

CONSTRUCTING THE CANADIAN LOWBROW MAGAZINE
THE PERIODICAL AS MEDIA OBJECT
IN THE 1930S AND 1940S



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ABSTRACT

Historians of Canadian popular print culture commonly refer to a “golden age” of English Canadian periodical publishing (1940–46), which was the result of wartime restrictions on the importation of popular magazines from the United States. This article examines a corpus of Canadian periodicals published before and after this golden age. In the late 1930s, before the introduction of wartime measures, a handful of Toronto-based publishers launched titles that reprinted, revised, and repurposed material from U.S. periodicals. After the end of the war, when protections for Canadian periodicals were first dropped, then reintroduced in weakened form, Canadian publishers engaged once again in the reprinting of U.S. materials.

KEYWORDS: *Canadian, lowbrow, reprints, humor, spicy*

The years 1940–46 have come to be viewed as a “golden age” for popular (and what are conventionally considered lowbrow) English Canadian periodicals. In December 1940, in response to the perceived need to protect domestic currency in wartime conditions, the Canadian government imposed a ban on the importation from the United States of certain classes of commodities deemed “non-essential.”¹ Among such commodities were comic books and so-called “pulp magazines.” This ban lasted until 1946, though, as we shall see later, it was reintroduced with important

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modifications in 1947. From 1940 to 1946, a number of English-language Canadian publishers, the majority of them based in Toronto, introduced lines of magazines and comic books that partially reproduced the range of genres published in the United States.² Now regarded as a period of significant national achievement in creative terms, this golden age is sometimes invoked as a particularly dramatic example of the ways in which national policy has been able to protect and stimulate Canadian cultural industries.³

The focus of this article is the Canadian popular periodical immediately before and after this golden age—during the years 1937–40, which preceded the import ban, and the period 1946–49, when that ban was first lifted. If the “golden age” of 1940–46 saw a certain stabilization of periodical formats and genres in Canadian publishing, the years that immediately preceded and followed it were marked by instability and eccentric attempts to develop new forms of the Canadian periodical that might thrive or at least survive under new circumstances. Both of these transitional periods were marked, as we shall see, by the copying or blatant theft of materials from U.S. periodicals and the production of aberrant magazine formats.

In studying these practices, I am particularly interested in the varieties of physical deformation that came to typify certain categories of Canadian magazine during these periods. By “deformation,” I mean the production of forms and formats that are abnormal or eccentric relative to norms that had been established, for the most part, in the United States. In the history of Canadian magazines of low prestige, these forms of deformation might include any of the following: the insertion, usually in the center of magazines, of materials produced and published somewhere else; the erasure or covering-up of a magazine’s dates or places of publication; the alteration of titles and illustrations to disguise prior publication of magazine content; the retracing or recoloring of illustrations to facilitate their (usually illicit) reuse; and the gathering up of multiple materials in aberrant formats intended to convey a sense of abundance and value. To these deformations, usually strategic in intent, we may add a general degradation of formats and materials as they passed from American to Canadian contexts—a reduction in the quality of paper, color reproduction, layout, and editorial coherence.

The magazines to be examined here are examples of print culture, but they are also particular kinds of media objects. As objects, magazines possess a *mediality* that extends beyond their expressive character. Magazines move and circulate, transport materials of various sorts, and store, within themselves, various kinds of unofficial cultural heritage. In the examples

to be discussed here, taken from a broader corpus of Canadian periodicals of low prestige published before and after the golden age, the objecthood of the magazine is made particularly explicit. The formats, dimensions and identifying marks of these magazines were all intended to facilitate the circulation, within Canada, of magazine materials acquired illicitly, or through short-lived contractual arrangements, from the United States. During this period, Canadian magazines became the carriers of residual materials produced five to ten years earlier in the United States.

BROADWAY BREVITIES AND THE CANADIAN TATTLER

Figure 1 shows, side by side, two periodicals dated May 1937. The magazine on the left is the second issue of *Broadway Brevities* (available only in photocopy form), published by the Union Publishing Company of Toronto, its title confirmed both on the cover and by the interior colophon. The periodical on the right bears the title “*Canadian Tattler* vol. 1, no. 1,” though the colophon on the first interior page identifies the magazine as the first issue of *Broadway Tattler*. The publisher and place of publication of this issue of *Canadian Tattler* are given as “Union Publishing Company, 8591



FIG. 1 [left] *Broadway Brevities* vol. 1, no. 2, May, 1937. Published by Union Publishing Company, Toronto. [right] *Canadian Tattler*, vol. 1, no. 2, May, 1937. Published by Union Publishing Company, Montreal. Collection of the author.

Champagne Ave., Montreal.”⁴ The inside contents of both magazines are the same, with the slight difference of interior identification just noted.

I take this publishing of identical materials under two distinct titles to betray the turbulence of Canadian periodicals during this period. The years 1937–39 were ones in which the publishers of ephemeral materials such as these experimented with the launching of multiple titles and the repurposing of various kinds of content. Taken together, these two magazines condense what we might see as the overlapping temporalities operating at the lowest levels of the Canadian magazine industry during this time. Both titles were among an array of magazines introduced in Canada in 1937 by publishing interests whose names, over the next five years, would include Union Publishing, International Publishers, Duchess Printing and Publishing, and Superior. The different temporalities here reside in the ways in which these magazines were, simultaneously, vehicles for recycling a stockpile of older materials brought to Toronto, possibly by their editor (a man named Stephen G. Clow) and the first tentative steps toward launching new Canadian magazines marked by the appearance, at least, of continuity and originality. We may see *Broadway Brevities* as looking backward, summoning up the resonances of a once-notorious (though, by 1937, largely forgotten) title, while *Canadian Tattler* could appear, however disingenuously, to be initiating a new line of distinctively Canadian magazines.

