Abstract

This thesis investigates the ways that 'Britishness' was engaged with in the British press during the revolutions of 1848 on the European continent. It investigates how both the reactions in the mainstream and radical press of Britain reflected their attitudes to and perception of 'Britishness'. In addition 'Britishness' is considered as a concept still in development. The focus of this thesis has been *The Times*, *The Illustrated London News*, and *The Northern Star* between 22 February, which marked the outbreak of revolution in Paris, and 10 April, the date of the unsuccessful Chartist demonstration in London.

The main body of this thesis has been divided up between the themes of Britishness as have been identified in the press, with consideration also given to the themes identified by the historiography. The sub-divisions are Order and Orderliness, which looks at how the press saw the revolutions, as well as the British people themselves, in terms of their capacity for maintaining order as well as being naturally ordered. The second theme is Reform and Revolution which investigates how the press relates these to Britishness, and the extent to which a distinction between the two was sought. The final theme is Exceptionalism and Exemplarism, which looks at to what extent Britain was seen as the exception and example to the rest of Europe. In all cases comparisons have been made between the mainstream and radical press.

Overall the thesis has revealed that the radical and mainstream press had different, often contradictory and competing, views of Britishness, and used their own definition as a weapon against the other. The widespread and significant occurrences during 1848 presented a great opportunity for the development of a concept such as Britishness, and while the mainstream press increasingly saw 1848 as the other itself, the radical press appeared to try to combine Britishness with the revolutionary experience 1848.

The Revolutions of 1848 and notions of Britishness in

the Mainstream and Radical Press

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Abbreviations

All dates given are 1848 unless otherwise specified.

ILN – The Illustrated London News

Star – The Northern Star

Chapter 1: Introduction

Britain and 1848: To Revolt or not to Revolt?

"We live in an age of revolutions."[1] These words are ascribed to the British politician

Benjamin Disraeli in the *Star* in early March 1848, only two weeks after the outbreak of

revolution in Paris. 1848 would go on to see a quick succession of revolutions erupting across

the European continent. While the first one was a revolt in Sicily, it is the revolution in Paris

that broke out on 22 February that has generally been seen as the spark that lit the

revolutionary flame of 1848. The revolution in France was of special significance due to the

memory many people still had of the wars that followed the French Revolution of 1789, and

many feared a similar result. Italy, Germany, and the Austrian Empire all experienced big

revolutionary episodes in 1848. As fittingly put by Metternich, an important and long-

standing Austrian politician: "When France sneezes, Europe catches a cold." Seemingly

continuing this metaphor, Michael Levin has spoken of the domino effect of revolutions in

1848 as a form of ideological contagion in Europe. As he points out, the fifty-odd revolutions

of the year were hard to miss.[2] Truly then Disraeli was correct. The image of 1848 as having

a particularly important place in this age of revolutions has been echoed by many historians.

As put by Terry Eagleton: 1848 was a year unique in its universal significance and

recognition as the "Year of Revolutions."[3]

While much of Europe descended into chaos, Britain looked on from the side-lines seemingly

unaffected by the widespread revolutionary wave. The events on the Continent were certainly

noticed, for they were reported and discussed in detail by both the more mainstream

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[1] *Star*, 4 March, p. 3
[2] M. Levin, *Political Thought in the Age of Revolution 1776-1848* (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 12
[3] Terry Eagleton in K. Boardman and C. Kinealy, 'Introduction' in K. Boardman and C. Kinealy ed., *1848: The Year the World Turned?* (Newcastle, 2007), p. 1

newspapers such as *The Times* and the *ILN* as well as radical papers like the *Star*. The in-depth accounts of parliamentary sessions in these papers include many discussions of the continental revolutions, suggesting that these revolutions were taken seriously by the government as well. The government definitely perceived a real threat that year, from a combination of revolutionary France, Irish separatism and a resurgent Chartism. The Chartists promoted the Charter, which advocated further political reform such as extending the franchise to all men.[4] However, aside from a Chartist demonstration held in London on 10 April, and a very minor Irish revolt in late July, there was no event in Britain that was comparable to the revolutionary surges of the Continent. Even these two were docile compared to the riots in Paris, Berlin or Vienna, and both were put down with apparent ease. The Chartist demonstration was the more significant of the two. It was the culmination of months of Chartist planning and saw large numbers attending as well as the submission of a huge petition to the government. However, strong government preparation in the hiring of many special constables ensured that the demonstration ended peacefully. The petition was rejected and the Chartists dispersed, and while they continued campaigning for a while longer, the failure of 10 April marked the start of their final decline.

The Chartists had been somewhat in decline already since the failure of an earlier petition in 1842, which is when they were at their all-time peak in activity and support. Nevertheless, 1848 saw a revival of the movement and this has been suggested as being thanks to the influences from the continental revolutionary activity of the year. Henry Weisser states that the Chartists were raised from their slumber by the events of 1848, while George Rude goes further, suggesting that the Chartist action was entirely due to continental European

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[4] J. Saville, *1848 The British state and the Chartist movement* (Cambridge, 1987)

influences.[5] The Chartists gained momentum and organised many meetings, as well as preparing the petition of April which reputedly had millions of signatures. Even the lower figure of signatures claimed by the government still allows for a widely supported movement. However it seems that this influence simply did not translate into the sort of action that was seen on the Continent. It has nevertheless been argued that the threat from Chartism was real, and perhaps even the greatest threat faced by the British state in the last two centuries.[6]

This has led to the question why there was no comparable revolution in Britain often being asked. Several reasons are usually presented. To give a few examples, Rude and Langer focus on the weakness of the Chartists and the strength of the government, while Alan Sked notes the importance of the reduced interest among the new elites for further reform following the Great Reform Act of 1832, which expanded the electorate to include many of the wealthier middle classes, and reduced property qualifications for members of parliament to allow these classes to stand for election.[7] Another interesting suggestion, made for instance by John Belchem, is that this lack of interest was due to a distance that Britain wished to maintain from Europe and what were seen as foreign notions of revolution, which were not compatible with British values.[8] This raises the questions of what exactly 'Britishness' was at this time, how it was referred to in response to the events on the Continent, and how it affected those seeking similar change in Britain (primarily the Chartists). These are the key questions asked in this thesis. National identity in the modern sense was, though widespread, still a fairly young concept at this time and an important and widespread event such as 1848's revolutions

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[5] H. Weisser, 'Chartism in 1848: Reflections on a Non-Revolution', *A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies, Vol. 13, No. 1* (1981); G. Rude, *The Crowd in History. A Study of Popular disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York, 1964); also Saville, *1848*.
[6] J. Saville in M. Chase, 'The Chartist movement and 1848' in D. Howell, D. Kirby and K. Morgan ed., *John Saville: Commitment and History: Themes from the life and work of a socialist historian* (London, 2011), p. 169
[7] Rude, *The Crowd in History*; W. Langer, *The Revolutions of 1848* (New York, 1971); A. Sked, 'Great Britain and the Continental Revolutions of 1848' in A.M. Birke, M. Brechtken, and A. Searle, ed., *An Anglo-German Dialogue* (Munich, 2000).
[8] J. Belchem, 'Britishness, the United Kingdom and the Revolutions of 1848', *Labour History Review, Vol. 64, No. 2* (1999)

had the potential to influence it. The revolutions would give ample opportunity for defining oneself against other groups and their behaviours, especially given the scope of the year's revolutionary influences and threats.

However 'Britishness' is difficult to define. In a more recent attempt to do so, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown referred to it as being the embodiment of certain values and ideals, notably freedom and justice.[9] In Linda Colley's seminal study, that covers the development of the British nation and its national identity up to 1837, she states that 'Britishness' was something very much in the process of development at that time.[10] However her case that 'Britishness' was something above and beyond just 'Englishness' is not altogether convincing. As far as the newspapers considered in this thesis are concerned, 'Britain' and 'England' appear to be used interchangeably. It is of course beneficial to leave a concept such as a national identity intentionally vague, for it presents opportunities for political argumentation. This would mean that there was a potential for 'Britishness' to have different meanings for different groups in society. Nevertheless, there often appear several themes that are consistently considered in building a picture of Britishness in a historical perspective. Dennis Grube, in his consideration of Britishness in Victorian Britain, notes that 'Britishness' was often defined against an 'other'. Though what this 'other' was changed over time, sometimes being Catholics or Jews, sometimes foreigners (like the French or Irish) and sometimes homosexuals and prostitutes. It depended on who was seen as threatening the country at any one time. Colley likewise notes the importance of an 'other' in national identity definition.[11]

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[9] G. Brown in D. Grube, *At the Margins of Victorian Britain: Politics, Morality and Britishness in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2013), p. 1
[10] L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (Yale, 2005)
[11] Grube, *Victorian Britain*; also Colley, *Britons*.

In the case of 1848, this 'other' appears to be foreign revolutionary influences. The establishment, supported by the mainstream press, sought to protect itself by defining 'Britishness' as being different and superior to such foreign influences. Even when the 'other' is an idea or concept rather than a group, this idea would still usually be tied to a group that was normally seen in a negative light in order to discredit the idea. Just as with a group focus, this could simply show which idea was seen as contrary and threatening to the state's own views at any one time. Linda Colley illustrates this when she addresses a specific 'other', asserting that the British, in terms of their national identity, "defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree" and imagined their closest neighbours "as their vile opposites, as Hyde to their Jekyll."[12] Here it can be seen that the unpopular traits are being tied to an unpopular group to discredit them both. 'Britishness' as different to continental, and particularly French, norms therefore appears to be prevalent in nineteenth century British society.

