“A little steam, a little sizzle and a little sleaze”: English-Language Tabloids in the Interwar Period¹

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Muckraking tabloid weeklies were a largely successful – and invariably controversial – part of Canadian English-language journalism in the years between the First and Second World Wars. While Bob Edwards’ *Calgary Eye Opener* and J.R. Rogers’ *Jack Canuck* were notable pre-World War I pioneers, the racy 5-cent weekly hit its stride after the War.³ Each new venture bore the indelible mark of its editor/publisher, each of whom was assailed widely for publishing ‘scurrilous’ and ‘corrupting’ material. The papers differed markedly in their scale of operations and journalistic sophistication and until the late 1930s there was no consistent tabloid ‘look.’ Their common trade was in ‘sensationalism,’ a perennial, if unstable, element of more than two centuries of North American journalism. As Bill Sloan observed in his recent study of supermarket tabloids, the public has apparently a “timeless desire to be horrified, outraged, amazed, scandalized, amused, infuriated, and titillated (not necessarily in that order).”⁴

Tabloids occupy such an identifiable niche in the early twenty-first century popular press that the term can be misleading. Today it conjures up journalistic excesses beyond the wildest imaginings of the earnest proprietors of Canada’s pre-World War II muckraking weeklies. Even then, the look and tone of these self-consciously irreverent papers became as quickly dated as the fashion pages of

1 An earlier version of this essay was presented in November 2001 at the History of the Book Volume III Open Conference in Vancouver.

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3 *Eye Opener* / *Calgary Eye Opener* 2 Jan. 1902 - 29 July 1922; *Jack Canuck* (Toronto) 29 July 1911 - 13 Sept. 1924.

4 Bill Sloan, *“I Watched a Wild Hog EAT my Baby!”: A Colorful History of Tabloids and Their Cultural Impact* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2001), 18.

Eaton's catalogues, and for many of the same reasons. Jazzier – bolder and more market-oriented – was the predominant cultural drift reflected in these successive publishing ventures. Bob Edwards' frontier whimsey was overtaken by *Jack Canuck's* intelligent, focussed passion for urban reform. But for all its innovative features, that paper turned an endearingly trusting face to the world and its transgressions, and on the other side of the cultural divide which opened in urban society in the 1920s, the pages of *Hush* and *The Axe* made all that seem naive.⁵ Fashionably cynical, these papers were dedicated to exposing corruption, hypocrisy, and privilege. As the inaugural editorial of *Hush* (25 Nov. 1927) warned: it might "at times find it necessary to attack those vehicles ... which are carrying, to the public hurt, third-class passengers on first-class tickets." In turn, by the late 1930s, such a moralizing mission, and the flamboyant prose in which it was dressed, would be lampooned by a new generation of journalists intent on giving "the reader what he wants, not what you think he ought to have."⁶

Between the wars, Toronto became the tabloid capital of Canada. Alongside the major party press, independent journalism had flourished in Toronto for much of the nineteenth century in various guises, from William Lyon Mackenzie's *Colonial Advocate* to J.W. Bengough's *Grip*. Successive waves of the 'new journalism,' mostly copied from the Americans, had brought a version of the penny press to Torontonians in the 1860s. By 1880 sensational reporting of crime, natural disasters, wars, and endless local news punctuated by investigative 'scoops' was available for 1 cent in 'Billy' Maclean's *World* and John Ross Robertson's *Telegram* and soon – as the competition stiffened – in multiple daily editions of various papers. Ironically, as Minko Sotiron details in his study of Canadian newspapers, *From Politics to Profit*, the expansion in circulation, plant, and personnel which accompanied the triumph of popular journalism simply replaced one master with another: explicit political party connections gave way to a less explicit indebtedness to business and financial interests.⁷ The successful packaging of news, well illustrated by the *Toronto Star* under Joseph Atkinson, both attracted

5 *Hush* (Toronto) 25 Nov. 1927 - ca. Dec. 1937; *The Axe* (Montreal) 13 Jan. 1922 - 9 Sept. 1924.

6 Al Rucker, "Believe You Me," *Week-End* 28 Mar. 1935.

7 Minko Sotiron, *From Politics to Profit: The Commercialization of Canadian Daily Newspapers, 1890-1920* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP), c. 8, 9 ; esp. pp. 133-36.

and distanced the reader. The demise of the 'opinionated editorial voice' in the daily press provided just space enough for the tabloid to flourish.

Without doubt, the early tabloids pose special problems for an historian, as sustained runs of these papers are not found easily in public collections.⁸ In its notoriety, 'trash' is quintessentially ephemeral: the papers surviving in barns and basements are crumbling;

- ⁸ The following is a preliminary list of the tabloids discussed in this article, with notes on founding proprietors, dates of publication when known, availability in microfilm, and known library holdings of print. Brief note is taken of the continuance or revival of titles by other publishing interests, even when no library holdings have been traced.

Eye Opener / Calgary Eye Opener, Robert Chambers [Bob] Edwards, prop., 2 Jan. 1902 - 29 July 1922 (mfm). After Edwards died on 14 Nov. 1922, his widow struggled to revive the paper but quite soon sold the rights to the name. As late as 1932 a sleazy monthly, *Calgary Eye Opener*, was published by the Bob Edwards Co., Minneapolis, Minn., with issues printed in Winnipeg and Montreal for the local market.

Jack Canuck (Toronto), R. [J.R.] Rogers (29 July 1911 - 5 May 1915) and L. [Louisa] Rogers (12 May 1915 - 13 Sept. 1924) props., 1911-12, 1 Apr. 1916, *Jack Canuck Illustrated Review of the War* (1914), City of Toronto Archives; 1911-12, scattered issues 1914-17, 1921, 1923, Archives of Ontario (AO); 26 May - 23 June 1923, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto (Fisher). Louisa Rogers left Toronto in 1925. H.B. Lloyd and Sam Lichtman incorporated the McCaul Publishing Co. in August 1932 to revive *Jack Canuck*: initially managing editor, Peter Brown assumed control of the company and acted as editor/publisher of the weekly from sometime in 1933 to 1936. As late as September 1937, *Jack Canuck*, "Canada's First Tabloid Newspaper," was published in Montreal on Sundays, prop. Jack Canuck Company, Toronto.

The Axe (Montreal), John H. Roberts, prop., 13 Jan. 1922 - 9 Sept. 1924, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (mfm).