Elsewhere, I have reconstructed the trajectory that took Stephen G. Clow, a Canadian who had lived in New York City since the turn of the twentieth century, to Toronto in the late 1930s.⁵ Clow had published the first *Broadway Brevities* (alternately known as *Broadway Brevities and Society Gossip*) from 1916 until 1925, when he was tried and then imprisoned for having run the magazine as a blackmail racket. Released from prison in 1928, Clow relaunched *Broadway Brevities* as a tabloid newspaper in New York in 1930, while contributing journalism to mainstream magazines like *Plain Talk* and writing anonymously for magazines of lower status (like *Smokehouse Monthly*). Over the first half of the 1930s, he entered into a variety of other publishing ventures as editor or contributor, though all of these were short lived.⁶ In 1937 Clow moved briefly to Canada, where he participated in the launch and editing of several of the magazines belonging to the Union Publishing Company. Arrested in Toronto in 1937 for the publishing of obscene materials but released with a fine, Clow returned to New York City, where he died in poverty in 1941.

Clow's life and career, the focus of my ongoing research, are of less interest here than his status as the probable conduit into Canada of materials published in various American magazines of the late 1920s and early 1930s. A large number of such magazines had been denied entry into Canada in the early 1930s on moral grounds.⁷ Canadian government bans on their importation rendered their content largely unknown in Canada and offered one of the conditions under which Canadian publishers might repackaging that content in domestically produced periodicals. The various magazines published by Union Publishing Company from 1937 onward would reprint material from a wide range of American magazines, but key among these sources were the original *Broadway Brevities*, other short-lived New York tabloids of the early 1930s in which Clow had been involved (like *Broadway Tattler*), Dell magazines such as *Film Fun*, and, most prevalently, the joke and cartoon magazines associated with William Fawcett's publishing house and its various offshoots—*Smokehouse Monthly*, *Calgary Eye Opener*, and *Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang*.

Three distinctive characteristics of *Canadian Tattler* and the Canadian edition of *Broadway Brevities* interest me here, insofar as they were emblematic of low-end Canadian periodical publishing in the years before the so-called golden age. One of these is the residual character of the materials contained within these magazines. The periodicals shown in figure 1 included cartoons by prolific American illustrators like Jimmy Caborn, clearly purloined from earlier American sources, alongside features copied or adapted from earlier titles in which Clow had been involved. The unsigned feature "Under a Harlem Moon" borrows its title and much of its capsule content from the 1933 tabloid *Broadway Tattler*, whose title, as noted, appears in the colophon as the ostensible (and perhaps original) title of the Canadian magazine ultimately published as *Canadian Tattler*.⁸ The feature "Among the Greenwich Villagers," credited in obviously pseudonymous fashion to "Sheridan S. Square," but clearly written by Stephen G. Clow, recycles themes and names from various pieces Clow had written in the 1920s and early 1930s for different incarnations of *Broadway Brevities*.⁹

The residual character of these materials is one version of the belatedness or lack of isochrony with respect to foreign models with which more legitimate Canadian cultural production has often been diagnosed.¹⁰ In the cases discussed here, this belatedness has less to do with the delayed assimilation of models born elsewhere than with the conditions under which inventories of American materials became available for use by Canadian

publishers. A series of moves against newsstands in New York City and elsewhere in the early 1930s, intended to stop the selling of periodicals deemed pornographic, added to a general instability at the low ends of American magazine publishing during this period.¹¹ The economic crisis deepened this instability. As I have suggested in an earlier study, the widespread failure of magazines and bankruptcies of American publishers during this period set loose inventories of images, jokes, and other content categories that might be reassembled, seemingly without fear of penalty, by Canadian publishers in possession of physical copies of magazines.¹² These inventories, typically consisting of materials from the late 1920s and early 1930s, served as the source for many of the materials that turned up in Canadian magazines at the end of the 1930s.

If the residual, dated character of materials was one characteristic of the late 1930s Canadian magazine, another was the attempt to “Canadianize” them. The history of Canadian cultural commodities is marked by practices that seek to add a Canadian dimension to such commodities or, conversely, to disguise any marks that might betray their Canadian origin. Each of these practices is one response to the marginalization of English-language cultural producers relative to American industries that share their language, but whose market and potential revenues are significantly greater. The Canadianization of materials is intended to suggest their originality and thus enhance their appeal to Canadian consumers, particularly when these consumers might have access to competing materials from the United States. A different economy of legitimacy inspires practices of de-Canadianization, which disguise the Canadian provenance of a cultural commodity in order to escape the judgment that it is of inferior quality or diminished originality.¹³ Insofar as both of these practices are easily seen as contrived, they contribute in almost equal measure to the perception of so many Canadian cultural commodities as being at least partially fraudulent.

The issues of *Canadian Tattler* and *Broadway Brevities* examined here, full as they were of materials produced in the United States (or lightly adapted from such sources), were the object of weak practices of Canadianization. In a practice borrowed for later magazines from Union Publishing and its successor firms, brief jokes or bits of humorous miscellany, apparently recycled from American magazines, were given titles or indications of provenance that anchored them in Canada, even when their core content did not. One joke in these magazines is introduced with an attribution to “Miss Milly Young, of 8590 Yonge Street,” while another list

of humorous brevities is titled “Yonge Street Best-Sellers.”¹⁴ (Yonge Street is considered to be Toronto’s main artery.) These are the only instances of Canadianization inside these two magazines, but we may note one important difference between their covers. *Broadway Brevities* carries the banner headline “Toronto Girl Drops 10 Stories” across the top of its cover, while this is missing from the version called *Canadian Tattler*. We can speculate that the inclusion of the Toronto reference on the cover of *Broadway Brevities* was a compensatory move intended to lightly Canadianize a magazine that made no reference to Canada in its title.

A third characteristic of these magazines, seemingly trivial, condenses several of the strategies employed by Union Publishing and other firms operating at this level of Canadian publishing in the late 1930s. While the date of publication of *Broadway Brevities* volume 1, number 2, is clear and unobscured (May 1937), the year of publication of the *Canadian Tattler* is crossed out with black ink. The point in the magazine’s history at which this crossing-out took place is unknown, but the frequency with which years of publication are covered over in magazines of this period suggests that it occurred early in the magazine’s history. (See, as well, this article’s later examination of *Joe Miller’s Smokehouse Monthly*.) Later issues of the *Canadian Tattler*, *Broadway Brevities*, and other Canadian magazines of this period, such as *Paree*, *Army Gags*, and *Caravan Quarterly*, were often published with no indication of date of publication. Given the absence of any conspicuously time-sensitive content, this lack of clear dating must be seen as part of a strategy enabling these magazines to be sold over long periods and across multiple releases in different locations.