Helen Brooks suggests that there was a feeling of pride amongst the English for not succumbing to revolution in 1848, especially when so many other countries had.[13] An important point here is the preference for ordered, gradual change through reform instead. Thompson has an alternate focus when he considers the image of the 'free-born Englishman'. He states that the British saw themselves as possessing several inalienable rights, foremost among them being freedom from absolutism, and a right to riot if this was threatened which had been granted by the Glorious Revolution of 1688.[14] Of course this right to riot can be seen as contradicting the preference for ordered reform, but the Tory tradition maintains that riot can be the initiator of change when change is definitely needed. Perhaps in the context of

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[12] Colley, *Britons*, p. 5
[13] H. F. Brooks, 'English Reactions to the Continental Revolutions of 1848', (Ph.D. thesis, Nebraska-Lincoln University, 1948), p. 4
[14] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963), p. 80

1848, the passing of the Great Reform Act only sixteen years previously would suggest that it was not yet time for further reform. Regardless, the way that the discussion of this tradition developed during the revolutionary fervour of 1848 would show how notions of Britishness arose in response to the revolutions. The radical element that saw inspiration from the Continent and sought to change Britain also had to contend with such notions. The Chartists would have been hard-pressed to advocate any revolutionary standpoint if this had been increasingly presented as an 'un-British' idea. Ensuring that their language fitted notions of 'Britishness' would be crucial for maintaining domestic support. Priscilla Robertson has even suggested that the Chartists themselves saw Britain as immune to revolution.[15] However the lack of a fully defined national identity would give them some leeway, and their greater representation amongst the lower order of British society would offer the opportunity to push Britishness in another direction. After all there is no reason for there to be just a single interpretation at any one time of a concept as complicated as Britishness. To use an example, for centuries Catholics in England had sought an English identity outside of the officially promoted Anglican one. Therefore the Chartists could have presented an alternative interpretation themselves, perhaps one that focused more on the right to riot than on ordered and gradual change.

The notion that Britain was different from, and better than, the Continent was often presented by both newspapers and government reports at the time. This provides another theme for 'Britishness': exceptionalism. This referred to a British wish to exclude themselves from the revolutionary aspirations of 1848, choosing instead to promote the idea that moving forward could only be accomplished by standing against revolution.[16] In fact, this equation of 'revolution' with 'foreigner' and 'bad' seems to have been a fairly popular one; Belchem

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[15] P. Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton, 1952)
[16] Belchem, *Britishness*, p. 143

points to instances where *The Times* referred to the Chartists as Irish, seemingly in an attempt to taint the movement with connotations of foreign (or at least 'un-British') influences.[17] The alliance in 1848 of the Chartists with the Irish Repealers, who sought the separation of the British and Irish parliaments, is the reason that such an accusation could be believed. As the Irish were often identified as the 'other', this would seem an effective comparison. In fact, more people in Britain enrolled as special constables upon the breaking news that this alliance had been formed.[18] 'Britishness' therefore seems to have been seen by some at least as incompatible with seeking revolution, for the mainstream newspapers of the day often criticised the revolutions while praising the British ability to avoid them. However there does not seem to be a consensus in the historiography, for Ivanyi talks about how there were also some revolutions that year that were well received in Britain and that actually received widespread public sympathy. He particularly focuses on the Hungarian revolution and the Italian revolts.[19]

Therefore it once again cannot be assumed that a word has just one meaning. Thompson made such a warning about the loose usage of terminology, with his focus being on the word 'riot'.[20] Gareth Stedman Jones made a similar point in his consideration of class, showing that such a linguistic concept was difficult to define.[21] In the eyes of the British there were different ideas of 'revolution': one that espoused freedom (which is positive), and one that represented a threat to social stability (and so was negative). Both Ivanyi and Belchem used similar sources, primarily newspapers, for their research. The difference here is Ivanyi's focus on working class newspapers, which suggests a division in British society regarding

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[17] Belchem, *Britishness*, p. 150
[18] R. Swift, 'The 'Specials' and the Policing of Chartism in 1848' in Boardman and Kinealy ed., *1848*, p. 52
[19] B. G. Ivanyi, 'The Working Classes of Britain and Eastern European Revolutions (1848)', *The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 26, No. 66* (1947), pp. 107-8
[20] E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present, No. 50* (1971), p. 76
[21] G. S. Jones in J. Popkin, *From Herodotus to H-Net: The Story of Historiography* (Oxford, 2016), p. 141

opinion of the revolutions. Part of the Chartist response to such bad press can be seen in the

redefinition of the word 'revolution' that was made by the Chartist Ernest Jones so that it did

not involve insurrection, showing how such a concept can be approached differently.[22]

Insurrection at the time tended to mean a failed and often violent attempt at change.[23] Such an

attempt to be distanced from the 'violent' form of revolution suggests that making a

distinction between revolution and insurrection was important. All of this also shows that the

concept of 'revolution' itself was not so clearly defined. Given the strong views regarding the

British preference for reform often quoted, this can again give the idea of Britishness taking

two different paths. Therefore how revolution was presented in response to 1848 is an

important question, especially to what extent the mainstream view of this differs to the

radical one. Much scholarship has aimed to show that the Chartists were quite different to the

continental revolutionaries, and to distance the Chartists from the revolutionary aura they

were given in the nineteenth century.[24] However, while hindsight might confirm such ideas,

at the time the comparisons that were made for instance in the newspapers between Chartists

and continental revolutionaries suggest that they were seen in a similar light (or at least

portrayed as such). With the newspapers being a key (and in many cases only) source of

information for people, such constant portrayals would likely have affected public opinion.

This question of compatibility between 'Britishness' and revolution leads to the question of

how 1848 influenced the use of language in Britain. In a study by Owen Jackson, the

changing use of revolutionary language (especially *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*) in the

newspapers of the south-west of England in the context of eighteenth and nineteenth-century

revolutions in France is considered.[25] This attests to a different effect of the revolutions of

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[22] Weisser, *Chartism in 1848*, pp. 23-4
[23] H. T. Buckle, *History of civilisation in England: 1857-1861* (London, 1873), p. 593
[24] M. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and nation in English radical politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 62
[25] O. D. Jackson, 'Receiving Revolution: the newspaper press, revolutionary ideology and politics in
Britain, 1789-1848' (Ph.D. thesis, Bristol University, 2000)

1848 on Britain, one where the revolutions change the use and meaning of certain language, especially impacting the good or bad connotations that accompany it. This study also shows how these newspapers painted the revolutions as an inherently bad thing that was associated with foreign influence, and so threatened the calm and order of Britain, which was again portrayed as opposite and superior in many ways. However this study focuses just on the influence of the French revolutions, missing out the Hungarian and Italian ones that Ivanyi suggests were seen in a more positive light. Weisser asserts that the Chartists did not want to make any comparison between France and Britain that advocated revolution, which gives the impression that this kind of revolution was not one that the Chartists thought would be popular with the British people.[26] He also suggests that the Chartists tried to distance themselves from the developments of the Continent and from the continental form of revolution, pointing to a few Chartist responses to those who accused them of similar intent. The Chartists stated that they were in fact different to the continental revolutionaries, and that their aims and methods were compatible with and upheld British values. This appears evident from the posters they circulated gathering support for their protest march on 10 April, with words like 'peace' and 'order' being prominent.[27] Belchem states that the Chartists did not seek to contest the national identity, but wanted to be the ones to guard it.[28] He also argues that 1848 was a test of Britishness.[29] This seems to suggest that the very nature of 'Britishness' was being reconsidered and perhaps redefined by the revolutionary activity of 1848. In this regard the Chartists were perhaps running a middle path between contesting and

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[26] Weisser, *Chartism in 1848*
[27] Chartist poster, 10 April,
[http://www.unionhistory.info/timeline/Tl_Display.php?Where=Dc1Title+contains+%27Poster+advertising+the+Chartists+Demonstration%2C+1848%27+]
[28] Belchem, *Britishness*, p. 149
[29] Belchem, *Britishness*, p. 143

seeking to guard the national identity, for they were trying to determine Britishness in their own way.