The Thunderer (Toronto), Patrick Sullivan, prop., ca. 1929 - March 1930, scattered issues, RG 4-32-1929-512, Attorney-General's case files, AO.

Thunder (Toronto), Patrick Sullivan, prop., 18 Apr. 1931 - 30 Apr. 1932, Fisher. Fisher also holds copies of a publication called *Thunder* for April-May 1933, and two copies of yet another *Thunder* for June 1934: the precise relationship of these last two publications to Patrick Sullivan has yet to be determined.

Hush (Toronto), Strathearn Boyd Thomson, prop., 25 Nov. 1927 - ca. Dec. 1937. Vols. 1, 2, 3, and scattered issues from RG 4-22, AO; and numerous hitherto uncatalogued issues in Fisher (mfm). With Thomson's approval *Hush* was revived in July 1939 by new owners, Richard Abie Sair and Harry Silverman (as Hush Publishing Co.). After what may have been a gap in publication (owing to legal difficulties) *Hush* was again relaunched in January 1941 by its next owner, George Shear, 4 Jan. 1941 to 20 Oct. 1945, *Hush Free Press* 27 Oct. 1945 - 10 Nov. 1973, Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library.

no business records survive; and few of those who could remember are willing to talk about the business. Undoubtedly, too, some academics find the prospect of reading sensational tabloid newspapers unappealing, and that has contributed to their scholarly neglect. Happily that is changing now as young scholars are beginning to mine the tabloid press in the years after World War II.⁹ For the interwar period, the impressionistic internal evidence of extant copies can be augmented by documents generated by various legal actions in which three of these early tabloid publishers became embroiled. Although the diversity in style, editorial purpose, and target market inhibits generalization about the tabloid press, this essay offers a preliminary exploration of three related issues: how a market was cultivated; what might have prompted ordinary people to buy or read a racy weekly; and what we can glean about contemporary assumptions about tabloid readership.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the 'sleaze' of Joe Azaria's tabloid formula – which provides the title for this essay¹⁰ – was typically provided by the dross of police court activities, so-called 'celebrity' exposés, and the often salacious reporting of otherwise innocuous events. The 'steam' and 'sizzle' accompanied populist crusades against a litany of injustices – real or imagined – and the questioning, often adversarial, approach which the papers took to government and corporate elites. An essential element of the sensationalism they proffered was self-advertising, calling attention to the paper and its proprietor. As *Jack Canuck* had aptly observed in 1913: "He who tooteth not his Trumpet, verily his Trumpet shall not be tooted."¹¹ While the new Canadian

9 Cf. Eric Setliff, "Sex Fiends or Swish Kids?: Gay Men in *Hush Free Press*, 1946-1956," in *Gendered Past: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, ed. Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan and Nancy M. Forestell (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1999), 158-78; Ross Higgins and Line Chamberland, "Mixed Messages: Gays and Lesbians in Montreal Yellow Papers in the 1950s," in *Challenge of Modernity: a Reader on Post-Confederation Canada*, ed. Ian McKay (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992). A notable exception to this post-World War II scholarship is Madge Pon, "Like a Chinese Puzzle: The Construction of Chinese Masculinity in *Jack Canuck*," in *Gender and History in Canada*, ed. Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996), 88-100.

10 Obituary of Joe Azaria, *Globe and Mail* 4 April 2001: R1, 5. Attributed to Joe Azaria ca.1954 on founding the tabloid *Midnight*. On Azaria see Sloan, 55-65.

11 *Jack Canuck*, 16 Sept. 1913. See also John Tulloch, "The Eternal Recurrence of New Journalism," in *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Studies*, ed. Colin Sparks and John Tulloch (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 132.

tabloids were not 'radical' in the sense of being consistently politically aligned (unlike the turn-of-the-century Australian *Sydney Truth* under John Norton)¹² or conspicuously modelled on flamboyant muck-raking American publications, they were politically engaged. *Jack Canuck* both Strathearn Boyd Thomson (editor/prop. of *Hush*) and John H. Roberts (*The Axe*) self-consciously compared their efforts to Henry Labouchère's late nineteenth-century London society tabloid, *Truth*.¹³ Whatever their inspiration, the inter-war tabloids invariably championed "Truth and Justice" in the battle against the Big Interests (always caps).

In search of readership, the tabloids, whatever the scale of their proprietor's ambitions, experimented with front-page layouts, typography, paper- and page-size, and content. Sports coverage, theatre reviews, society gossip, lost persons advertisements, and even local political manifestos might punctuate the spaces between news-breaking stories and the timeless miseries of family and police courts. Some papers remained very focussed on local/provincial issues, notably *The Axe*, published in Montreal in the early 1920s by John H. Roberts, sometime secretary of the Quebec branch of the Dominion Alliance for the Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, and *The Thunderer* and *Thunder*, published in the late 1920s in Toronto by Patrick Sullivan, a belligerent anti-Catholic Irish immigrant obsessed with the disappearance of the millionaire theatre magnate Ambrose Small. For those papers, the punch (and its consequences) came from a local story. By contrast, *Hush*, started in Toronto in late 1927 by a socially well-connected but disaffected horse-breeder cum promoter, Strathearn Boyd Thomson, was conspicuously aggressive in cultivating markets. Its proprietor's personal obsessions – the Ontario Jockey Club, the Beauharnois canal scandal, eugenics [pro] and moral rearmament [con] – were neatly balanced by muckraking exposures of municipal graft and local malfeasance,

12 Robin Berwick Walker, *The Newspaper Press in New South Wales, 1803-1920* (Sydney: Sydney UP, 1976), c. 11; Michael Cannon, *That Damned Democrat: John Norton, an Australian Populist, 1858-1916* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1981).

13 *Jack Canuck* 10 Feb. 1912: 4. A notice of the death of Strathearn Boyd Thomson's father appears in *Truth* 31 Dec. 1919: 1182. Writing copy while imprisoned, date-lined Quebec, 6 Nov. 1922, Roberts reports reading the life of Henry Labouchère, "the great English Liberal who founded 'Truth,' the great precursor of THE AXE," *The Axe* 10 Nov. 1922: 8.

Figure 1. *Jack Canuck*, 30 September 1911. Reproduced from a copy held in the City of Toronto Archives.