SMOKEHOUSE ANNUAL

These features of the late 1930s Canadian magazine are both magnified and tightly condensed in my second example, the undated volume whose cover bears the title *Smokehouse Annual* (figure 2). The volume’s colophon, which is printed on the final interior page (p. 128), identifies the publication differently, as “Capt. Joey’s Tattler Winter Annual,” and its publisher as “Progress Magazine Co., 319 Bay Street, Toronto, Canada.” Various features of this publication point to both the dispersion of publishing activity in Toronto in the late 1930s and the convergence of multiple trajectories in the migration of materials from the United States into Canada. *Smokehouse Annual* is full



FIG. 2 *Smokehouse Annual* [interior identification as *Capt. Joey's Tattler Winter Annual*]. No date. Progress Magazine Co., Toronto. Collection of the author.

of advertisements for other magazines or books from Toronto publishers at different addresses—for the magazines *Zippy*, *Real Smart Romance Stories*, and *Garter Girls* (International Publishers), and a line of sex manuals and self-help books (Union Publishing Co.). My earlier research suggests that

Progress, International, and Union were owned by identical or overlapping interests that would adopt the name Superior Magazine Publications, soon to become a major player in the wartime Canadian magazine boom.¹⁵ The Canadian *Broadway Brevities* would be identified with each of these imprints at different points in its publishing life.

The only hint as to the date of publication of this *Smokehouse Annual* comes at the end of the “Foreward” [*sic*], signed by “Cap’n. Joey,” who tells the readers (or “Tattlers”) that “we’re signing off for 1939.”¹⁶ It is unclear whether a volume titled *Capt. Joey’s Tattler Winter Annual* actually saw publication under that title—if so, it may have been given this new cover for additional distribution—or whether its packaging and re-titling as *Smokehouse Annual* preceded any actual printing and release.¹⁷ In any event, this volume represents the intertwining of two strands in early 1930s American magazine publishing whose raw materials (titles, content genres, and modes of address) lived out some of their last days at the low ends of the Canadian periodical industry. These strands were the lengthy publishing career of Joseph “Capt. Joey” Burten (alternately known as “Cap’n Joey”), which took him from early 1920s Greenwich Village bohemia to the status of early 1940s pornographer; and the winding down of the digest-sized humor magazines (*Smokehouse Monthly*, *Calgary Eye-Opener*, and *Capt. Billy’s Whiz Bang*) once published by William “Capt. Billy” Fawcett or associated relatives, but now dispersed among various interests.

“Capt. Joey” was Joseph Burten, a World War I veteran whose long list of publications ran from the early 1920s jazz-age magazine *Capt. Joey’s Jazza Ka Jazza* through his longest-lived title, *Follies* (launched as *Capt. Joey’s Follies* in 1923, briefly called *Follies* in 1923, then, in the same year, renamed *Burten’s Follies*, the title it would carry until its demise around 1933). In 1933 Burten had entered into an agreement with Stephen G. Clow whereby Clow would write for a series of new, satirical magazines that included *Razzberries* and *Squawkies*, titles that referred mockingly to network radio and talking films respectively.¹⁸ Burten, who left few traces of his activity in the latter half of the 1930s, emerged in the 1940s as the publisher of a long series of mostly one-shot pornography magazines filled with photographs of nude women and references to soldiers in uniform.¹⁹ Though it used his full name (one article is introduced by “Joe Burten”), the *Smokehouse Annual* appears to contain no materials directly traceable to Burten’s earlier publications. Indeed, it is unclear whether he participated directly in the

publication of this volume or simply served as a vaguely recognizable and titillating name around which the *Annual's* publishers constructed a lively editorial personality. The editorial that “Cap’n Joey” signs makes reference to “Celestine Vichy,” a pseudonym and character employed by Burten since the 1920s—and the name recurs throughout the *Annual*—but the editorial voice strains after an exaggerated Canadianness in which the involvement of the real Joseph Burten is unlikely.²⁰

The cover for the *Smokehouse Annual* was the same as that which had been used for the July 1936 monthly issue of the American magazine *Smokehouse Monthly*.²¹ That magazine had been launched in 1926 by Captain W. H. “Billy” Fawcett, modeled on his highly popular magazine *Capt. Billy’s Whiz Bang*. Both magazines contained folksy but occasionally racy jokes set amid cartoons, ribald stories, and a few recurring columns. Between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s the miscellaneous character of their content gave way to a more consistently “spicy” tone, with all categories of content becoming increasingly sexualized. From 1928 until 1933 *Smokehouse Monthly* carried an unsigned column of Broadway gossip and reminiscences, “Abroad on Broadway,” which was almost certainly written by Stephen G. Clow. This column circles, issue after issue, around his coterie of one-time friends and occasional collaborators, and it regularly revisits the period 1916–25, the years of Clow’s greatest cultural power and ubiquity within New York show business circles.

Smokehouse Annual represents the attempt to repackage materials that originally appeared in the American magazine of the same name, but it adds to these other features existing within the public domain or of uncertain origin. The *Annual* contains items titled “Baloney Hour,” “Questions and Answers,” and “Smokehouse Poetry,” all of which were recurring features in the original American magazine. These and other materials are set amid recurrent introductory phrases that feature references to “Cap’n. Joey” (Joseph Burten) and gratuitous invocations of Canada. The “Smokehouse Poetry” section, a staple of the original American magazine, is a lengthy compendium of folksy verse and barroom ballads of the sort common to all the Fawcett magazines, but alongside these is Oscar Wilde’s “The Ballad of Reading Gaol.” The Canadianization of the poetry section is accomplished by inclusion of the canonical Canadian World War I poem “In Flanders Field” and Edward E. Paramore Jr.’s “The Ballad of Yukon Jake.”