Chapter 2: The Newspapers

<u>Introduction</u>

The focus of this research project is the mainstream and radical British press. Radical refers to the Chartist public organ the *Star*, which was the most important and successful of the Chartist newspapers throughout the movement's history. Its owner and chief editor was Feargus O'Connor, who was also the leader of the Chartist movement, which justifies the *Star*'s reputation as the voice of Chartism.[1] In 1848 it was the only active Chartist newspaper following the discontinuation of *The Charter* in 1840. Originally a regional paper, the *Star* moved its headquarters to London in 1844. However it was already nationally pre-eminent by 1839.[2] Mainstream refers to the non-radical papers. The primary focus is on *The Times* due to its significance as the widest read newspaper of the time. The *Star* at its peak did manage to outsell *The Times*, though this was before 1848. Nevertheless the *Star*'s distribution remained high at this time. Its significance must be considered beyond mere distribution figures, for a group would often share a copy that they would read together.[3] For variety, the *ILN* has also been considered. The first newspaper to include pictures, the *ILN* had a unique potential for presenting actual depictions of the events it described in its columns. While a bit of a novelty at the time, as the normal format for newspapers was simply blocks of text, its pictures allow an opinion to spread quicker than through a text. The fact that ultimately all newspapers followed this example means that its potential importance should not be lightly discarded, even if it could not compete with the distribution of the *Star* or *The Times*. These papers have been chosen for their national significance. While regional papers have been argued as being

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[1] A. G. Jones, 'Chartist journalism and print culture in Britain, 1830-1855' in J. Allen and R. Ashton ed., *Papers for the People: A Study of the Chartist Press* (London, 2005), p. 5
[2] J. Allen and R. Ashton, 'Introduction' in Allen and Ashton ed., *Papers for the People*, xi; H. Weisser, *British working-class movements and Europe, 1815-1848* (Manchester, 1975), p. 2
[3] Weisser, *British working-class*, p. 183; see also *ILN*, 26 February, p. 9.

as influential if not more so,[4] because the topic of interest is 'Britishness', a paper that can reach the whole country will give a better indication of this. The press was influential, as noted in *The History of the Times*: "The power of *The Times* to stimulate, anticipate, and on occasion to organise public opinion had by 1850 been recognised for a full generation in official circles at home and abroad."[5] For many, newspapers would have been the main, if not only, way of gaining news about the world around them at this time.

1848 saw many important developments throughout the year and the changing opinions and perceptions that this resulted in cannot be done justice in one study. Therefore the selection made here has been primarily to focus on the period from 22 February, which marked the outbreak of the French revolution in Paris, until 10 April, the date of the Chartist demonstration in London, with some consideration of the first reactions to the failure of this demonstration. This has allowed for a close study of the British response to this crucial early stage of 1848. This period marks the first responses to the revolutions of the year, with the French revolution being chosen as the starting point both due to its reputation as leading the others, and the common British definition of themselves in opposition to the French. The failure of the Chartist demonstration in April would mark the potential for a different response as Britain relaxed somewhat from the threat of revolution at home. In addition, as this also resulted in the splintering of Chartism with more Chartist newspapers arising after April, it becomes harder to present a unified picture of public Chartist discourse. Chartism was never a single movement, but as the *Star* was its only paper in early 1848, it at least had just one public voice. The June Days in Paris, as well as the overall end to the revolutionary

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[4] L. Matthews-Jones, 'The deleterious dominance of The Times in nineteenth-century scholarship', [http://blogs.tandf.co.uk/jvc/2014/02/25/the-deleterious-dominance-of-the-times-in-nineteenth-century-scholarship/] (2014)

[5] *The History of The Times: The Tradition Established: 1841-1884* (London, 1939), p. 147

year that saw all the movements fail, would have generated fresh perspectives that built upon the one investigated here.

The papers considered appealed to different demographics. The essentially pro-establishment *The Times*, with its tendency to assume high levels of knowledge in Latin, French and History (British and French as well as Ancient), appealed more to the middle and upper classes, while the *Star*, with its constant calls for change, appealed more to the working classes. Interestingly though, the *Star* also makes some assumptions of historical knowledge, though less of linguistic knowledge. This would suggest that readers of the *Star* would not struggle to understand *The Times*. The *ILN* matched *The Times* in intended audience, as well as, it would seem, sources used, for it sometimes included the same reports, word for word. Linda Connors has suggested that periodicals at this time were not yet specialised, and so were meant to appeal to as broad a readership as possible.[6] The interaction between the papers is fairly one-sided, for while the *Star* often makes references to 'the press' (in the process acknowledging that it believes its own opinions to be different to those of the mainstream press), *The Times* makes no mention of the *Star*. This suggests that it could have been more likely for readers of the *Star* to have read *The Times* as well, rather than the other way around. This would appear logical, for the *Star* was just a weekly paper like the *ILN*, while *The Times* was a daily one (except Sundays). Nevertheless this should not be taken to suggest that the *Star* was not a viable source of information. *The New York Tribune*, an American newspaper with a nation-wide distribution that used British newspapers for many of its early reports on the events of 1848, occasionally used the *Star* for this purpose. The difference in frequency of distribution noted above also meant that the *Star* found itself responding directly to *The Times* on occasion. The frequent references to 'the press' (which

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[6] L. E. Connors, *National Identity in Great Britain and British North America, 1815-1851: The Role of Nineteenth Century Periodicals* (Farnham 2011), p. 26

are most certainly mainly references to *The Times*, due to the content of the references as well as the position of *The Times* as the most widely read newspaper) prove that at the very least the editorial team of the *Star* were reading *The Times*.

In the early nineteenth century the practise of newspapers having foreign correspondents was fairly recent and most would use the reports of foreign newspapers to write stories about what was occurring abroad. *The Times* did have a foreign correspondent in Paris at this time, but news from elsewhere in Europe would usually go through this channel. The Paris branch was known to occasionally edit the stories received in order to fit them to what it knew *The Times* would approve of.[7] The paper relied on English residents abroad, perhaps traders or diplomats, who would sent bundles of papers to the correspondent in Paris.[8] The practise of sending reporters to cover events first hand was only developed in the latter half of 1848. The *Star* would have had fewer resources at hand than *The Times* but would also have benefited from its connections to other nations through the multi-national Fraternal Democrats, with whom the Chartists had a close relationship at this time. While each paper would have had many writers, Connors' study has indicated that in fact a newspaper in the nineteenth century would have expressed one particular point of view.[9] The opinions expressed in any article were therefore that of the newspaper itself, rather than of the individual.[10] The people wanted there to be one consistent line and the editors catered to this.[11] As far as the *Star* is concerned however, a letter from the editor George Julian Harney to Friedrich Engels stated that O'Connor did not complain much about what Harney included, even if he did not always

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[7] *The History of The Times*, p. 134
[8] *The History of The Times*, p. 135
[9] Connors, *Periodicals*, p. 21
[10] Connors, *Periodicals*, p. 23
[11] *ibid.*

agree with it.[12] This suggests the potential for a more diverse set of views in the *Star* than would be expected of mainstream newspapers.

The Times has also been used to generate a sense of context, as well as to be a comparison to the radical *Star*. As well as representing different elements of the population, *The Times* and the *Star* have opposing views of the establishment. *The Times* is generally positive of the government and its actions, trusting it to make the right decisions, while the *Star* is critical of the government, often blaming it for acting against the people's interests. Whether the government is able to take correct action is a discussion that comes up often in response to 1848 and it shall be seen that different opinions of this have a part to play in attitudes to Britishness. While the newspapers discussed the same events of the year, they often came to different conclusions. Though it is perhaps when they came to similar ones that it is most interesting and revealing about opinions of Britishness.

As has been seen in the introduction to this thesis, Britishness cannot be assumed to be a singular and defined concept, but rather is a multipolar and fluid one. The important themes that have arisen have been made the sub-divisions of the rest of this chapter. The first part will deal with the theme of Order and how the press considered this in response to 1848. The second part will focus on Reform and Revolution and the ways these concepts were discussed in the context of the time as well as how they are related to action at home. The final part will focus on Exceptionalism and Exemplarism, which refers to the ways that Britain was or was not seen as a special case, different from the Continent and a potential example to it. Another important theme that has been identified in the historiography is the 'other'. This has not been considered as a separate category as it is so central to the definition of each of the other themes that it has therefore been discussed throughout. Each of the themes is often

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[12] Letter to Engels, 30 March 1846, quoted in E. Royle, *Chartism* (London, 1996), p. 121

considered in relation to its opposite, which is attributed to the 'other': the 'reform' of Britain contrasted with the 'revolution' of France for instance. Together these three cover the main themes of 'Britishness' that are discussed and debated in the light of the year's events. They are not meant to be a complete consideration of all themes of Britishness, but some simply were not discussed as much or at all in 1848. Protestantism is the main theme that is missing due to the complete lack of reference to it as a defining feature of Britishness in the context of early 1848. However it is possible that this is due to it being so obvious that referring to it was unnecessary.