Figure 2. *The Thunderer*, 8 February [1930]. Reproduced from a copy held in the Archives of Ontario, RG4 -32- 1929-512.

running commentary on matters of state and public policy, and stock promotion. Thomson had positioned *Hush* as a serious player in the tipster sheet field from the outset: stock touting – especially of stocks in which you had a personal interest – could be as lucrative a business as the paper itself.¹⁴

The economics of weekly journalism had long provided a counterpoint to the daily newspapers where advertising revenue (to which circulation was a handmaiden) drove the enterprise, and expansion priced the acquisition or launching of an urban daily beyond the reach of any but the very wealthy. *Grip*, for example, started life in May 1873 with capital of eighteen dollars – a paltry sum, perhaps, but one which would make later tabloid proprietors envious.¹⁵ For a century, classic tabloid publishing has followed some basic rules: determination – and a shoe-string – is all that is required.¹⁶ Bob Edwards began the *Eye Opener* in 1902 with “cash on hand of \$1.47” while J.R. Rogers recalled that he and his wife Louisa produced *Jack Canuck* in the summer of 1911 “without a dollar of capital. It was edited sometimes in the kitchen, sometimes in the cellar.” In the late 1920s Strathearn Boyd Thomson (who undoubtedly had some money of his own) received initial help from “a few earnest citizens” who supported his crusading ideas for *Hush*.¹⁷ The trick is to make a virtue of necessity: start small; write much of the copy yourself; employ very few full-time staff; rent modest office space; contract out the printing; but mostly have the drive to break into new markets using local stringers and the nerve to court a libel action.

14 There is no evidence that Thomson started *Hush* as a Bay Street market tip sheet in 1920 (Frank Rasky, “Canada’s Scandalous Scandal Sheets,” *Liberty* Nov. 1954: 74). However, there is some evidence that *Hush* tips had an effect on the market. James Gray remembered the mining boom of 1928 when he was a margin clerk in a brokerage office dealing with “a stream of gullible mining-stock buyers eager to take fliers in the latest moose-pasture promotions being touted by *Hush* and other Toronto and Montreal tipster sheets” (James H. Gray, *Troublemaker! A Personal History* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1978], 35).

15 Cumming, 38.

16 See G.W. Ritchie and B.M. Tate, “Toronto Tabloids and How They Operate,” *City Lights* Feb. 1935: 16, for a model of how a 16-page tabloid with weekly sales of 50,000 at 5¢ a copy could generate a weekly profit of \$700.00. The relatively successful publishers – Rogers, Roberts, and Thomson, like Joe Azaria in the 1950s – spoke fondly of the initial meagre financial resources with which they launched their enterprises.

17 Grant MacEwan, *Eye Opener Bob: The Story of Bob Edwards* (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Arts, 1957), 7; *Jack Canuck* 29 July 1912: 11; *Hush* 16 May 1929, editorial.

You could do this almost anywhere, as Bob Edwards' peripatetic publishing career in Alberta before World War I demonstrated, but Toronto was an ideal location. Not only was there a substantial potential readership and an established network of newsboys and newsstands, but the city was the hub of a transportation network which served small town Ontario as well as the rest of the country. The big dailies drew journalists and cartoonists from elsewhere, creating a pool of experienced, if not always talented, newsmen who moved in and out and around in the marketplace. The crossover of staff was cumulative, and by the 1930s various new ventures were launched by veterans of other current or defunct papers. Working as a crime reporter on a daily paper was not very different from writing for a tabloid. Indeed, you could do both at once, especially if you worked on a Hamilton or Ottawa or Winnipeg paper and moonlighted as the anonymous out-of-town stringer for a Toronto tabloid.

The flexible but intimate world of tabloid employment had its counterpart in the printing/publishing end of the business. There were numerous printing establishments capable of putting out a weekly on long-term contracts, but as it developed, the tabloid trade became markedly concentrated. The Sovereign Press, owned and managed by an ex-vaudevillian and printer, Hanmer Burt Lloyd, was the centre of the business. Lloyd initially operated from rented premises on John Street; in 1930 he built a three-story plant around the corner at 52 McCaul, an address which would become synonymous with Toronto tabloids. His business arrangements are unfathomable. He steadily employed linotype operators but would on occasion send typesetting jobs out. His dealings with Pat Sullivan on *The Thunderer* and *Thunder* may have entailed a stake or been limited to a publishing contract, but rumour had it that Sullivan introduced him to Strathearn Boyd Thomson in 1927.

Certainly Lloyd's publishing connections diversified in the 1930s as he collaborated as publisher in various new ventures – including *Sports Weekly*, edited by a very young Allister Grosart (later Senator Grosart).¹⁸ Increasingly he teamed with Samuel Lichtman, newsstand

18 G.W. Ritchie and B.M. Tate, "Toronto Tabloids, How and Where They Started," *City Lights* Jan. 1935: 16-18; "Toronto Tabloids and Some of Those Who Conduct Them," *City Lights* Mar. 1935: 16-18; McCaul Publishing, RG 55, series 1, Corporate Records, Liber 295, no. 51, AO. By 1936 there was Binnie-Lloyd Publishing, and in 1937 Newsdealer's Publishing Co., H.B. Lloyd and S. Lichtman, proprietors.

operator, publications distributor, and distributor of *Hush*, who was sharing 52 McCaul as a business address at the time. This was a very small world, indeed, and one in which loyalty was highly prized. When bail for Patrick Sullivan on charges of publishing obscene material in 1930 was set prohibitively high, among his guarantors were Herbert Hobson, another ex-vaudevillian and bookkeeper of the Sovereign Press, Hobson's wife, and Sam Lichtman.¹⁹ In a contemporary snapshot of the Toronto tabloid scene, Lloyd and the Sovereign Press gang were portrayed as "a happy little family of co-workers ... as good, solid, God-fearing and home-loving citizens, bound together in mutual affection and common memories – a happy and upright family."²⁰ But there was a cut-throat side to the tabloid business by the early 1930s. Strathearn Boyd Thomson had started *Hush* at the old John Street premises and, given its obvious success, Lloyd invested a substantial sum (\$15,000) in 1931 in an over-sized Duplex printing press for the new building to accommodate the oddly-proportioned weekly. Abruptly, in 1932, Thomson left, taking his editorial and printing business to Adelaide Street. Left with a large press and not much business, Lloyd and Lichtman fought back, successfully reviving the dormant *Jack Canuck*, supporting new ventures such as *Week-Ender*, and in 1938 launching a deliberate look-alike called *Flash*.²¹

The key to big-time success in the tabloid business was the 'out-of-town stringer' and a sophisticated distribution network, and no one knew that better than Thomson. In the old days, Bob Edwards had not kept a subscription list and had relied on newsboys in towns, while in the country, issues of the *Eye Opener* were often passed from homestead to homestead. The railways moved – and sometimes sold – the *Eye Opener* at the low federally subsidized second-class postal rate of a quarter of a penny per pound of newspaper. But there never was much of a profit, not because the

19 Rex v. Patrick Sullivan, RG 22-5870, case #19-30, AO; "Arrest Editor Thunderer, Ask \$25,000 Bail," *Evening Telegram* 9 Jan. 1930.