Materials from Fawcett magazines turn up in various Canadian magazines published in the late 1930s,²² and a Canadian magazine titled

Whiz Bang (from whose title any reference to “Capt. Billy” was dropped) was published in the early 1940s by Superior Publishers as a vehicle for wartime humor directed at soldiers. While many of the Canadian magazines published by low-end publishers during the period 1937–39 seemed to be simply reproducing pages from American periodicals with no alteration, the *Smokehouse Annual* is a more complex object bearing evidence of a considerable labor of construction. The new bits of text that sometimes frame a joke or other feature as Canadian are occasionally of a different typeface or are unaligned relative to the borrowed texts that follow them, but there is less evidence of this incongruity and of a crude repurposing of borrowed content than in other Canadian magazines of the period.

In the *Smokehouse Annual*, as noted, Joseph “Capt. Joey” Burten (born in Elmira, New York) is reinvented as a Canadian, his editorial voice modulated so as to address a national audience in language full of references to Canadian life and geography. This constructed editorial personality is employed, perversely, as the device through which a magazine full of American materials is Canadianized. This reinvention of Burten is absurd enough, but that absurdity is magnified by the volume’s conflicting titles, *Smokehouse Annual* and *Capt. Joey’s Tattler Winter Annual*, which collapse two strands of early 1930s American publishing (those of the Fawcett and Burten publishing concerns) whose only point of intersection had been the career of the Canadian Stephen G. Clow.

FAMOUS CRIME CASES

A key line of force in the consolidation of the wartime golden age of Canadian publishing was the emergence of the Superior publishing concern out of the various firms engaged in publishing the periodicals examined so far. The company’s murky roots in the late 1930s resist a full reconstruction, and its contemporary reputation has mostly to do with its status as a publisher of comic books that, from the late 1940s until the firm’s demise in the mid-1950s, were distributed in the United States.²³ Nevertheless, Superior had grown and flourished during the war-years, publishing full lines of magazines (in such genres as true and fictionalized crime, romance, and humor) that replaced those American titles barred from entry into Canada. The lifting of this ban in 1946, following the end of the Second World War, resulted in the flooding of the Canadian market with imported American

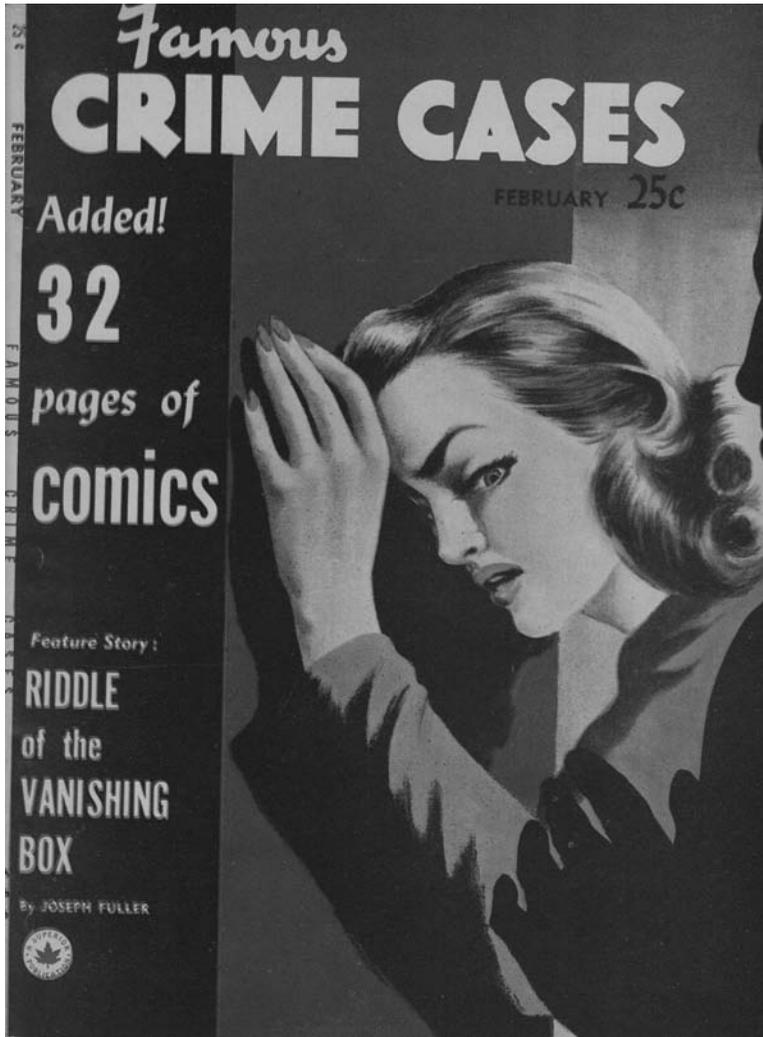


FIG. 3 *Famous Crime Cases*, vol. 9, no. 2, February, 1949. Superior Publishers Limited. Collection of the author.

titles, casting the future of Canadian publishing firms in doubt. Shortly thereafter, however, in response to a widespread flow of Canadian currency to the United States, the Canadian government imposed a new “Emergency Exchange Conservation Act.” That act, which lasted from 1947 until 1951, once again prohibited the importation into Canada of certain classes of print materials, including “pulp” magazines and comics.²⁴ Unlike the currency protection measures of 1940, however, the 1947 Act allowed publishers to

import the “raw materials” of American magazines and comics: the art and printing plates with which Canadian versions of American titles could be published. While this allowed Canadian companies to once again dominate their market, it significantly altered their mode of operation, turning many of them into reprinters of American magazines and comics.

Figure 3 shows the cover of the February 1949 issue of *Famous Crime Case*, a true crime magazine that Superior had launched in the early 1940s. In addition to its promise of ostensibly true articles on real crimes, the cover of this issue of *Famous Crime Cases* touts the fact that it contains “32 Pages of Comics.” These color comics are somewhat clumsily stapled into the middle of a black-and-white true crime magazine otherwise full of nonfiction crime stories and low-quality reproductions of photographs. The inserted pages were originally published in American comic books issued by the Lev Gleason Company. *Famous Crime Cases* included these inserts over a few issues only, in 1948 and 1949, taking all of the inserted materials from the American comic book title *Crime and Punishment*.²⁵ As appendages, these comic book inserts were intended to enhance the appeal of Canadian magazines by making them appear to offer a greater abundance of content than was usual.

