibited the ability of young Québécois to compete for jobs against the tech-savvy Anglophones, who received a more modern, profession-oriented education. Lower, "In Unknown Quebec," 95.

[90] Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 127.

[91] See ibid., 128-131; Corlett, "A Dream of Homogeneity."

[92] For instance, Lower corresponded with Charles Hope, the honorary secretary of the White Canada Research Committee, throughout 1938. In his letters, Lower displayed a fascination with the behaviour of Asian immigrants in British Columbia, and especially with that of the Japanese. See Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 8, file 42.

[93] Arthur Lower, "Canada as a Pacific Power," *Canadian Affairs* November 1, 1943, 4, Queen's University Archives, Arthur Lower Fonds, box 13, file 51.

[94] Lower, "Canada as a Pacific Power," 4.

[95] Lower analyzed various "peoples" in terms of their physical and cultural ability to live in Canadian society and endure life in a northern climate. He maintained that the government should only recruit immigrants from those ethnic groups whose definitive traits matched those of English Canadians and were properly suited to life as a labourer or farmer in a northern climate. In addition, he consistently argued that the government should actually discourage

Chinese for their assimilability once in Canada, he believed that the ability of Asians to do so was rather limited. He observed that "something from a quarter to a third of the Japanese in Canada report themselves as members of the Protestant faith." As they had converted to a religion that made them more disposed to accepting liberalism and local culture, Canadians were already "on the way to assimilating them, insofar as that is possible where skin colour intervenes."[96]

In the same year that he contrasted Chinese and Japanese Canadians, he clarified his views on the term "race." Lower acknowledged its hollowness as an analytical concept, remarking that "there are few communities indeed where men are not hopeless mongrels." He added that "a people" consists of a group of individuals displaying a sufficient amount of homogeneity so as "to enable them to live a common life." While Lower concluded that "race" was a useless and murky concept, he nonetheless employed it frequently and inconsistently, referring to both English and French Canadians in racial terms throughout his work.[97] Yet he wrote at a time in which researchers were just beginning to challenge the conceptual foundations of scientific racism.[98] While his works after the war largely refrain from employing overtly racialized language or exploring the theme of immigrant assimilability, Lower continued to organize various communities into a hierarchy and conflate "race" with "culture," "people," and "nation."

Consistent with the organic conception of the community, Lower argued that a given society or people acquired its unique characteristics over long periods of social stability in which its members interact with and adapt to their environment.[99] Though an expression of a more fundamental nature common to all humans, liberalism was not necessarily an exportable commodity.[100] In *This Most Famous Stream*, Lower argued that since the Chinese lacked Christian values, they therefore also lacked the cultural foundations for compassion, charity, appreciation of individual life, and the liberal society. Furthermore, he identified the Christian ethic as a core cultural feature of "white" countries, ignoring both the possibility that other cultures held similar values that were capable of supporting liberal values, as well as the fact that Christianity is by no means an exclusively "white" religion.[101] Though renouncing "race" and challenging inherited assumptions regarding its validity for the classification of peoples, Lower nonetheless reinscribed prejudice in his work. Here, he merely substituted biological racism with an ethnocentric framework based on culture. Unsurprisingly, the yardstick against which he measured other cultures was invariably the Anglo-Saxon. Immutable elements of culture determined who was fit

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immigration, and attempted at several points to dissuade Canadians of the notion that their country could accommodate a population much larger than the one it already had by the middle of the twentieth century. Arthur Lower, "Myth of Mass Immigration," *Maclean's*, May 5, 1949, 16; Arthur Lower, "Our Shoddy Ideals," *Maclean's*, November 1, 1937, 24.

[96] Lower, "Canada as a Pacific Power," 4.

[97] Lower, "Two Nations or Two Nationalities?", 471.

[98] Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2, 343.

[99] In "The Origins of Democracy in Canada," Lower provided an equation for understanding the history of a given country or region. Social loyalties and individual interests always play out "against a backdrop of environment. The three factors compose, to borrow a mathematical term, a triangle of forces." Lower, "The Origins of Democracy in Canada," 65.