20 Ritchie and Tate, Jan. 1935, 17.

21 Thomson sought an injunction against Lloyd and Lichtman prohibiting the use of a name designed to confuse the public, *Evening Telegram* 4 Feb. 1938; unprocessed Supreme Court of Ontario, Index of Actions (Civil) 1938, RG 22, AO. In his regular column, "Scandal Sheet," Al Rucker narrates a thinly disguised version of the defection and its aftermath, *Week-Ender* 11 Apr. 1935: 8. See also, H.R. How, "Half a Million for Sex and Scandal," *Canadian Business* July 1951: 34-35, 66.

paper lost public favour, but because Edwards utterly scorned normal business practice.²² *Jack Canuck* just prior to World War I made a successful bid to achieve a measure of national exposure. Regular advertisements encouraged a subscription service – even the Senate Reading Room in Ottawa subscribed – but circulation in the cities still relied heavily on newsboys. As the paper's reputation spread, the Rogers shipped in modest quantities to urban centres throughout Ontario, western Canada, and the northern United States. The circulation figures looked strong. An analysis of the data published in *McKim's Directory* and *Lydiatt's Book of Canadian Marketing Data* for 1920 produces an estimated weekly circulation of 63,000 copies – placing *Jack Canuck* ahead of *Saturday Night*, for example. These figures are in line with the evidence filed in the civil action initiated by the paper's printers in 1919, which suggests that over the period of the contract under dispute (15 April 1915 to 31 July 1919) the weekly run averaged 65,000 copies. But that size of print-run, on its own, did not necessarily secure a profit. Louisa Rogers had assumed the role of publisher of *Jack Canuck* after her husband was lost at sea when the *Lusitania* was torpedoed in May 1915, and soon faced difficult business decisions. The key to profitability is minimizing returns: unsold papers cost as much to print and ship as those that sell. After a couple of years when there was "very little" profit, a law suit contesting \$2000 forced a claim for bankruptcy protection in late 1924.²³

Traditionally, newspaper distribution had depended on the postal service and local newsboys. By the early 1930s shipping by freight and express had become common. Samuel Lichtman (Toronto news agent) as the exclusive distributor of *Hush*, ran a business across the country, based on provincial sub-agents to whom he shipped bundles of issues; they in turn delivered them to local retailers. The experience of Manitoba in late 1931-32 suggests how the business operated. Lichtman's link to Manitoba was the Imperial News Company, a fairly large-scale regional distributor based in Winnipeg which handled 300 to 400 weekly publications and 150 to 200 monthlies. Imperial News distributed the western edition of *Hush* to retail

22 MacEwan, 8-9, 125-26, 133-34.

23 In Bankruptcy, Jack Canuck, circulation accounts, RG 22-5822, 1925, vol. 4, #18/25, AO; Russell Johnston, H-Canada, 2 Mar. 1999; Industrial and Technical Press, Ltd. and Jack Canuck Publishing Co., RG 22-5800, 1919, #1167, 1176, 1635, AO; Sloan, 61.

Figure 3. *Jack Canuck*, 3 February 1923. Reproduced from a copy held in the City of Toronto Archives.

outlets throughout Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta (just a few, as there was a separate distributor for Calgary), and the west coast. Between 10 and 11 thousand copies a week were distributed in Greater Winnipeg alone, through 200 to 240 outlets; beyond that, Imperial had a network of 150 or so outlets. Lichtman shipped the papers from Toronto to retailers in outlying centres in Manitoba directly; the country points paid Imperial News, who then settled with Lichtman and, in due course, got credited for returns by voucher. Figures (of a sort) for the three-month period December 1931 - February 1932 suggest a per-issue gross return of 2.33 cents at the Toronto end for *Hush* on a 5-cent retail sale. From there you would deduct Lichtman's fraction, the printing costs, and the stringers' fees, and add the increasingly significant revenue from the advertising attracted by the scope of the circulation – and you can see how Thomson made money.²⁴

Editorially, *Hush* courted the market, matching its coverage of the Toronto scene with local gossip columns from the hinterland. "Inside Stuff at Ottawa" by Nightshirt became a regular feature in June 1931, along with sporadic offerings of "Hamilton Handfuls," "Calgary Kernels," and "Signs of the Times" by Whisperer, a column devoted to western Canadian news. By late 1931 *Hush* boasted an eastern (Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes) and a western edition. The latter offered a real come-on: a gossipy column by "our famous Winnipeg correspondent, whose Bohemian qualities and superior education enable him to mix, unchallenged, in all grades of society from the highest to the lowest, [who] again regales us with some more original news and facts that the Western dailies will not print." There was always a risk: and the possible cost of the diminished editorial control which accompanied national coverage was something which Thomson had not appreciated until he was confronted with a libel action. A careless instance of mistaken identity in that gossip column, involving a St. Boniface fireman, took Thomson and

24 *In the Supreme Court of Canada Between Strathearn Boyd Thomson – Leon Lambert and Mary Lambert, Appeal Case* (Toronto: Sovereign, 1937), examination for discovery of William James Sinnott, manager, Imperial News, 183-85. The monthly figures for net distribution by the Imperial News Company for three months of December 1931 to February 1932 (a period of intense negative pressure on sales as a fallout of the Lamberts' libel actions) averaged 46,000. The gross shipping number of 59,400 for December 1931 is probably a good indicator of the scale of *Hush's* western business in the early 1930s.

BUY KENECHO GOLD!! SEE PAGE 15

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Vol. 9, No. 36 TORONTO, September 19, 1936

**GOD BLESS DAVID
AND MRS. SIMPSON**
By STRATHEARN BOYD THOMSON

As I ponder over the callous political cruelty that is the very keystone behind the vicious and cowardly attack that was waged against King Edward VIII, the lady he loves, and his New Empire vision, my mind flies to Edouard Rosset-Granger's deathless masterpiece, *JETSAM*, here reproduced.