In the history of Canadian cultural commodities, the offering of an abundance has produced one version of nonstandard form; more commonly, Canadian versions of the cultural commodity have offered less content than their American equivalents. Canadian comic books of the 1940s and 1950s, for example, typically contained fewer pages than their American counterparts (36 rather than 52). At present, the inventories of cultural materials made available to Canadians through online services such as Netflix, Amazon, and YouTube are significantly smaller than those accessible in the United States, largely as a result of licensing discrepancies. Just as the alternatives of Canadianization and de-Canadianization both represent strategies intended to counter the perception of the Canadian cultural commodities as illegitimate, the sense of such commodities as offering too much or too little relative to an American norm betrays the predicament of Canadian cultural producers. In many of the magazines discussed here, a sense of abundance was conveyed through the overlaying of multiple titles and references that evoked, in however hazy a fashion, more glamorous periods in magazine history. The periodical published as *Smokehouse Annual*, as we have seen, marshaled and overlaid the lingering resonances of the Fawcett magazines, the vaguely notorious reputation of

Joseph “Capt. Joey” Burten, and the pedigree of the titular word “Tattler” in an effort to accrue weight in an uncertain market.

The comic book stories stapled into the middle of *Famous Crime Comics* were clearly intended to enhance the appeal of Canadian true crime magazines at a time in which the latter were losing their prominence in the Canadian market. The use of comic book materials as “appendages,” to enhance the desirability of the Canadian true magazine, may be seen simply as offering more to the buyer, but it also involved the use of a new format to diminish the sense of outdatedness that surrounded an older one. By the late 1940s the true crime magazine, like the pulp magazine more generally, was in decline as a commercial force, in both the United States and Canada. Its readership was being eroded by two ascendant cultural forms—the comic book, which continued to attract younger readers, and the paperback novel directed at adults. Like the compact discs or DVDs attached to magazines since the 1990s, the insertion of comic book pages in *Famous Crime Cases* in the 1940s may be seen as the use of an ascendant form to prop up another, which was residual and in decline. Within the American market, the clearest example of this strategy was the insertion of slick pages of nude photographs amid pages of jokes or fiction printed on pulp paper, a common practice in the 1930s.²⁶

The practice of inserting comic book stories into a pulp magazine was not confined to the Canadian market. In 1950, the American publisher Avon packaged stories from its own line of comic books in the pulp magazines *Out of This World*, *Sparkling Love Stories*, and *Out of This World Adventures*, in part to woo pulp magazine readers over to its comic books. (Later, Avon would reduce its pulp magazines to digest size, so that their format resembled that of paperback books.) It is important, however, to note the difference between Superior’s packaging of comics within a story magazine and that of Avon. While, for the latter, this was a cross-promotional strategy involving different lines of content issuing from the same company, for Superior it expressed new transnational relationships between Canadian and American content. For Avon this agglomeration of materials from two distinct sorts of periodicals published by the company represented the operations of a coordinated system; for Superior Publishers, it highlighted the contrived, disjointed character of the Canadian magazine commodity.

As a true crime magazine into which comic books were inserted, *Famous Crime Cases* was, arguably, doing something else as well. It was offering the enticement of American crime comics at a time when these

were coming under scrutiny by the Canadian parliament and, in particular, by Member of Parliament Dave Fulton who, in 1949, introduced legislation to criminalize the publication, distribution, and sale of crime comics.²⁷ While Superior had begun publishing separate Canadian editions of comics like this one, they faced intense scrutiny from the federal government and provincial censors. We may see the true crime magazine, with comics bound within it, as a Trojan horse of sorts with which a cultural form increasingly monitored by Canadian lawmakers and moral leaders snuck its way into Canada.

JOE MILLER'S SMOKEHOUSE MONTHLY

Joe Miller's Smokehouse Monthly (figure 4) may be considered a particularly abject example of low-end Canadian print culture, for a variety of reasons. Published three years after the golden age of the Canadian pulp magazine had ended, its low-quality image reproduction of cartoons and illustrations on pulpy paper seem all the more degraded for a period that saw the ascendancy in the United States of humor and nude photography magazines printed on slick paper and employing sharp black-and-white photography. The cover of *Joe Miller's Smokehouse Monthly*, like much of the interior content, is printed off center, and the color illustration that adorns it is quite shameless in its pornographic promise, even by the standards of its low-end competitors. While the magazine identifies its publisher as Metropolitan Publishing, of New York and Toronto, all the advertisements within are for oft-reprinted sex manuals available through mail order only from a Toronto address. The reference to New York seems designed solely to give legitimacy to the magazine. Indeed, the interior content is marked by examples of gratuitous Canadianization—one set of jokes is given the title “Ottawa Merry-Go-Round,” and another is attributed to the Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock.²⁸

Like the *Smokehouse Annual*, this media object overlays two traditions in publishing history, draining what residual resonances lingered within the title “Smokehouse” and invoking the name of an eighteenth-century British compiler of jokes. While, at the time of publication of the 1939 *Smokehouse Annual*, its American antecedent was of recent memory, this was no longer the case at the end of the 1940s, when the Fawcett magazine (and the Canadian magazines that borrowed its identity) had been defunct