<u>Order and Orderliness</u>

"We shall not be misunderstood when we say, that while all our neighbours are having their revolutions, we must have a revolution of our own—one of the quiet and conventional sort."[13] This quote in *The Times* of 10 March sets out one of the often repeated comments about the European revolutions of 1848: that Britain will not and should not follow the example of the Continent, but must follow its own path. It specifies maintaining order as the element that must differentiate Britain from the Continent. This statement seems to both serve as a dismissal of the revolutions on the Continent as well as promoting the hoped for orderly action at home. If 'action' is even the right word, for the picture painted by this particular article is that of a Britain calmly going about its day to day business, while all around are rocked by violence and confrontation. The 'revolution' that *The Times* advocates seems to be a revolution *from* the events of the Continent. Maintaining order in this storm seems to be presented as revolutionary in its own way. The view that *The Times* is presenting here clearly fits into Belchem's view that Britain is defining itself against Europe.[14]

As Colley's argument about Britain's self-definition against France would suggest, the focus of this is primarily directed against France. The French revolution quickly becomes painted as a disordered and chaotic event in the mainstream papers. Between the first reports and early April, *The Times* often includes an article titled 'The State of Paris' and it essentially says the same thing every time: there is trouble in Paris. "Paris still continues in the same state of constant ferment" goes an article on 31 March. "The minor demonstrations, the eternal promenadings of bands of workmen, the deputations, the processions, the drums and banners, &c., are never absent a day—not even an hour of the day—from the streets."[15] *The*

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13 *The Times*, 10 March, p. 4
14 Belchem, *Britishness*, p. 143
15 *The Times*, 31 March, p. 4

Times appears adamant to push this perception: "Paris seems determined to keep up its character for producing daily some new commotion" starts an article from 3 April.[16] Little is left to the imagination and readers were left with a clear picture of Paris. In fact, the seeming expectation of disturbances in Paris begins to make it more newsworthy to comment on instances where there is order in the city. Nevertheless these snippets of order are considered as exceptions: "Paris has again entered into one of those periods of sulky external tranquillity which seem to come upon it at rare intervals, like moments of prostration and lassitude after its little fever fits."[17] If such snippets of order were even genuine: "order was an accident".[18] "In the midst of the sulky brooding calm, with which Paris affects to look tranquil and pleasant…, scarcely a day passes without its own little minor demonstration and special commotion."[19] The view expressed by *The Times* is clear: Paris and France are in chaos.

Linking this to Britishness may seem uncertain, for order can of course be accepted as a generally positive thing that you do not need to be British to appreciate, and so appeals to order must also be considered from such a perspective as well. It is however the contrasts that are drawn between Britain and France in this regard that give this theme extra meaning and relate it to Britishness. France was one of the most significant 'other' elements against which the British defined themselves. *The Times* gives its own opinion of the English when it states that "an English mob is neither political nor warlike."[20] Given that *The Times* has just portrayed the French revolutionaries in Paris as exactly these two things, this definition of an English mob can clearly be seen in contrast to the view of the French. The article where this statement appears (about a demonstration in London) does not make it clear whether this was actually an observation of this demonstration, or an expectation of the English in general.

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[16] *The Times*, 3 April, p. 3
[17] *The Times*, 7 April, p. 8
[18] *The Times*, 10 March, p. 4
[19] *The Times*, 24 March, p. 6
[20] *The Times*, 9 March, p. 4

Perhaps it could have been both. That such a distinction from the French is made is evident when *The Times* actively compares both sides. After a long description of the French revolutionaries appearing at the *Hôtel de Ville* in Paris armed and in large numbers, *The Times* offers the following description of the English residents of Paris who followed them: "The English residents, who presented their quiet and sensible address on that day".[21] A clear contrast is presented between the loud and warlike French, and the quiet and peaceful English. This example is especially revealing as it speaks of Englishmen *in* Paris, suggesting that Englishmen can retain their traits even if resident elsewhere, such is there nature that it does not change if they move. McAllister points to the same contrast being drawn in the *ILN* where it can clearly be seen in its illustrations how a British demonstration in London is quiet and ordered, while the one depicting a French demonstration shows an absolute frenzy with large numbers packed together waving weapons.[22] What is perhaps even more interesting is that the demonstration depicted is no other than the Chartist march of 10 April. Even their demonstration fits into British stereotypes it seems.

The reasons for such distinctions were delved into by *The Times* as well. The paper refers to another old difference between the French and British as a justification:

> "The real difference at the bottom of the whole affair is, that the Celtic nature is not so energetic, so ambitious, so struggling, so persevering, so patient, so mechanical and orderly as the Saxon. It may possess quicker feelings, stronger imagination, and more of a certain native poetry; but it is not so adapted for comfort, peace and wealth. A massacre of the Saxons with the aid of French bayonets will not mend this deficiency. It is a matter for moral and gradual improvement."[23]

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[21] *The Times*, 15 March, p. 4
[22] A. McAllister, 'The Case of the Missing Chartist: How the Year of Revolutions was Presented to Readers of *The Illustrated London News*' in Boardman and Kinealy ed., *1848*, p. 232
[23] *The Times*, 4 March, p. 4

Attention here has also turned to the threat of Irish rebellion that arose that year, and the difference between the British 'Saxons' and the French and Irish 'Celts' is crucial. *The Times* implies that tendency to order or disorder is ethnically embedded. Such differences are emphasised when *The Times* discusses other revolutionary movements. It is a lot more positive about the Germans, fellow Saxons as well as Protestants: "On the side of France lie the principal dangers of Europe, on the side of Germany the main defences of order and authority upon the Continent".[24] Order is clearly something that is seen as specific to the Saxon race. The Irish can therefore be linked to the French and they are in fact expected to follow the latter's example due to their own tendency for mischief. [25] This is significant as it marks the Irish as an 'other' at this time as well as the French, both against whom the British can define themselves.

The revolution in France, but also the wider revolutionary atmosphere of 1848, gives further development to this notion of 'order' as part of Britishness in the press. Seeing revolution everywhere while Britain alone appears to have escaped it, a sense of the British having an innate orderliness developed further. The contrast here is that while the French might be able to restore order after a disturbance, the British are naturally ordered, and so such action is unnecessary in the first place. They do not need as much policing as they are capable of policing themselves. Or at least this is the perspective that is publically promoted in the mainstream press. It can be seen in instances where there is mention of the police not having to intervene in a demonstration, for the 'un-political and un-warlike' English can keep order even during a demonstration.[26] The lack of a need for a strong police presence is something that can also be seen in the *ILN* illustrations that McAllister referred to. Another point that he could have made is that, unlike in the depiction of the French demonstration, the British one

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[24] *The Times*, 13 March, p. 4
[25] *The Times*, 9 March, p. 5 and 23 March, p. 4
[26] *The Times*, 3 April, p. 3

has no police or military presence in it. In fact there are no weapons at all.[27] It is ordered, but this is portrayed as simply being the people's natural state, even when motivated to action by the Chartists. The British public is also shown to be aware of what will cause unrest in the first place. Following a discussion of the negative effects of socialism on France, *The Times* states that "our own countrymen hardly need the warning."[28] The people's wish for order is further demonstrated when *The Times* is keen to point out that even the working classes asked to be made special constables to keep the peace in case of a rowdy Chartist demonstration.[29] In his discussion of the special constables, Roger Swift mentions that the ability of the people themselves to put down the Chartists that year was a matter of national pride.[30] This must be seen in contrast to the accounts of the failure of the recruited National Guard to keep order in Paris. The difference is clear: the French need to be recruited to keep order (and yet still they fail), while ordinary British workers put themselves forward as willing volunteers to maintain order. If they are even required. *The Times* offers advice to the French that "full work and good wages would have kept that fierce democracy in order better than a hundred thousand soldiers of the line",[31] supposedly a reference to the British system and economy as naturally breeding order by making the people content.

However the Chartists do not always seem to fit into this expectation of the British. Describing a demonstration in London, *The Times* states it as causing "riotous disturbances, which, though they never assumed a very serious aspect, were sufficiently disgraceful to those who took part in them".[32] It is interesting that the focus appears more on the 'disgrace' that those involved brought upon themselves rather than the effect of the 'disturbances'.

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[27] *ILN*, 15 April, p. 1
[28] *The Times*, 24 March, p. 4
[29] *The Times*, 10 March, p. 4
[30] Swift, 'Specials', p. 50
[31] *The Times*, 29 February, p. 5
[32] *The Times*, 7 March, p. 8

Judging from the wider perspective of *The Times*'s coverage of 'order', it appears that the perpetrators are not worthy of the nation in which they live. *The Times* often portrayed the Chartists as disorderly.[33] In addition the paper suggested a link between the French revolution and the Chartist resurgence, implying a foreign influence that puts to question the Chartist claim to speak for the British people.[34] However *The Times* does not seem entirely one sided in this matter, admitting that after one such Chartist meeting, the demonstrators dispersed peacefully with no incident occurring, and police interference was not required.[35] Though *The Times* seems to doubt that this would be repeated, suggesting that the Chartists will likely cause more trouble in future. The Chartists have of course been campaigning for longer than the outbreak of revolution that year, but it is interesting how they seem to not be included in the view of order at home that *The Times* has.

The Chartists made many attempts in early 1848 to respond to this picture of themselves as disorderly. Interestingly *The Times* itself includes such an attempt. A letter is published where a Chartist complains about the language used about the Chartists, and promises that the great meeting of 10 April "shall be a peaceable, orderly, and moral display of the unenfranchised and toiling masses."[36] This response is commonplace in the *Star* where the Chartists are keen to distance themselves from the image of themselves as 'disturbers of the peace.' The *Star* emphasises that the press is wrong and that it does not focus enough on what the Chartists are actually doing, or the content of their meetings.[37] The Chartists see appearing orderly as being very important, and make a great effort to do so. In every issue of the *Star*, they mention almost religiously that they will be legal and peaceful in the pursuit of their aims and

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[33] *The Times*, 10 March, p. 4 and 14 March, p. 5 for example.
[34] *The Times*, 16 March, p. 5
[35] *The Times*, 16 March, p. 5
[36] *The Times*, 4 March, p. 3
[37] *Star*, 11 March, p. 1

that they are on the side of peace and order.[38] It becomes a sort of mantra. This can be seen in

a Chartist poster promoting the demonstration on 10 April as well, which has as its heading:

"Peace and Order is our motto".[39] However it is uncertain whether this appeal to order is

actually an expression of Britishness, or simply good public relations. Any group or

movement is hardly going to suggest that it will cause disturbances and uncertainty if it

seriously wishes to gain support. Especially in such a public way as a newspaper or poster. It

is the Chartists' references to the notion of Britain as innately orderly that relate this to

Britishness. On one occasion, the *Star* described one meeting in the usual vein, stating that

"everything proceeded with the greatest order and decorum" but also emphasises that this

occurred even without the presence of the Chartist executive leadership.[40] This is suggesting

that even the rank and file Chartists are naturally ordered and respectable enough to have a

peaceful meeting on their own; they do not need supervision. They therefore should be seen

to fit the expectations of the British laid out in *The Times* and the *ILN*.