The pathetic irony of this rendering of jeopardized womanhood and poignant suggestion of greater tragedy behind those touchacious waves, is symbolical of the tempests of human life, carries its message to those who realize how wickedly the woman who King Edward VIII loved was persecuted—undefended as she is against those interlocking, social and political forces, of gorilla nature, that periodically have swept England for centuries. England is always cruel to women. Poor Lady Hamilton. Poor Nell Gwynne.

What is the real objection to Wallis Simpson of the Olympian personality, with the sad, stark face and a voice like the odour of violets made audible, "the queen of romance, of glamour, and the unfulfilled longings of a love-starved world?"

(Continued on page 17)

Figure 4. *Hush*, 19 December 1936. The title *Hush* is printed in red.
Reproduced from a copy held in a private collection.

Lichtman to the Supreme Court of Canada, where they eventually triumphed.²⁵

Beyond such sketchy circulation figures, and the mantra-like assurances of tabloid proprietors that each paper was read by at least three people, what can we know – or deduce – about the readership of this press? Certainly few people acknowledged reading these papers, and “letters to the editor,” when featured, were invariably contrived. Leon Lambert, the aggrieved St. Boniface fireman, did admit in court to buying *Hush* every other week for the boys at the fire hall. He thought he was typical: “I bought the paper to see what was going on.... I didn’t like the paper, I just bought it like anybody else.”²⁶ Of course, there were multiple ‘anybody elses’ if one considers the range of coverage in these papers. There was a definite element of the current gossip and scandal magazine *Frank* in *Hush*, for example, with reams devoted to Rosedale gossip, Granite Club finances, and society divorces. Virtually every news item in the tabloids was personalized. The Big Interests against whom they endlessly inveighed had names and often faces in caricature. The underpaid young women wage-earners whose cause the editors championed were not just being exploited: they were employed and being cheated by an Eaton, an Ogilvie, a Burton, or whomever, depending on where the paper was published and the byline filed. The human interest stories, the parade of human frailty which provided the sub-text of police court reporting, also came with a name – and often an address. There were surprisingly few public protests. For ordinary people, anything more than a printed retraction involved legal fees, which they could rarely afford. The rich and famous targets of the tabloids’ crusades typically preferred to nurse their humiliation in silence, in the knowledge that legal action inevitably would attract more – and likely bad – publicity. When

25 The alleged libel was published in *Hush* 17 Dec. 1931 (Western edition). There is a succession of reported cases relating to the Lambert and Lambert libel actions: *Manitoba Reports* (1933): 322-24; *Ontario Reports* (1937): 341-54; *Supreme Court Reports* (1938): 253-78. I have benefited from documentation relating to the Lambert cases not available in the public domain: *In the Supreme Court of Canada between Strathearn Boyd Thomson – Leon Lambert and Mary Lambert, Appeal Case* (Toronto: Sovereign, 1937); *In the Supreme Court of Canada ... Factum of the Appellant* (Toronto: Sovereign, 1937); *In the Supreme Court of Canada ... Respondents’ Factum* (Toronto: Murray, 1937). See especially, J.V. McAree, “Little Mouse Set Press Lion Free,” *Globe & Mail* 9 Sept. 1938.

26 *In the Supreme Court ... Appeal Case*, Leon Lambert cross-examination by R.H. Greer, 97-98.

their anger burst their lawyers' bounds, the major dailies invariably ran the story, further illustrating the point that the publicity, and the complaining and denouncing, could make a little paper 'quite famous.'²⁷ The ramifications of the publicity afforded by legal action, and the uncertainty of its outcome, seem to have provided a measure of protection for tabloid proprietors. In his examination of censorship in Canada, Bruce Ryder has confirmed the reluctance of provincial authorities through the 1930s to bow to the wishes of moral reformers and prosecute tabloids for obscenity, for example.²⁸

It was difficult then – as it is now – to gauge what readers might have made of it all. Certainly, like all committed muckraking journalists, tabloid proprietors took credit for any positive change in the status quo – a public inquiry established or a noble crusade advanced an iota – alleging that they alone spoke for the People, the daily press having been suborned by its dependence on advertisers.²⁹ But what of other tabloid enthusiasms? Did cautionary tales of the Yellow peril and the White slave trade or exposés of predatory choir masters imitate or parody their readers' prejudices? And might the answer relate to the relative sophistication of tabloid readership and popular culture generally?³⁰ Some readers, undoubtedly, did absorb the intricate details of inequitable property taxation, and cared about the lay-a-bouts at City Hall and the stock market machinations of Sir Herbert Holt, Joe Flavelle, and young J.H. Gundy. But did many? Or might the bombast, hype, and this week's screaming headline seem worth 5 cents on their own.

27 A spectacular, and expensive, loss of temper by three prominent horse men in Toronto, provoked by Strathearn Boyd Thomson, was covered extensively by the Toronto dailies: *Globe* 3, 4, 20 June; 6, 9 July 1929; *Toronto Star* and *Telegram* for the same dates; as well, the *Telegram* covered the civil action 3, 13 Sept. 1929; 4 Nov. 1929; 14 Jan. 1930. Cf. Claud Cockburn, *Cockburn Sums Up: An Autobiography* (London: Quartet Books, 1981), 102, with reference to the mimeographed publication, *The Week*.

28 Bruce Ryder, "Uncover Censorship: Exploring the History of the Regulation of Publications in Canada," in *Interpreting Censorship in Canada*, ed. Allan C. Hutchinson and Klaus Petersen (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1999), 144-45.

29 Cf. *Hush* 2 June 1932, 3: "the chains of falsifications and deceit which manacle the limbs of Canada's suborned daily press – the press that made International Nickel, Beauharnois, and Sun Life frauds possible, to the ever-lasting disgrace and detriment of the Dominion"; also Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), 475-76.

30 Compare, for example, Pon, 88-100, and Christopher Browne, *The Prying Game* (London: Robson Books, 1996), 66-67.

The lack of certainty on these issues proved deeply troubling to contemporary authorities. By 1934 George Drew, recently retired head of the Ontario Securities Commission, had become convinced of the serious menace of stock 'Tipster Sheets.' Now free to speak out, he publically excoriated Strathearn Boyd Thomson and "that weekly insult to everything that is decent" which he published, alleging that he touted stocks in which he had "a strong personal interest" to a circulation of "seventy or eighty thousand."³¹ There had been two concerted efforts by government to muzzle tabloids in the 1920s, one each in Ontario and Quebec, which capture something of the deep frustration felt by the establishment as the tabloids flourished. When their patience snapped, the consequences for the publishers were severe.