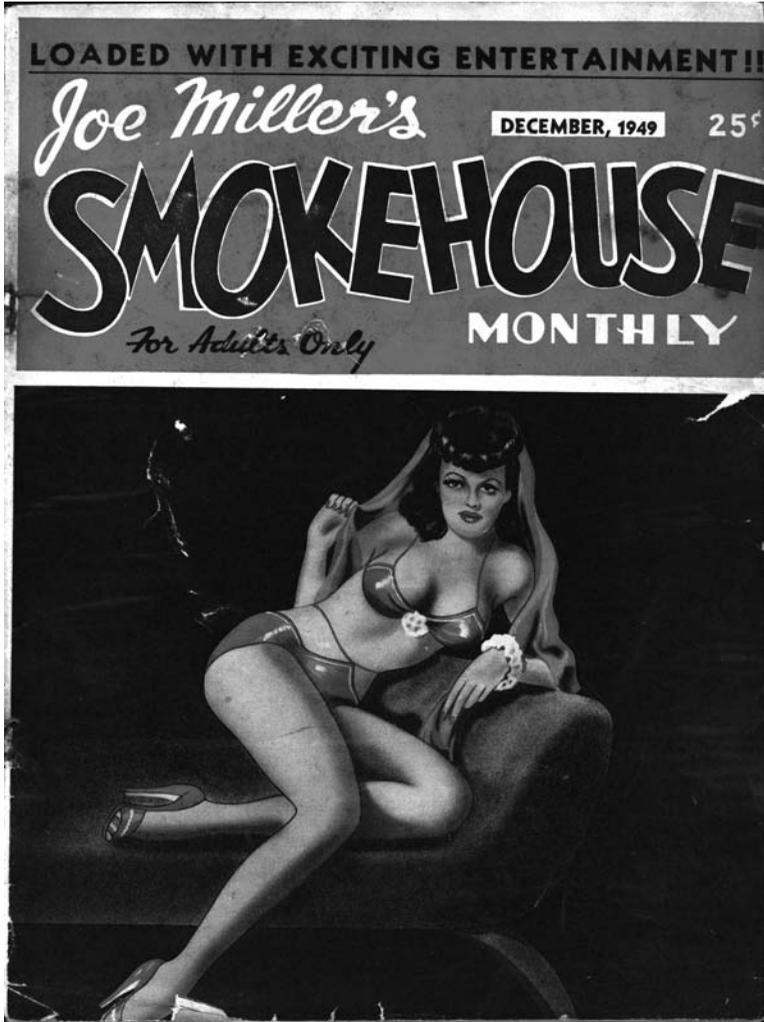


FIG. 4 *Joe Miller's Smokehouse Monthly*. December, 1949. Metropolitan Publishing Co. Collection of the author.

for several years. The “Joe Miller” to whom this volume is attributed was the author of the 1739 book “Joe Miller’s Jests,” a volume reprinted several times over two centuries and lampooned in a Daffy Duck cartoon in 1942.²⁹ The link to the original Joe Miller is confirmed here in an extraordinarily lengthy (for the genre), even pedantic unsigned text, “Joe Miller and his Saturnalia of Wanton Gags and Torrid Temptresses,” which sets the 1739 volume within a tradition of similar collections.³⁰ The tone of this article shares nothing with the rest of the content in *Joe Miller’s Smokehouse*

Monthly, beyond a tendency toward cramped type and poorly placed illustrations. Its concluding paragraphs, after a jump of several pages, are given the new title “Joe Miller and Burlescuties,” but nothing in the text confirms a shift of focus.

More than any of the other volumes discussed here, *Smokehouse Monthly* pulls its content from an eclectic variety of sources: alongside bits of decades-old “flapper” humor, there are cartoons of roughly contemporary style, including one by Kirk Stiles, who made his career in risqué humor and pin-up magazines of the 1950s, like *Humorama*, published by the New York-based Martin Goodman (best known as the man who relaunched Marvel Comics in the early 1960s). A number of two- to three-page fiction stories are more typical of earlier strands of spicy pulp function, including one, “Notorious Girl,” by Frank Kenneth Young, one of the most prolific low-end pulp authors of the 1930s. As was the case with *Smokehouse Annual*, this volume recycles poetry that had long been in the public domain. “One Day of Turkey and Six Days of Hash,” credited to Joe Miller, was, in fact, a Broadside Ballad, often published in compendia of Lumber Camp ballads;³¹ another verse text, “I know my love,” had circulated for years in volumes of Irish folk songs. This miscellany sits awkwardly amid illustrations and spicy stories clearly intended to satisfy the cover’s claim to being “For adults only.”

Joe Miller’s Smokehouse Monthly is dated December 1949, but no volume or issue numbers are given inside. The thin strip of white on which the date is printed would lend itself to easy overlay should the publisher wish to perpetuate or renew its availability. Indeed, on a different copy of this periodical, held within the Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto Library, the year is covered over with what appears to be adhesive tape, further suggesting the magazine’s detachment from any punctual moment of release and sale.³² In any event, nothing in *Joe Miller’s Smokehouse Monthly* is time-sensitive in even the loosest of fashions, and the dominant impression it conveys is of an archaic object straining after a permissiveness that might still have been novel in the Canadian context, but was no longer so when set against the varieties of quasi-pornographic magazines available in the United States at the beginning of the 1950s. In several respects, this *Smokehouse Monthly*, devoid of the bold inventiveness that marked Canadian periodicals during the wartime “Golden Age,” but lacking, as well, the direct ties to earlier American publishers that fueled the transitional period 1937–39, stands as the perfect morbid symptom of

an era's closing. By this point, the passage of American materials into the low end of Canadian periodicals no longer seemed to follow any logic of transnational remaindering or "dumping" whereby further revenues were extracted from the Canadian market by an original, United States-based publisher. Rather, the bankruptcy of original American publishers, the public domain character of so many reprinted materials, and the minor but persistent rewriting or alteration of text and illustrations all allowed Canadian publishers to assemble content in packages that bore no commercial relationship to their various sources.

QUESTIONS OF CIRCULATION

In a variety of ways, the magazines studied here are immune to two of the impulses that have significantly oriented periodical studies in recent years. One of these, rooted in the influential work of Michael Warner and others, asks us to study periodicals in terms of the manner in which their temporalities of circulation serve to constitute publics.³³ In a smoothly operating magazine culture, references forward and backward serve to establish the continuities on which a sense of publicness may found itself. In the Canadian magazines discussed here, it is difficult to find any such continuity of circulation. References in any given magazine to earlier publications may have worked to summon up the lingering resonances of American titles no longer published, but this could not smooth over the temporal and geographical ruptures between them. The Canadian magazines functioned principally as the carriers of materials assembled in packages, in which each issue offered a particular assortment of images and texts drawn (and, much of the time, stolen) from anterior texts of American origin. The magazine, in these cases, is a carrier for mostly detachable materials whose own patterns of circulation remain unexplored by scholars and difficult to reconstruct. In these Canadian periodicals, the markers of a magazine's seriality—dates, numbers, forms of editorial address, and even the inclusion of readers' correspondence—were frequently instruments of deception, intended to disguise, behind the façade of continuity and frequency, what was, in fact, the ongoing production of individual commodities sent out to be sold on their own. More often, as it happens, these markers were simply absent. In the absence of a seriality signaled in forms of address and interreference, the pertinence of the term "periodical" in relation to these

media objects is up for question. While the Canadian titles examined here were clearly carriers of materials originally produced for periodical publication, these carriers themselves were offered for sale in a manner that often resembled that more typical of books.