[100] Though he stated in 1938 that "self-government and freedom" were indeed exportable commodities, this conclusion does not coincide with those expressed in other works. Lower, "The Product of Revolutions," 39.

[101] Lower, *This Most Famous Stream*, 17.

for liberal citizenship. He ultimately believed that each people had to find its own, culturally contingent path to the realization of this way of life, a process he suggested was not always successful.

Conclusion

As a result of this thinking, Lower urged his fellow Canadians to search for the source of their common national identity in the land. While he believed that Canadians were on the verge of forging their own political community and distinct nationality, they had not yet discovered this fact for themselves. At the end of *Colony to Nation,* Lower wrote that Canada, "with its divisions of race presents no common denominator in those profundities which normally unite, in race, language, religion, history and culture." He added:

> If the Canadian people are to find their soul, they must seek for it, not in the
> English language or the French, but in the little ports of the Atlantic provinces,
> in the flaming autumn maples of the St. Lawrence valley, in the portages and
> lakes of the Canadian Shield, in the sunsets and relentless cold of the prairies,
> in the foothill, mountain and sea of the west and in the unconquerable vastness
> of the north.[102]

Yet he believed that as they adapt their inherited institutions to the terrain, climate, and linguistic cleavages of the country, Canadians inevitably grow closer, and the communities of English and French speech become increasingly bound together through a common history and a shared experience of life in the north.

However, members of the next generation hesitated to join the search for common unifiers and the elaboration of national narratives. On the surface, they eschewed this genre of history in favour of a new tendency that sought to uncover the very cleavages that "national" narratives tended to obscure. But their departure from the inherited historiography arose from some of the same preoccupations that had inspired Lower. In a gibe to the received history, J.M.S. Careless subtly alluded to Lower by remarking that the country was "somewhat past the colony-to-nation epitome of the Canadian story." But Careless nonetheless sought a common unifier in the national past. For him as it had for Lower, this bond lay in the "Canadian experience," albeit one significantly moulded by the "limited identities" of region, culture, and class as identified by Ramsay Cook.[103]

However, the assumptions upon which Lower's intellectual framework rested meant that geography or experience alone provided an insufficient basis for building a new national identity. Specifically, his strain of liberalism led him to conceive of the individual as the locus and basic unit of the nation. Yet not all Canadians shared the cultural or religious heritage that had given rise to his construct of the ideal liberal individual. Hence the dilemma: those who by culture were

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[102] Lower, *Colony to Nation,* 560.

[103] J.M.S. Careless, "'Limited Identities' in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1969): 1-10; Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Centennial Celebrations," *International Journal* 22, no. 4 (1967): 663.

unequipped to accept the rights and duties of the individual could not fully participate in modern society, and by extension could never fully integrate into the Canadian nation. In this respect, Francophones had to make a definitive break with their past. As Christians, they possessed a number of the cultural foundations of liberalism, but Lower believed that their traditional way of life and Catholic social mores prevented them from realizing their true potential as individuals. The only people who tended to conform to the brand of liberalism as advocated by Lower were Protestant Anglo-Saxons, as well as those who had successfully integrated into that culture. Lower ultimately rendered many of the cultural values of his own particular ethnic group as the universal to which Canadians had to aspire. By implication, only those who fit this mould were capable of directing the fate of the nation.

On a broader level, Lower conceived of history as the extensive process by which humanity discovered and applied the laws of nature. These in turn reflected a Christian ethic, one that upheld the primacy of individuals while also compelling them to collaborate in communities. The resulting dialectical struggle between individualism and collectivism gave rise to a society of ever-growing complexity, whose evolving institutions progressively reinforced the Christian ethic and expanded the rights of the individual. To Lower, Christianity was the engine behind the development of the liberal society. Paradoxically, this society ultimately took the form of a conservative, organic structure that enmeshed the individual within a complex hierarchy. Although an adherence to natural laws was supposed to bring about the expansion of liberty and freedom, it ultimately served as the rigid bounds beyond which any action entailed the collapse of the social framework.