Patrick Sullivan's obsession with the disappearance of Ambrose Small on 2 December 1919 coloured *The Thunderer* which ranted ceaselessly about a Roman Catholic conspiracy in the affair. Small's disappearance provided an enduring subject of speculation at the time and, most notably since, a sub-plot for Michael Ondaatje's 1987 novel, *In the Skin of a Lion*. Sullivan, ex-Alberta Provincial Police, had been hired by Small's sisters in the early 1920s to find him, restore his reputation, and (some thought) advance their claim to part of his substantial estate.³² The provincial government of G. Howard Ferguson, sensitive to the feelings of the Catholic hierarchy, viewed Sullivan's antics with increasing alarm by 1929 and, despite the Church's reluctance to support prosecution, the government determined to proceed. The Attorney-General's Department co-ordinated a sting operation with the Ontario Provincial Police and the City of Toronto Police, whereby plainclothes police with a search warrant were to stalk Sullivan and, when he was about to publish an issue, confiscate it. The scheme was not foolproof, and Sullivan managed to produce an issue in which he attacked a fellow journalist, Henry Corti, editor of *La Tribuna canadese*. This was fortuitous, as the Crown promptly charged Sullivan with defamatory libel. Now the Toronto Police wanted to call off the surveillance on the grounds that, if it became known, there might be newspaper sympathy for Sullivan which could taint the jury in the Corti case.

31 *Financial Post* 20 Oct. 1934: Drew lambasted both Thomson and John H. Roberts (lately of *The Axe*).

32 Ambrose Joseph Small, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1998), XIV: 936-38; Ritchie and Tate, Mar. 1935, 17-18.

Figure 5. *Thunder*, 19 September 1931. Reproduced from a copy held in a private collection.

Ever resourceful, Sullivan managed to produce yet another issue (11 January 1930), this time linking a London, Ontario, United Church minister to the very Catholic Widow Small. That item prompted an obscenity charge. Bail was set initially at the exorbitant figure of \$25,000 and that did arouse press sympathy. Nervous lest Sullivan wriggle free from these legal entanglements, the Crown promptly lowered the figure to \$10,000, which was posted for Sullivan by the two Misses Small (with whom Sullivan lived) and the gang at the Sovereign Press. In two trials Sullivan was found guilty on both counts of libel and obscenity and sentenced to a total of sixteen months.³³

After the obscenity trial, the presiding judge, Daniel O'Connell, questioned Sullivan's sanity, suggesting that he undergo a mental examination.³⁴ Certainly his obsessions are hard to take seriously today, but it is harder still to appreciate quite how he could have appeared dangerous enough to warrant this charade of repression. In 1930, one must conclude, Pat Sullivan's offence was seen as political. His ranting needed to be stopped, not because of its religious bigotry *per se* or because he was correct in his allegations about a cover-up in the Small case,³⁵ but because – with his personal grandstanding and his newspaper – he seemed to threaten the delicate balance of secular and religious identities which underpinned public authority in this denominationally and ethnically diverse province.

John H. Roberts' agenda in publishing *The Axe* was very different from Pat Sullivan's but he, too, provoked the political establishment into what would be known as *L'affaire Roberts*.³⁶ Published in

33 Memorandum to Mr. Bayley from Hon. W.H. Price, 5 Apr. 1929. Price briefed Premier Ferguson personally on the Sullivan file, Memorandum for Howard Ferguson from W.H. Price, 24 Apr. 1929; G.H. Ferguson to W.H. Price, 2 May 1929; Memorandum for the Attorney General from I.A. Humphries, 21 Dec. 1929; Memorandum for the Attorney General from E. Bayley, 15 Jan. 1930, RG 4-32, 1929, #512, AO. *Evening Telegram* 9, 10, 13 Jan. 1930. Extant issues for February and March 1930, with quite balanced editorials, appeared under the name of Sydney May, associate editor. General Sessions of the Peace, County of York, Rex v. Patrick Sullivan, RG 22-5871, 1930, case 4-30, AO.

34 Rex v. Patrick Sullivan, RG 22-5870, 1930, case 19-30, AO.

35 As late as 1936, Sullivan was protesting that he had been imprisoned "by the Tory Party for exposing the corruption in the A. Small case," Sullivan to Hon. Arthur Roebuck, Attorney-General, 14 June 1936, RG 4-32, 1929, #512, AO.

36 The documentation on this issue is varied. In addition to *The Axe*, see esp., Bernard L. Vigod, *Quebec before Duplessis: The Political Career of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1986), 50, 55, 93-94;

Montreal, *The Axe* was the slimmest of the tabloids under discussion, but Roberts lived up to his editorial promise to make his paper “The hope of all who suffer, The dread of all who wrong.” He attacked dubious business dealings (for which he faced more than one libel action); he fought for lame ducks; and he relentlessly exposed the shortcomings of the Liberal government of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau – a party with which he had been cozy. As he wrote in his regular editorial column, “Why I started *The Axe*,” 27 January 1922: “what I hope to see accomplished ... is a change in public sentiment that will bring about a political upheaval in Quebec. It is not a healthy thing that the Quebec Legislature should be practically all of one political color.”

The chronic snipping probably irritated the government and must certainly have bothered whichever cabinet minister or bureaucrat was the target of the week. But the front-page story in the issue of 27 October 1922 was another matter: it concerned the unsolved case of the 1920 murder of a young Quebec city girl, Blanche Garneau, which had become something of a *cause célèbre*. During the election campaign of 1921 *Le Devoir* had reported an allegation of government interference in the case. That news story had prompted a libel action. Now *The Axe* offered \$5,000 for information leading to a conviction of the murderers, alleging deliberate foot-dragging on the part of the Quebec police and repeating street gossip about the involvement of two (unnamed) Members of the Legislative Assembly and the sons of two highly-placed Quebec government officials in the crime. The official response was swift. On 30 October the members of the Legislative Assembly, incensed by this blanket indictment of their honour, voted unanimously to summon Roberts to the bar of the house at 4 o'clock, Thursday, 2 November 1922. Having refused to answer questions and name names (on the grounds that it might prejudice the criminal trial for seditious libel for which he had been arrested) Roberts was found guilty of violating the

Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs XXII (1922): 712-15; XXIII (1923): 605-07; Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province du Québec* (Montréal: Les éditions Chantecler Ltée, 1953), XXVI, 159-73, 191-95; Jean-Charles Bonenfant, “Outrages au Parlement,” *Les cahiers des dix* (Québec, 1974), 171-87; Réal Bertrand, *Qui a tué Blanche Garneau?* (Montréal: Qunize, 1983); Adélard Turgeon, *The Roberts’ Bill: The Judicial and Social Point of View. Speech Delivered in the Legislative Council on Wednesday 22nd November 1922* (n.p.: n.p., [1922?]); Brenton A. Macnab, *Reflections and Comments Arising out of the Case of Roberts* (Montreal: [n.p.], 1922).