Circulation, here, is less the inscription of pathways through which social relations take shape than the eccentric movement of constituent parts out of which particular kinds of commodities or objects are made. In thinking about this movement, it is useful to return to the work of Gaonkar and Povinelli on circulation and the primacy of what they call the “edges of forms” of the circulating object: the interfaces and surfaces that shape their movement through space.³⁴ The edges of a cultural object are, in the crudest terms, its forms of packaging, but they are, of course, more than that: they are the surfaces of presentation through which cultural objects move through and stick to social or other situations. They are also the molds that shape the cultural object and dictate the manner of its circulation through public places; they represent the congealing of long processes whereby classes of objecthood and genres of content acquire long-lasting resonance. The edges of form of the periodicals discussed here include the dressing up of heterogeneous assemblages of materials behind titles of some recognizability; the regular repression of any identifiers of date, place of publication, or issue number that might limit the temporal or geographical reach of a magazine; and the use of eccentric formats, like the simulated annual, or the magazine containing inserted comic books, to carry acquired materials into the Canadian market in containers that might not arouse judicial or consumer suspicion.

The other impulse within contemporary magazine studies that these periodicals resist is that which urges the study of readership as key to the understanding of a magazine’s social life. In part, the problem posed by these magazines is that their readership is almost impossible to reconstruct—not simply because too much time has elapsed, but because the tokens that normally serve to specify readers (advertisements other than those for in-house publications, letters to the editor, references elsewhere in popular culture to the reading of these periodicals) are virtually nonexistent. Indeed, it is difficult to know the relative importance of the different channels through which these magazines were distributed to readers. While the prevalence of advertisements offering subscriptions and single-issue sales suggests a significant investment in mail-order distribution, the overlaying or altering of cover dates and issue numbers suggests strategies

aimed at potential buyers encountering these magazines on newsstands or in other retail outlets.

I have suggested elsewhere that, in the study of minor cultural forms (like avant-garde poetry or versions of Canadian popular culture), the struggle to produce will almost always involve processes of greater complexity than will the rare and typically isolated actions through which these forms are consumed.³⁵ The production of the magazines described here involved the mobilizing of disparate groups of materials, the invention of eccentric formats, and the carrying out of elaborate forms of deceit and disguise. Coupled, these activities knit together a complex set of relationships between the magazine cultures of Canada and the United States, and it is by studying the media objects that condense and express these relationships that we may come closer to understanding them.

NOTES

The author wishes to thank the editors of this volume and anonymous reviewers who helped enormously in suggesting revisions through which parts of this article might be improved and clarified.

1. See, among many accounts Caroline Strange and Tina Loo, *True Crime, True North: The Golden Age of Canadian Pulp Magazines* (Richmond, B.C.: Raincoast Books, 2004); Michelle Smith, "From 'The Offal of the Magazine Trade' to 'Absolutely Priceless': Considering the Canadian Pulp Magazine Collection," *English Studies in Canada*, no. 30 (2004): 101–16; and John Bell, *Invaders from the North: How Canada Conquered the Comic Book Universe* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006).

2. For detailed information on the Canadian comic book industry during this period, see Bell, *Invaders from the North*. See, as well, the posts by Ivan Kocmarek on the website comicbookdaily.com, and, in particular, "WECA or Not," *ComicBookDaily.com*, <http://www.comicbookdaily.com/collecting-community/whites-tsunami-weca-splashes/weca-not/>. See, as well, the archived history, "Canadian Golden Age of Comics, 1941–1946," *Libraries and Archives Canada*, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/comics/027002-8300-e.html>.

3. Indeed, the two periods in the twentieth-century history of Canadian popular culture considered "golden ages" for their respective forms are both seen as prompted by actions of the Canadian government. One of these was the period 1940–46, for periodicals. The other was the period that followed the introduction in 1971 of "Canadian Content" quotas for Canadian music on radio stations, now considered a significant factor in the growth of a national music recording industry in the 1970s.

4. Despite extensive research, I have uncovered no information on a Union Publishing firm operating in Montreal during this period. The Lovell City Guides for Montreal for the years 1937–39 identify a Sam Wrublewsky as the only occupant of this address during that time.

5. Will Straw, "Traffic in Scandal: The Story of Broadway Brevités," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 73 (2004): 47–971.

6. This period in Clow's life is covered briefly in Will Straw, "Squawkies and Talkies," *Parallax* 14, no. 2 (2008): 20–30.

7. See "Keeping Out Obscene Publications," *National Revenue Review*, February 1932, 5; and the various lists of banned periodicals published under the title "Prohibited Publications" in issues of the *National Revenue Review* in 1932 and 1933.

8. Unsigned, "Under the Harlem Moon," *Broadway Brevities* I, no. 2 (1937): 21.

9. Sheridan D. Square, "Among the Greenwich Villagers," *Broadway Brevities* I, no. 2 (1937): 14.

10. See, from the perspective of literary theory, the analysis of claims of Canadian belatedness in Imre Szeman, "Belated or Isochronic? Canadian Writing, Time, and Globalization," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 71 (2000): 145–53.

11. This crisis is best followed in each successive issue of the magazines *Author and Journalist* and *Writer's Digest* between 1930 and 1934, through a long series of untitled announcements of magazine closures and failures to pay writers, but see in particular untitled, *Author and Journalist*, September 1932, 32.

12. Straw, "Traffic in Scandal." The circulation and recycling of materials from American magazines of this period extended beyond Canada. In her study of Chinese modernist magazines of the early 1930s, my colleague Liying Sun has found numerous instances in which Chinese magazines "borrowed" cartoons from American "spicy" magazines such as the late 1920s/early 1930s incarnation of *Jim Jam Jems*. See Liying Sun, "The New Eve Undressed: Nudes in *Linglong* and American Popular Journals (1920s–1930s)," paper presented at the conference "Gender and Transcultural Production: Chinese Women's Journals in their Global Context, 1900–2000," School of Oriental and African Studies, London, May 14, 2011.