The *Star* does not share *The Times*'s opinion of order in the French revolution. It states that

"they [the French] need but a peaceful demonstration, as behoves an intelligent and

enlightened nation".[41] This appears to be a suggestion for what action the French should take

next. This is the key difference between the two papers, for while *The Times* does not think

that the French are capable of peaceful action as it is a specifically British trait, the *Star* is

suggesting that the French are capable of this. The *Star* goes further and tries to counter the

picture of the French revolution in *The Times* and the *ILN* to show that it can be seen as an

ordered event. The *Star* praises the French for achieving their aims without spilling much

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[38] *Star*, 4 March, p. 1; 11 March, p. 1; 1 April, p. 1; to give just a few examples.
[39] Chartist poster, 10 April,
[http://www.unionhistory.info/timeline/Tl_Display.php?Where=Dc1Title+contains+%27Poster+advertising+the+Chartists+Demonstration%2C+1848%27+]
[40] *Star*, 11 March, p. 4
[41] *Star*, 26 February, p. 4

blood, and of being merciful and sparing their king and his ministers.[42] They are praised for their moderation in victory.[43] All of this looks like an attempt to make the French revolution a more appealing event. Given the Chartists' own aims as well as their wish to make the French appear a viable example to follow in Britain, this is understandable. By making the French revolution appear in line with British values, they can promote it as an example for the British people. However in doing so they oppose orderliness as something peculiar to the British, which *The Times* states often and explicitly.

In trying to make the French revolution a good example, the *Star* also tried to distance this revolution from the first French revolution that began in 1789. The first French revolution still had very negative connotations in Britain. The *Star*'s reference to the French mercy in sparing their king can be seen as a direct reference to how these two events differed. It is a noticeable difference that while *The Times* emphasises that 1848's revolution is similar to the first, the *Star* avoids any such comparison, instead emphasising the differences between the two:

> "the revolution of 1848 was marked by extreme humanity, generosity, and clemency, because effected by the people themselves—while the revolution of 1793 was marked by deeds the most sanguinary, atrocious, and cruel"[44]

This is part of the *Star*'s attempt to 'clean up' the view of the 1848 French revolution. Not only is it distancing it from the events following 1789, but it's filling 1848 with popular British traits, contrasting it from the non-British elements that made 1789 unpopular. As Bensimon states, the mainstream press was more keen to emphasise similarities between the two, focusing on symbols of the first revolution like the Phrygian cap, even though they were

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[42] *Star*, 11 March, p. 1
[43] *Star*, 25 March, p. 4
[44] *Star*, 1 April, p. 1. 1793 is crucial as the year that the king was executed.

not common in 1848.[45] Similar elements can be seen in the *ILN*, where the French revolutionaries of 1848 are often depicted wearing Phrygian caps for instance.[46]

When discussing the action that should be taken at home however, the message that the Chartists give through the *Star* seems a bit confused. At times it even appears contradictory, as if they were uncertain what action and mind-set to actively promote. A motto used in the *Star* gives a very clear image of this apparent confusion: "Let 'Peace, Law, and Order' be the motto—'Onward and we Conquer' be the motto".[47] Here the *Star* is preparing the Chartists for the imminent demonstration the week after. Clearly they are aware that they must conform to order, but they also want to promote action for change; and 'conquering' can be perceived as more violent. The difference with *The Times* in this regard is that *The Times*'s take on order is very passive, while the *Star* is speaking of maintaining order during action. It's as if there is an internal struggle in the Chartist movement, wanting to actively promote action to achieve their goals, but also wary of the bad press of a disordered attempt to change society, emphasised all the more strongly due to the recent events in France and across Europe. This particular article goes on to say "England expects that every man will do his duty"[48] though it seems that this could be interpreted in a number of ways. A reader of both the *Star* and *The Times* might be confused about what exactly this duty is. This also suggests that the *Star* is attempting to combine order with action, while the mainstream press prefers a lack of action overall.

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[45] F. Bensimon, 'Britain During the 1848 Revolutions and the Changing Features of 'Britishness' in Boardman and Kinealy ed., *1848*, p. 87
[46] *ILN*, 4 March, p. 1 and 11 March, p. 1 are just some examples
[47] *Star*, 1 April, p. 5
[48] *ibid.*

<u>Reform and Revolution</u>

"We may have grievances to complain of, but we shall redress them peaceably. We may have vital Reforms to seek, but we shall obtain them without Revolution."[49] Here is summarised a key point emphasised in the mainstream press as a result of the outbreak of revolutions in Europe in 1848: in Britain, reform was preferred to revolution. Even when it is admitted that perhaps there are some changes that need to be made, the way to do this should be through reform. The reference here to redress grievances 'peaceably' connects this theme to that of 'order' that has been previously discussed and the two have much in common. The promotion of gradual, quiet change echoes a view of Britain as an inherently ordered society. If Britain and order are synonymous, then reform should be the only means possible to enact change, especially given the efforts of the mainstream press to paint revolution as chaotic and disorderly. The *ILN* provides a great example of this with their front page on 4 March which replaces the usual title illustration with one showing chaos in Paris under the heading 'The French Revolution'.[50] Linking revolution with disorder in this way makes it easier to present both as the opposites of preferred British behaviour.

The mainstream press makes clear what the problems are with revolutionary activity. Revolution brings everything to a halt. *The Times* states that "the certain effect of every great revolution is to check, if not absolutely to paralyse, all the ordinary springs of social industry."[51] It also suggests that the price of revolution is the fall of production that results in a loss of credit, referring directly to France.[52] *The Times* has seen the fallout in France and tied this directly to the fact that there was a revolution. It compares France after the

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[49] *ILN*, 8 April, p. 2
[50] *ILN*, 4 March, p. 1
[51] *The Times*, 28 February, p. 5. Another example that is specific to France is 5 April, p. 4
[52] *The Times*, 30 March, p. 4

revolution to a stagecoach losing control when going down a hill.[53] A letter to the editor in *The Times* states that the British do not like the idea of losing productivity to such reasons. It stated that the citizens would not be happy if business was delayed even for a day due to any Chartist activity.[54] However it is not just revolution that causes trouble, but trouble that caused revolution in the first place. *The Times* asserts that revolution in France broke out as a result of a series of "follies and blunders",[55] thereby suggesting that it is a country that makes mistakes that is prone to falling to revolution.

In fact such mistakes that result in revolutions are suggested as somewhat self-perpetuating, for as *The Times* states, "we begin to think that revolution is to be the permanent state and government of France."[56] *The Times* is keen to emphasise that revolution breeds further revolutions, and in this light sees all of the French revolutionary experience as one single connected event, saying that:

> "The French Revolution has now passed through the vicissitudes of 60 years, without, indeed, arriving at any settled or definite result, but exhibiting in its several periods or stages the most extraordinary variations of passion and opinion which ever occurred in the history of society."[57]

The reference to the French revolution not arriving at any "settled or definite result" would be of particular concern for the British, especially given the earlier discussion about order. In the opinion of *The Times*, revolution is an inefficient way to pursue change for it has a habit of causing the country to fall into a state of permanent upheaval. While *The Times* could be seen to be pursuing an agenda of supporting the establishment in its smearing of revolution, its

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[53] *The Times*, 23 March, p. 4
[54] *The Times*, 1 April, p. 5
[55] *The Times*, 3 April, p. 4
[56] *The Times*, 31 March, p. 4
[57] *The Times*, 10 March, p. 4

discussion of future revolutions in France is quite foreshadowing. It discusses potential

further "descent into faction" and the fallout between Republicans and Communists, thereby

predicting correctly the June Days yet to come.[58] *The Times* also leaves the future open and

uncertain, asking the question: "In fact what will be the Government of Paris six or twelve

months hence?"

1848 presented a chance to the mainstream British press to further discredit the French as

well as to solidify the image that revolution breeds instability. Most importantly it was seized

as an opportunity to differentiate France from Britain. *The Times* indicates that Britain should

be a passive observer: "Why may not France guess at good government if she likes? Let her

try first one form and then another, so long as we are allowed to watch at a safe distance the

operations of her terrible laboratory."[59] The idea that Britain should not have anything to do

with the revolutionary tendencies of the French continues in *The Times*, for it states that "the

reason that the credit of England stands unshaken in the face of time and of the world,

is…that England has not plunged for nearly two centuries into the vortex of revolution."[60]

This reference is using Britain's history to justify the response to the present. Britain's non-

revolutionary streak is presented as a worthy achievement, and as a start contrast to the

French "vicissitudes of 60 years."[61] The historical experience of France is now shown as the

'other', very different to that of Britain. The present French trouble, combined with their

seeming tendency for it, is all the more reason to be proud of Britain's different and superior

path, and to identify against the French experience.