CRITICAL
COMMENT
WITHOUT
FEAR OR
FAVOR.

THE AXE

A JOURNAL OF ACTION AGAINST REACTION

EDITED BY JOHN H. ROBERTS

"LAY THE AXE AT THE ROOT OF THE TREE"

PLAIN
SPEAKING
CONCERNING
PUBLIC
QUESTIONS.

No. 42

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27th, 1922

Annual Subscription Two Dollars — Price 8 cents.

\$5,000.00 REWARD!!

THE STORY OF THE FOULEST CRIME IN ALL QUEBEC

The rumors and accusations that are flying around, and the action of the Attorney General in publicly branding two men declared innocent by the Courts as guilty of Blanche Garneau's murder, make action imperative.

Blanche Garneau, a French Canadian girl, was brutally murdered in the city of Quebec two years or so ago. There is no need for participation of this and other. The story is well known, every one knows it, in the Province of Quebec and to many outside its boundaries.

So far, no person has been

BLANCHE GARNEAU'S BLOOD CRIES ALOUD FOR VENGEANCE!

THE GREATEST ADMINISTRATIVE SCANDAL IN QUEBEC'S HISTORY IS THE FAILURE TO DISCOVER THE MURDERER, OR MURDERERS, OF BLANCHE GARNEAU.

THE AXE IS SATISFIED THAT SOMEBODY IS BEING SHIELDED WHO IS IT?

IS IT THE SON OF ONE OF THE HIGHEST-PLACED OFFICIALS IN THE PROVINCE, AS IS FREELY STATED?

IS THE SON OF ANOTHER PUBLIC OFFICIAL INVOLVED IN THIS SORDID MURDER DRAMA?

WHAT TRUTH IS THERE IN THE RUMOR THAT TWO MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR BLANCHE GARNEAU'S DEATH?

WHOEVER MURDERED THIS FRENCH CANADIAN GIRL SHALL BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE, IF THE AXE CAN DO IT.

IF PREMIER TACHÉREAU KNOWS THAT THE TWO MEN, BINET AND PALMER, WHOM HE DECLARED IN THE LEGISLATURE TO BE GUILTY AND SAID SHOULD BE HANGED, ARE GUILTY, HE MUST GIVE THE PUBLIC THE PROOF OF THEIR GUILT OR, OTHERWISE, BE HELD GUILTY OF DELIBERATELY DECEIVING THE LEGISLATURE AND THE PUBLIC.

WHO PLACED THE DEAD GIRL'S BODY IN THAT LONELY PARK AFTER SHE HAD BEEN FOULLY DONE TO DEATH?

ARE ANY OF OUR DAUGHTERS OR SISTERS SAFE WHILE BLANCHE GARNEAU'S MURDER REMAINS ON THE LIST OF UNDISCOVERED CRIMES?

THE PEOPLE OF QUEBEC LOOK TO PREMIER TACHÉREAU, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, TO FIND BLANCHE GARNEAU'S MURDERER OR STEP ASIDE AND LET SOMEONE ELSE FACKLE THE JOB.

THE AXE CONSECRATES ITS POWERS, TIME, MONEY, AND WHOLE ABILITY TO THE RIGHTING OF THIS GREAT WRONG AND APPEALS TO ALL LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS TO ASSIST IN THE SEARCH FOR THE MISCRIMES.

WE APPEAL TO THE LIEUT. - GOVERNOR TO TAKE ACTION

In the circumstances, either the Attorney General should be replaced, or a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the failure to discover the murderer, or murderers, of Blanche Garneau.

Right Honorable
Sir Charles Dugas, P.C., M.C.,
Lieutenant Governor of the
Province of Quebec,
Quebec, P.Q.

Your Honor—

In the public interest, the proprietors of this journal, THE AXE, have decided to offer a reward of Five Thousand Dollars for the discovery of the murderer, or murderers, of Blanche Garneau, in the Capital City of this Province, Quebec, the land of government, since two years or so ago.

We respectfully suggest to Your Honor that the discovery of the perpetrator of this crime cannot be left to private individuals or a royal commission, and that you should, under the royal investigation, have to supervise the present Attorney General, and appoint another Attorney General. In his place, the present incumbent of the office having so far failed to bring the guilty persons to justice, or appoint a Royal Commission for the purpose of inquiring into the reasons for the failure of the Attorney General's Department to bring to justice the murderer, or murderers, of Blanche Garneau.

Fully realizing all the considerations, terms, request to publication as we respectfully suggest to Your Honor and being aware of the duties of your position in regard to taking such steps as we urge upon you, we yet say that no question of official dignity, etiquette, or custom should be permitted to prevent the bringing to justice of the authors of one of the foulest crimes ever committed in the Dominion of Canada. Therefore, urge Your Honor to give immediate and favorable consideration to these recommendations.

We have the honor to be, Your Honor's,
Obedient Servants,
The Editors of THE AXE.

PREMIER TACHÉREAU

Quebec's Attorney General, who declared Binet and Palmer, guilty of Blanche Garneau's murder, after a jury had found them innocent. He must tell the people why he believes these guilty or find the real murderer.

convicted of her murder, her murderer, or murderers, remains undiscovered. It may be that Blanche Garneau was not a simple little French Canadian girl, but she was entitled to the protection of our institutions and the laws of this Province. The fact is, the law is broken, and the law must be upheld.

\$5,000.00 REWARD

We hereby offer a Reward of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) for such information as shall lead to the conviction of the murderer, or murderers, of Blanche Garneau in the City of Quebec during the year 1920.

This reward will be paid to the person who furnishes the actual information leading to a conviction, as aforesaid, including the officers or members of any police force, detective agency, or other official or semi-official body.

All communications referring to this matter, should be addressed to "The Editor, THE AXE", 20 St. James Street, Montreal, P. Q., in strict confidence.

(Signed),
THE AXE PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED,
Per John H. Roberts, President.