13. Outside of the magazine field, the best-known examples of de-Canadianization are feature films, made in Canada with Canadian funds, that disguise their Canadianity through the use of one or more American stars and the absence of direct references to the places in which they are shot. Strategies of Canadianization are more rare, but include such ephemeral objects as the record album *Across Canada* by the Dave Clark Five, a retitled version of a record originally issued in the United States as *Coast to Coast*. See Peter S. McCullough, "A Guide to Canadian Pressings," JerryOsborne.com, <http://www.jerryosborne.com/canada.pdf>.

14. The unsigned joke attributed to "Miss Milly Yonge" carries the headline "Girl Drops 10 Stories," *Broadway Brevities* 1, no. 2 (May 1937): n.p.; unsigned, "Yonge Street 'Best-Sellers,'" *Broadway Brevities* 1, no. 2 (May 1937): 3.

15. Straw, "Traffic in Scandal."

16. "Cap'n. Joey," "Foreward," *Smokehouse Annual*, 1939, 3.

17. The only reference I have ever seen to a publication with the title *Capt. Joey's Tattler Winter Annual* was in an Abebooks listing from Dave Mason Books, a well-known antiquarian book dealer in Toronto. When I inquired about it, they were unable to find the volume.

18. See Straw, "Squawkies and Talkies"; and "Here's Clow Again," *Variety*, September 26, 1933, 57.

19. These publications, almost all of them undated, include such titles as *Argentine Nights*, *Army Gals and Gags*, *Artists and Models*, *Burlesk*, *Cap'n Joey's Magazine*, *Gay Broadway*, *Gay Parisian*, *Gobs and Gals*, *Hawaiian Nights*, *Hollywood Scandals*, *Life in Rio*, *Manhattan Scandals*, and a briefly revived *Burten's Follies*.

20. An example of Canadianization in this volume is this passage from "Cap'n. Joey's" editorial: "For a while it looked as if there was no balm in Saskatchewan, that Toronto (the good), had gone worse, that Montreal would never change, but like our Premier, our old ship of the Dominion has been steered through the Depression through better times, no foolin'" (Cap'n Joey, *Smokehouse Annual*, 1939, 3).

21. The phrase "A Grand Salaam!," which is at the bottom left of the *Smokehouse Annual* cover, is centred on the 1936 *Smokehouse Monthly*, and the latter lacks the promise of "Cartoons and Illustrated Humour."

22. A feature called the "Whiz Bang Baloney Hour" appears in an undated issue of *Broadway Brevities* that was probably, given its place of publication, released around 1940, and "Smokehouse Poetry" is a feature in later issues of the same title. Features titled "Smokehouse Poetry" also appear in issues of *Canadian Tattler*, such as no. 5 (1937) and no. 7 (1938).

23. See, among many on-line overviews, "Comic Books in English Canada," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed October 30, 2014, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/comic-books-in-english-canada/>.

24. See, among many other accounts, John Bell, "The Comic Menace: How fear and protectionism killed Canada's postwar comic book industry," *Maisonneuve*, October 5, 2006, accessed September 15, 2014, <http://maisonneuve.org/article/2006/10/5/comic-menace/>.

25. "Vic and Pat Colby," "Stanley Flint and Steve Parker," "Evans Healey," reprinted in the February 1949 (vol. 9, no. 1) issue of the Canadian magazine *Famous Crime Cases*, were published originally in the American comic book *Crime and Punishment*, 1, no. 9 (December 1948). That entire issue was itself reprinted by Superior as the Canadian comic book *Crime and Punishment*, no. 9 (December 1948). The stories "Schnoz (The Fix) Kowalski," "Rod Williams,"

and “Everett Duane,” which appeared in the Canadian true crime magazine *Famous Crime Cases* 9, no. 2 (March 1949) were first published in the American Gleason comic book *Crime and Punishment*, no. 10 (January 1949). “Bill McClune the Double-Crosser,” “Ralph Luther,” “The Skeleton in the Cave,” which appeared in the December 1948 issue of the Toronto-based magazine *Famous Crime Cases*, appeared originally in no. 8 (November 1948) of the American comic *Crime and Punishment*. The Gleason comic *Crime and Punishment* had no consecutive pagination and stories were numbered independently. The Canadian reprints followed this practice.

26. Examples include the Fawcett magazine *Capt. Billy’s Whiz Bang Winter Annual*, 16th ed., 1937, and the *Eye-Opener’s Red Pepper Annuals* published in 1936 and 1938 by Annette Fawcett, the ex-wife of William H. Fawcett.

27. See Bell, “The Comic Menace.”

28. Unsigned, “Ottawa Merry-go-round,” *Joe Miller’s Smokehouse Monthly*, December 1949, 7. The reference to Stephen Leacock comes in a short, unsigned paragraph with the title “Easy,” p. 15.

29. See, among many other online sources, Kevin Shay, “Joe Miller’s Jest or, The Wit’s Vade-Mecum (1739),” *STAGGER[Nation]*, <http://www.staggernation.com/jmj/>. The 1942 Daffy Duck cartoon, in which Daffy attempts to sell copies of the “Joe Miller Joke Book,” is described by Frank Moraes, “Joe Miller Joke Book,” *Frankly Curious*, May 26, 2014, <http://franklycurious.com/LMNucleus/?itemid=8806>.

30. Unsigned, “Joe Miller And His Saturnalia of Wanton Gags and Torrid Temptresses,” *Joe Miller’s Smokehouse Monthly*, December 1949, 6, 20–22; and, in the same issue, Frank Kenneth Young, “Notorious Girl,” 28–31; Joe Miller, “One Day of Turkey and Six Days of Hash,” 24; unsigned, “I’m sure I know my love,” 25.

31. See, for example, the list of such ballads published by the Denver Public Library, <http://labs.libhub.org/denverpl/portal/Lore%20of%20the%20lumber%20camps/6nH7i3ty/>.

32. I thank Christopher Young, who works at the Fisher Rare Book Library, for supplying me with a scan of this version.

33. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).

34. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition,” *Public Culture* 15 (2003): 385–97.

35. Will Straw, “Cultural Production and the Generative Matrix: A Response to Georgina Born,” *Cultural Sociology* 4 (2010): 209–16.