The superior path that is suggested is one of reform. *The Times* does not go as far as to

suggest that Britain has no problems, but that there is a better way to solve them. "The

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[58] *ibid.*
[59] *The Times*, 7 March, p. 4
[60] *The Times*, 14 March, p. 4
[61] *The Times*, 10 March, p. 4

inequalities of British society are, we think, too great", but it is the means of achieving this that must be different for "it should be the *tendency* of legislation to reduce them; but that is a very different thing from a sudden change."[62] 'Sudden change' is a clear reference to revolution, but it is not the only difference to France hinted at here. The other is that the government is trusted to enact change itself. This trust is echoed by the *ILN*.[63] Patience is what is being called for by these papers. Using an important British historical reference, *The Times* suggests that it would have been disastrous [for Britain] to have jumped from the Magna Carta straight to *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.[64] This seeming ignorance of the 600 years between the two appears to suggest the backwardness of France and exaggerates the leap that they attempted to make. The reference to the motto of the first French revolution would also remind readers of the negative impacts (for Britain) of that event, and so give a not yet forgotten example of the dangers of sudden change.

This appeal to reform is linked by *The Times* to British traits that make the people more suited to this superior form of change. The British are portrayed as hard-working, that they hope to rise in society as a result, and that life was good and presented opportunities for natural progression. [65] The "national honour" is according to the *Illustrated London News* the "safeguard of England" which means that "there is no fear of REVOLUTION".[66] This is contrasted to the French who do not appear so hard working and are now taking part in the revolution for want of anything better to do.[67] The lack of ability to reform is given as a criticism of the French character. The French papers on the other hand, as Bensimon has pointed out, mocked the British for the fact that they were incapable of securing a revolution

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[62] *The Times*, 28 March, p. 4
[63] *ILN*, 1 April, p. 1
[64] *The Times*, 28 March, p. 4
[65] *The Times*, 28 March, p. 4
[66] *ILN*, 8 April, p. 2
[67] *The Times*, 5 April, p .4

at home.[68] This suggests that simple reform was not seen as enough by the French. *The Times* also paints the Irish as more in line with the French than the British in this respect, for Ireland aims to mimic other nations when they start a revolution.[69] This shows how the revolution/reform divide is again being entrenched in the 'other', which as Colley and others have shown, is a key part of national identification. The only positive word that *The Times* has for any of the revolutionary movements of 1848 is that of Germany. However what is interesting is that it uses the word 'progress' to describe the events there, the word 'revolution' is curiously absent from its accounts.[70] This would suggest that revolution is being associated with the 'other', and so the more positive perspective of Germany must be justified as not being a revolution. This is interesting as it challenges the notion that was expressed by some of the scholarship mentioned in the introduction that there was also a good image of revolution in the press.[71] Early 1848 suggests that, for the mainstream press at least, all revolution was bad.

The fear of revolutionary influences spreading to Britain is also addressed in *The Times*. It makes the claim that a revolution will in fact make things worse for the workers who are supposed to be benefiting from it.[72] The Chartists are accused of following in the footsteps of the French, thus aligning themselves with the 'other'.[73] Their revolutionary character is attested to, for they are accused of being prepared to use force to secure their goals as well as that they have used "a great deal of seditious and revolutionary language."[74] An example of this is offered in a report of a meeting where "Three cheers were then given for the British revolution" seemingly as a reference to the upcoming April demonstration that is the focus of

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[68] Bensimon, 'Britain During', p. 91
[69] *The Times*, 23 March, p. 4
[70] *The Times*, 20 March, p. 8
[71] See Chapter 1: Introduction
[72] *The Times*, 28 March, p. 4
[73] *The Times*, 16 March, p. 5
[74] *The Times*, 6 April, p. 5

most Chartist meetings at this time.[75] Having marked revolution as a concept inherent in the 'other', *The Times* seems to be making an attempt to distance the Chartists from *The Times*'s own presentation of Britishness. Similar to calling the Chartists Irish later in the year as pointed out by Belchem, *The Times* is here grouping the Chartists closer to the Irish as well as the French, and therefore as an 'other' themselves. British nature has been shown as being pro-reform and anti-revolution, and the Chartists are being portrayed as failing to live up to this standard. The fact that *The Times* makes a clear distinction between 'reform', which is good, and 'revolution, which is bad, and tying this to its views of Britishness, indicates the importance of such a distinction, especially as *The Times* uses this distinction as a weapon to criticise others, even those who might refer to themselves as reformers.

As with accusations of disorder, the Chartists are again keen to respond to the accusations of the press. The *Star* blames the press for badmouthing the French revolution for its own purposes:

> "therefore, the first attempt of the Press is to run down the French Revolution—its second to convince the British people that they are remarkably comfortable, that a Revolution would do them no good, and that they ought to be remarkably satisfied."[76]

This shows that the *Star* is aware that *The Times* is attacking the French revolution as part of its attempt to discredit revolution in general. This also emphasises again the difference between the *Star*'s active comparisons to the French revolution with *The Times*'s passive comparisons. The *Star* did not share the negative opinions of revolution that *The Times* or the *ILN* had. Speaking favourably of the French revolution, with, unlike *The Times*, no fear of the word revolution itself, the *Star* appears influenced by 1848 to present revolution as a potential force for good. "Hurrah! A successful insurrection bids fair to become a triumphant

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[75] *The Times*, 25 March, p .5
[76] *Star*, 1 April, p. 4

revolution!" claims the *Star*, in one of its many positive accounts of the French revolution.[77] This example also attests to the difference being made between 'insurrection' and 'revolution' attributed to Ernest Jones.[78] Before it can be said that the *Star* has a completely positive view of revolution however, some of the more ambiguous references in the paper need consideration. In another of its first reports, the *Star* states that "if the people [French] are not insensible to their own interests, they will in this their hour of triumph, insist upon a "Reform" that will give them sovereignty."[79] The overly positive outlook on the French revolution in the rest of this article makes this use of the word 'Reform', capitalised and in quotations, stand out. There are other uses of 'reform' in the *Star* in relation to the French. The *campagne des banquets* (the meetings held by the French revolutionaries in the run-up to the revolution of 1848) is referred to as 'reform banquets' by the *Star*. As mentioned previously, the *Star* was trying to promote the French revolution as a positive example for Britain. Therefore such references could be an awareness of the need to play down the revolutionary extent of the French revolution. Painting the people's meetings as ones for reform, and then stating that they should seek reform *after* the revolution has already happened, presents an impression that reform was the original plan of the French; the revolution was an unplanned consequence. There is no insistence on the distinction between reform and revolution in the *Star* like there is in *The Times* for instance. However this is very likely just speculation, for the free use of the word 'revolution' by the *Star* to describe events not otherwise termed in such a way (such as the Chartist riots in Birmingham and Manchester) suggests that it is more likely that the paper, and by extension the leadership of the Chartists for it is Feargus O'Connor's article that uses the term a lot, does not consider revolution to be a bad thing. Therefore the Chartists (through the *Star*) do not respond to the

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[77] *Star*, 26 February, p. 4
[78] Weisser, *Chartism in 1848*, pp. 23-4
[79] *Star*, 26 February, p. 4

idea of revolution being bad as much as Weisser and Belchem would have expected. They seem to be carving their own interpretation.

The *Star* differs primarily from *The Times* in that it advocates action at home. The common reference to France as a good example would appear to suggest that Britain should follow her in revolution.[80] However, perhaps France is just being presented as an inspiration, rather than a blueprint. In an account of a speech given by O'Connor in Parliament, he states that the "subserviency and treachery of French officials, who…resisted reform, led to revolution, and the system was as corrupt in England…They [British] should have reform."[81] This seems to confirm the image of revolution having been the result of reforms being turned down, at least in Chartist opinion. O'Connor uses the events in France to justify the call for reform at home. Revolution appears a potential but unintentional consequence of such calls being ignored. The mention of the system being "as corrupt" in England does imply that O'Connor is suggesting that Britain could go down the same path as France if the government rejects the wishes of the people. The same article, which is an account of Parliamentary proceedings, goes on to present France as an example of what could happen if attempts at reform are continuously put down. Given that the Chartists had been seeking further political reform since the Reform Act of 1832, this could be seen as an accusation that if change should happen through reform by the government, the government has been failing in this obligation. This should be compared to the view expressed in *The Times* that government should be trusted with making the right reforms. O'Connor's appeal to Parliament suggests a similar adherence to government, but the suggestion that Britain could fall in the same way as France implies that the government could fail in its duty. This is aligning the British and French

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[80] *Star*, 4 March, p. 3; 11 March, p. 4, to give a few examples.
[81] *Star*, 4 March, p. 3

experiences, rather than focusing on the French as an 'other' as is done in the mainstream press.