Figure 6. *The Axe*, 27 October 1922. Reproduced from a copy held in the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec.

dignity of the House and became the object of extraordinary legislation to ensure his incarceration for one year. The government's impetuous response raised serious questions about the constitutionality of the powers of the Quebec legislature and the wisdom of the government in resorting to draconian measures against Roberts. Legislative committees and royal commissions reported; the Supreme Court of Canada heard – and dismissed – an appeal for a writ of *habeus corpus*; public orators were enlisted; and newspaper editors in Quebec and Ontario reflected soberly on the imprisonment of a fellow editor. Few of Roberts' defenders, whether politicians or journalists, spoke approvingly of *The Axe*, preferring to focus on the issue of the freedom of the press. The government's defenders were less circumspect. The *Ottawa Journal* denounced Roberts and "his slimy business," articulating a fear of the subversive power of tabloid journalism which resonated well beyond the Quebec Legislative Assembly: "there are too many people ready at the least suggestion to believe that a man who engages in public affairs is a grafter or some other kind of crook.... The need of men of ability in politics demands that they should be protected as far as possible from base libel and slander."³⁷

Throughout this ordeal, *The Axe* continued publication, albeit reduced to its initial 4-page format, under the editorship of Roberts' son, Leslie (a future Canadian journalist of note). After five months in detention, Roberts was released by an order-in-council (12 April 1923) and the charge of seditious libel was withdrawn, cooler heads having prevailed in the face of allegations of government tyranny. On 20 April *The Axe*, unrepentant at its full 8-page size, regaled its readers with the full account of Roberts' imprisonment – a story which in all likelihood had at least as much 'street' appeal as the initial \$5000 award. By October 1923 *The Axe* had hit its stride with a 'woman's column,' theatre reviews, and photographs crammed into 12 pages. In retrospect it is tempting to make more of the *L'affaire Roberts* than it can rightly bear. While both John H. Roberts and his political foes assumed that the tabloid press could influence – perhaps even help shape, for better or for worse – public opinion, the Taschereau government was vulnerable on a number of fronts by 1923, and credit for their ensuing election setback cannot be claimed by *The Axe*. Nevertheless, that Blanche Garneau headline in

37 *Ottawa Journal* 9, 10 November 1922, quoted in full in Turgeon, 50–54. Compare *Globe* 14 Nov. 1922: 2.

an 8-page tabloid worked like a pinprick in a large balloon – a muckraker's fantasy come true.

At the outset of my research into the English-language tabloid press, I had hoped to uncover lineaments of a discernable 'alternative' popular culture. Instead, what I found is better called an 'alternative perspective.' The daily press in the interwar years offered up a whig world view of consumption, order, progress, and respectability. The tabloid world was upside down, inhabited by schemers and liars who preyed on little guys. But within that outline, nothing was sure from week to week. The spice of scandal and the editorial antics of these papers attracted an eclectic readership which crossed class and gender boundaries despite strong whiffs of the barber shop and pool room.³⁸ And while there were undoubtedly many more readers than the sales figures record, undoubtedly, too, the papers were read in different ways and for different reasons. Clearly there was more than a handful of self-styled civic moralists who followed the tabloids in order to monitor the tastes of ordinary working people; there were those with a prurient interest in matters not generally talked about in public; and, then, there was the majority who, I venture, read the tabloids for entertainment. *Schadenfreude* can be addictive.

Before 1939, two generations of editors/publishers gave editorial direction to these tabloid ventures, which worked best when they amused as well as hectored; and failed when they slipped into ideological advocacy or crank conspiracy theories. However, the social practices and literary conventions of journalism are propelled in part, I would argue, by the tension between appetite and tolerance which governs the market. Through the 1930s public taste fuelled in the United States the mass production of pulp fiction and adult comics, and for all the customs inspectors and post office managers it would not be long before Toronto, at least, followed suit.³⁹ Competition in the tabloid business was keen by the late 1930s and an editorial commitment to Truth & Justice became dated quite quickly. By the 1940s 'sleaze' provided its own 'steam & sizzle' and an age of innocence, of sorts, passed.

38 Simon Michael Bessie, *Jazz Journalism: The Story of Tabloid Newspapers* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1938), 62.

39 Jay A. Gertzman, *Bootleggers and Smuthounds: The Trade in Erotica, 1920-1940* (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1999). Morris Ruby and his brother Louis, publisher of *Flash* by the mid-1940s, did a big business in printing pulp fiction and tabloid magazines in Toronto during and after World War II (Rasky, 78).

RÉSUMÉ

Au cours des années entre la Première et la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, les hebdomadaires populaires de demi-format déterrants des scandales étaient un phénomène de l'édition anglophone au Canada, qui avait du succès dans une large mesure— et qui était invariablement sujet à controverse. Vendus pour 5 cents, ils polissaient un style plein de verve de reportages consacrés aux crimes et aux nouvelles à sensation, mais jusqu'à la fin des années 1930, ceux-ci n'avaient pas l'apparence uniforme de journaux de demi-format. Bien que la diversité du style, des objectifs de la rédaction et des marchés visés doit nous mettre en garde contre toute généralisation, cet essai explore trois questions connexes : comment un marché a été développé ; ce qui a peut-être incité les gens ordinaires à acheter un hebdomadaire plein de verve ; et ce que nous pouvons glaner des hypothèses contemporaines concernant les lecteurs de journaux de demi-format. Des modes de tirages et des pratiques de distribution en évolution accompagnaient des politiques de rédaction innovatrices qui cherchaient à attirer l'intérêt d'un public lecteur éclectique, masculin et féminin, appartenant à diverses classes de la société. La discussion utilise des archives générées à la suite de procès au cours desquels ces éditeurs de journaux de demi-format se sont trouvés mêlés à l'appui de la preuve 'interne' impressionniste d'exemplaires existants. Deux cas de procès d'État punitifs contre des éditeurs de journaux de demi-format — ceux de Patrick Sullivan, rédacteur du *Thunderer* à Toronto en 1930, et de John H. Roberts, rédacteur de l'*Axe* à Montréal en 1921-22 — mettent à l'épreuve les hypothèses contemporaines concernant le pouvoir des journaux de demi-format d'influencer l'opinion publique. De toute évidence, le rapport entre les politiques de la rédaction des journaux de demi-format et les forces du marché qui cherchaient l'allégeance des lecteurs était complexe et réciproque. À la fin des années 1930, un style de journalisme plus explicitement sensationnaliste, appliqué au journal de demi-format, allait remplacer le moralisme qui était caractéristique des éditeurs en croisade de la période de l'entre-deux guerres.