The *Star* continues with its calls for change to avoid revolution. The Charter is promoted as the best security that the country has "against the convulsion of revolution".[82] The Chartists are therefore promoting themselves as offering an alternative to the revolutions that are spreading across Europe. While it could be argued that a paper, regardless of the famous British freedom of the press, would not actively promote revolution, Chartist exasperation seems to have risen between the outbreak of revolution in France to the days before their own demonstration in London. In an article from 8 April, O'Connor announces in the pages of the *Star* that "I am for a revolution."[83] This seems a contradiction to the Chartists' earlier claims to be proposing an alternative to revolution, though it must be noted that many of such uses of 'revolution' are made in articles written by O'Connor himself. A hope is also expressed that if the petition of April was rejected, the Chartists would take over the government.[84] However the same issue also makes a call to the "MEN OF LONDON" that "A great, *peaceful Revolution* must be accomplished in Britain."[85] A peaceful revolution would normally be considered quite a contradiction, perhaps admitted by the choice of italicising these words. This appears to encapsulate the Chartist difficulty in combining their wishes for change in society with the criticisms being levied by the mainstream press. These criticisms appeal to 'Britishness', and it is the British people that the Chartists claim to represent. Another point of interest is that the *Star* does not make the clear distinction between 'reform' and 'revolution' made in *The Times*. The two different views of revolution attest to the idea of a negative and positive type discussed on page nine. Like with the comparison between

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[82] *Star*, 11 March, p. 1
[83] *Star*, 8 April, p. 1
[84] *ibid.*
[85] *ibid.*

Ivanyi and Belchem, the focus is on the fact that the mainstream press had a different view to the radical press, rather than either recognising two types of revolution.

There is an element of Britishness relevant to this theme that is appealed to in the *Star* but is absent from the mainstream press. That element is the right to riot referred to by Thompson, the precedent for which was given by 1688.[86]

> "And always bear the one GREAT FACT in mind, that the only superiority that your constitution possesses over all others is, that we have the power to meet, and that having the power to meet, by our courage we have destroyed the oppressors' power to prosecute if we express sentiments at variance with his will."[87]

And also:

> "Whenever a government violates the rights of the People, insurrection is for the People, and for every portion of the People; the most sacred of rights, and the most indispensable of duties!"[88]

This is quite at odds with the anti-disorder and anti-revolution sentiments seen in the mainstream press. The *Star* is also appealing to what it sees as a relevant element of Britishness in its attempt to promote change, while the mainstream press can be seen as appealing to the elements that advocate resistance to change.

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[86] Thompson, *The Making*, p. 80
[87] *Star*, 26 February, p. 1
[88] *Star*, 26 February, p. 4

Exceptionalism and Exemplarism

"By the favour of Heaven, we will still practise the arts and cherish the means which have
prospered us so far."[89] *The Times*, in this statement of 21 March, has presented a very
favourable view of the British system as one that has weathered the revolutionary storm of
1848. This statement goes further, implying a longer term ability for the British to avoid
trouble thanks to their better system. This should be contrasted with an earlier statement of
the situation in France: "Time seems suddenly thrown back for a century, and difficulties and
uncertainties have revived that had become things of tradition."[90] France is struggling while
Britain is prospering. *The Times* is already keen to emphasise this difference just one month
after the outbreak of revolution in France, and still early in the grand revolutionary
occurrences of 1848. Of course from hindsight it is known that Britain did indeed weather the
storm, but in late March, with the big Chartist demonstration only weeks away and every
week seemingly claiming another revolutionary victim, that Britain would emerge unscathed
was far from obvious. Nevertheless, *The Times* is quick to present this view that British ways
have saved the country and that therefore, as tried and tested means, they should continue to
be adhered to.

The same article also shows the significance of Britain's achievement in the context of the
times. *The Times* offers the following description: "The changes and perils of the most
extraordinary half century in the history of mankind have rolled to and fro upon the tides of
time." This "storm" has cast many a "noble craft" upon the "beach".[91] The outbreak of yet
more revolutions that Britain seemed to be avoiding once again would not have gone
unnoticed. This fact would lend justification to *The Times*'s statement in favour of the

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[89] *The Times*, 21 March, p. 5
[90] *The Times*, 28 February, p. 6
[91] *ibid.*

establishment above. In a later article, it is made clear that Britain has escaped. Britain is the exception to this revolutionary rule: "Every monarchy in Europe but our own seems to have slipped from its ancient moorings,"[92] and so this implies Britain's superiority as well, especially given the negative connotations of revolution seen in the mainstream press. The high expectation of historical knowledge of *The Times*, as well as its extensive coverage of the revolutionary goings on of the year, would make its readers aware that they lived in an age of revolutions. It would also be clear that Britain had (so far) yet again avoided following the Continent to its fate. Therefore, the feeling that the country must be doing something right would not be hard to believe. 1848 gave further opportunities for comparisons to be made with the Continent, especially France, and *The Times* was eager to take them. In its ongoing commentary of the French practise of planting liberty trees all over Paris, the opinion is stated that this was something strongly contrary to an Englishman's natural taste". The reason for this is given as: "The poplar [the liberty tree]…otherwise so shortlived and useless a tree is not what we should select to typify the institutions of England."[93] This both serves to paint the picture of British institutions as long-lasting, but also contrasts them to the French which are here suggested to be fragile, like the tree that represents them. Yet again the element of comparison with the 'other' creeps into this view of Britain. The perception of Britain as longstanding and resilient is built up by the mainstream press using the revolutions as a point of contrast.

Alongside this idea of the exceptionalism of Britain in its apparent unique ability to avoid trouble in 1848 is tied a sense of exemplarism as well. Britain is presented as the example that all Europe is now attempting to follow:

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[92] *The Times*, 23 March, p. 4
[93] *The Times*, 31 March, p. 4

"This country may justly feel proud at finding all the nations of Europe almost simultaneously reconstructing their governments on our old insular model. The representative system now propagated with electric speed from capital to capital is that which has been quietly and slowly growing up in the midst of us for six hundred years."[94]

Here *The Times* presents its view of 1848 as an attempt to recreate Britain on the Continent. The theme of reform is also evident, as it is the tradition of gradual change that is depicted as having created the superior system of Britain that is now the envy of Europe. This attests to British exceptionalism, for all the other European countries are trying to copy this system in a short time, in sudden change. *The Times* builds on this to also promote the idea that Britain already has all that which other countries seek: "We possess those things which other nations are everywhere demanding at the gates of the Palace or the door of the Legislature."[95] That is why they are copying Britain. The *ILN* offers the same opinion:

"Sober and reflecting, they [Germans] perceive that, under a limited Monarchy, of which the English Government presents so perfect a model, the greatest amount of personal and political freedom can be enjoyed, in conjunction with the greatest security of property, without the body politic being needlessly exposed to the desolating effects of any of those hurricanes of popular passions which have so often brought the most powerful Republics to the verge of destruction, and which not infrequently render the rule of the many more oppressive than the despotism of absolute sovereignty."[96]

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[94] *The Times*, 25 March, p. 4
[95] *The Times*, 21 March, p. 5
[96] *ILN*, 1 April, p. 1

All this further attests to the superior and progressive nature of the British political system. Such a message means that the mainstream press is tying the establishment to this sense of British exceptionalism and exemplarism. And yet the government itself does not get a direct mention in the examples above. The statements refer to "this country" and "us" which gives a sense of attributing British success to the British people themselves, as they are given credit for the positive status quo. It appears a very smart attempt to tie Britishness with success which thus advocates resistance to change. Change on the Continent is occurring to emulate Britain, so Britain must already be in the correct place.

British exceptionalism is further evidenced when *The Times* speaks of 1848 as a domino effect: "Already we see a hundred European sections. They follow in one another's trail."[97] Britain is of course the exception to that rule for: "we do not mean to follow their example"[98] which is again separating Britain from the herd. It is clear then that it is the European mainland that is following the example of Britain, not the other way around. Britain is portrayed as standing strongly on the side-lines as a beacon to others while the countries of the Continent succumb to troubles one by one. This could create a problem for the utopian picture that *The Times* seems to be creating however. If Britain is the example, why is following this example leading the Continent to chaos? The emphasis on reform made above could suggest that this chaos on the Continent is due to it not following Britain's gradual development through reform; instead the mainland enacted sudden change in its attempt to emulate Britain. The reference to the continental Europeans following each other's trails seems to imply that they are going about the process in the wrong way, and this causes them trouble. So the idea of British reforming tradition is tied into its exceptionalism. As the original 'bad' influence, France is the main culprit, and following the French example is

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[97] *The Times*, 15 March, p. 4
[98] *The Times*, 9 March, p. 4

problematic. Therefore, when *The Times* states that in fact Chartism has risen again because of the influence of Paris,[99] this is a clear criticism. A criticism not only of the Chartists' following of the French, but of the implication that they have abandoned British tradition as a result.

The Times is keen to suggest that this exceptionalism and exemplarism are seen from the outside as well as evident to the British themselves. The idea that Britain was the "land of liberty" is something that *The Times* suggests was even the opinion of other nations.[100] "Follow the example of Great Britain" is the advice of the Prussian Minister in France to the French Provisional Government according to *The Times*.[101] As well as this, an element of jealousy from other countries is expressed, particularly of Britain's apparently unique ability to stay out of revolutionary troubles. "At the same time, the jealousy [of Italy] against England on account of its remaining comparatively tranquil in the midst of the general *bouleversement* is expressed by…all parties".[102] Whether this can be trusted is uncertain however. As Bensimon's study has shown, French publications had a very different idea of Britain. They portrayed the fact that the British could not secure a revolution as a bad thing, definitely not something worth emulating.[103] It therefore seems likely that the Continent did not hold Britain in as high a regard as *The Times* would have us believe. The truth of this is perhaps not so important, for what these examples show is that *The Times* believed that such aspects were worthy of emulation and jealousy, and that they use such factors to promote the idea of British exceptionalism.

The views of the *Star* are at the beginning similar to those seen in the mainstream press. In its first report, the *Star* portrays the French as having followed the British precedent, as the

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[99] *The Times*, 15 March, p. 4
[100] *The Times*, 28 February, p. 5
[101] *The Times*, 10 March, p. 5
[102] *The Times*, 31 March, p. 6
[103] See no. 97

French revolution was an attempt to establish what Britain already had,[104] seemingly echoing the idea of British exemplarism. Britain is also described as both the "land of liberty" and as "the pioneer of liberty",[105] which focuses more on establishing British precedence in this matter. It likewise furthers the idea of exemplarism, for 1848 is shown as seeing other countries attempt to become lands of liberty as well. In fact, in some instances the *Star* appears to become as patriotic as either of the mainstream papers considered: "Could neither the cunning king nor his cunning minister [of France] just have looked across the channel and seen how *our* rulers manage these matters?"[106] The emphasis this article placed on 'our' is a powerful suggestion of solidarity with the establishment. And yet, as the article continues, this appears more and more as a backhanded compliment. It states that the freedom of complaint that is a "safety valve" has been abused by the British government, for it has allowed the government to oppress the people, as issues do not actually get dealt with.[107] Since the *Star* shows its awareness of the French government's mistake in supressing the *campagne des banquets*, it is also aware of the significance of Britain's freedom of complaint in being able to defuse a situation.

Thus the agreement with the mainstream press ends and the *Star* goes on to exhibit a much different view of this theme. In fact, here lies the greatest contrasts of all the three themes considered. France is presented as having usurped Britain's role as the example to Europe and it is Britain who must now look to France as the new example.[108] "Glory to the men of Paris! Who have…set an example before the oppressed of every land."[109] The many complaints that the *Star* has about the status quo in Britain shows that the paper considers the

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[104] *Star*, 26 February, p. 1
[105] *Star*, 4 March, p. 2 and 18 March, p. 4
[106] *Star*, 1 April, p. 2
[107] *ibid.*
[108] *Star*, 18 March, p. 5 and 25 March, p. 4; to name some examples.
[109] *Star*, 26 February, p. 4

people of Britain as amongst those who are 'oppressed'. A regularly recurring saying in the *Star* is that France is the light by which England will read its Charter: these two are often considered together, something that is seen on a poster as well. [110] The role reversal continues in statements such as "Great Britain should pant after the liberty of France", and that the Chartists wish to see "England as free as France was now."[111] Interestingly this is a rare reference to 'Great Britain', as the term England has usually been preferred. The *Star* in this sentence is eager to include the whole island for it states: "No wonder that the cries of Paris are finding an echo in the streets of London, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Manchester,"[112] a rare case where Scotland is brought into the picture of 'Britain' which is so often seen as synonymous with England in the papers. Britain's exceptionalism and exemplarism is thus lost in this Chartist view, and France is shown to have become superior thanks to the gains of the revolution of 1848. However the *Star* does not want to reduce the prestige of Britain too much. It states that: "They [British] had often boasted that England was the greatest nation in the world. Was it not monstrous that she should also be the most distressed nation in the world?"[113] This seems to be appealing to British greatness in a different way to that seen in the mainstream press: that British people should prove their greatness by taking action now and not accepting the status quo. British exceptionalism is likewise turned on its head: "Shall this country [Britain] remain an exception to the general and glorious progress of nations? NO!"[114] Therefore it can be seen that the *Star* presents a competing picture of this theme to that which was expressed in the pages of the mainstream press.

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[110] *Star*, 4 March, p. 3 and 18 March, p. 4; to name some examples. Chartist poster, 20 March, [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/humanrights/1815-1848/doc-chartist-image.htm]
[111] *Star*, 11 March, p. 4; 25 March, p. 4
[112] *Star*, 11 March, p. 4
[113] *Star*, 18 April, p. 2
[114] *Star*, 1 April, p. 5

The *Star* also goes as far as suggesting that Britain should link itself to France, rather than defining itself against it: 'Englishmen will redeem their character, and will prove themselves worthy to link England's name with that of free and glorious France.'[115] This is a very different take on the common reference to the 'other' of Britain. The tying of Britain with the rest of Europe is more commonly seen in the *Star* than in the mainstream press. The *Star*'s very first sentence of the first paper after the revolution states that: "At no period of England's history was there a more important crisis than that which has now arrived."[116] This gives the striking implication that French events have the potential to count towards English history. It thus presents the view of history that is held by the author of this piece, which is no other than Feargus O'Connor himself. The element of Britain's strong link to Europe is perhaps the greatest distinction between the radical and mainstream press. Another example would be the *Star*'s reporting of the meetings of the Fraternal Democrats, who are tied closely with continental Europe. The *Star*'s European focus is of great contrast to *The Times*, which seems to go as far as to suggest that perhaps Britain should consider herself an Asian power, and not a European one, due to the fact that the most important parts of her Empire were in Asia. *The Times* already in March states that Europe has recently gained too much attention in the press, and it's time for focus to return to Britain's eastern empire, which the rest of this article then promptly does.[117]

However Wilson makes an interesting suggestion in this regard. He states that despite expressions of European solidarity, most Chartists shared middle class prejudices of British superiority and faith in a distinctive national development that made revolution unnecessary.[118] The *Star* seems to suggest that Chartist opinion favoured change, and its

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[115] *Star*, 8 April, p. 2
[116] *Star*, 26 February, p. 1
[117] *The Times*, 20 March, p. 4. See also J. Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China* (London, 2011).
[118] P. H. Wilson, 'Introduction' in P.H. Wilson ed., *1848: The Year of Revolutions* (Aldershot 2006), p. xiv

complaints against the establishment suggest somewhat of a lack of faith in this national development. However, rather than it being one or the other, it seems that the *Star* is trying to present a message of combining these two sides, rather than making them exclusive.

Chapter 3: Conclusions

Final Statements

Pogge von Strandmann reports that there was a saying in the nineteenth century that revolutions were made in France, thought and theorised about in Germany, while the situation in England was characterised by fear of revolution and measures to prevent its possible outbreak.[1] The mainstream press definitely seems to have confirmed the above in regard to France and England. Even the *Star* was attempting to present Chartist aims as potentially saving Britain from destruction. However there are differences between the radical and mainstream press in their views of the Continent. The idea of the Continent, especially France, as the 'other' is only really evident in *The Times*. This contrast is seen in terms of the other themes as well. The mainstream press aimed to use 1848 to tie 'order', 'reform', as well as exceptionalism and exemplarism, to the British experience. 1848 *was* the 'other' in many regards. Chartism's association with 1848 made Chartists the 'other' as well. The Chartists' role as the latest group that threatened the establishment saw them targeted as the latest 'other'. Such a view was not echoed by the radical press which tried to push Britishness in a different direction. The way that the *Star* appeals to the Irish workers as well as British ones echoes more of a class consciousness than a national one. The 'other' for the *Star* is not the fellow Irish worker, but the privileged elite treading down on the British and Irish alike.

Britishness is therefore a complicated concept. Its ambiguity is reinforced by the fact that 'English' and 'British' are quite interchangeable in all of the newspapers considered. Different papers focus on different elements of Britishness, with economy, perhaps another

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[1] H. P. von Strandmann, '1848-1849: A European Revolution?' in R. Evans and H. P. von Strandmann ed., *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction* (Oxford, 2002), p. 1

theme of Britishness, discussed as important to preserve (from revolution) in *The Times*, while the *Star* makes fewer direct references to it. The idea that both sides see themselves as truly representing Britishness is suggested from the way that Britishness is used as a weapon against the other. The Chartists are presented as threatening the economy and the peace, both which *The Times* insists are dear to the average British citizen; while in the *Star*, the establishment is presented as failing in its duties, thereby justifying the invoking of the right to riot. The radical and mainstream press therefore see Britishness differently, and 1848 presented new opportunities to push it in different directions. The suggestion that the press aimed to echo public opinion would suggest that this opportunity was used to confirm the notions and prejudices already held by the British people.[2] The fact that the *Star* and the Chartists that it represented were the 'radical' group of the day, combined with the ultimate failure of Chartism that year could account for their version of Britishness not becoming as entrenched and widespread as that which was seen in *The Times* and the *ILN* for instance. This would explain why so many of the expectations of Britishness seen in the secondary literature do not materialise in the pages of the *Star*. The circulation of the *Star* fell after the failure of the demonstration of 10 April while *The Times* remained strong, and this could perhaps also suggest that *The Times* catered better to what the British public wanted to hear.

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[2] Connors, *Periodicals*, p. 23

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