

**The Awkward Homecoming of Maria Monk  
Printers, Censors, and a Mysterious Canadian Edition of an  
Anti-Catholic Best-Seller**  
**Les retrouvailles inconfortables de Maria Monk  
Imprimeurs, censeurs et une mystérieuse édition canadienne  
d'un best-seller anticatholique**

Forrest Pass

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Article abstract

Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk (1836) is perhaps Canada's most scandalous literary export. However, only a few editions of the scurrilous anti-Catholic fabrication have been published in its purported author's country of origin. A mysterious undated edition, "published for the trade" in Toronto, is probably the most widely circulated Canadian printing. Based on a close investigation of the Toronto edition's physical characteristics—the stereotype plates used to print it, the illustrations, and the mismatched printer's ornaments appearing on certain pages—as well as the ownership history of one copy and the context of the book's legal status in Canada, this article argues that the Toronto edition is evidence of an anonymous publisher's strategies to evade customs censorship. It suggests that these strategies influenced how Canadian readers might have engaged with Awful Disclosures, highlighting the tension between obscenity and anti-Catholicism that underlay the book's reception among readers, printers, and censors.

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# The Awkward Homecoming of Maria Monk: Printers, Censors, and a Mysterious Canadian Edition of an Anti-Catholic Bestseller

FORREST PASS  
Library and Archives Canada

## *Abstract*

*Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836) is perhaps Canada's most scandalous literary export. However, only a few editions of the scurrilous anti-Catholic fabrication have been published in its purported author's country of origin. A mysterious undated edition, "published for the trade" in Toronto, is probably the most widely circulated Canadian printing. Based on a close investigation of the Toronto edition's physical characteristics—the stereotype plates used to print it, the illustrations, and the mismatched printer's ornaments appearing on certain pages—as well as the ownership history of one copy and the context of the book's legal status in Canada, this article argues that the Toronto edition is evidence of an anonymous publisher's strategies to evade customs censorship. It suggests that these strategies influenced how Canadian readers might have engaged with *Awful Disclosures*, highlighting the tension between obscenity and anti-Catholicism that underlay the book's reception among readers, printers, and censors.

### Résumé

*Anful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (« Les Révélations horribles de Maria Monk ») (1836) est sans doute la plus scandaleuse exportation littéraire du Canada. Et pourtant, seules quelques éditions de cette calomnieuse œuvre anticatholique ont été publiées au pays d'origine de son autrice présumée. Une mystérieuse édition sans date, « publiée à des fins commerciales » à Toronto, est probablement l'impression canadienne la plus largement diffusée. À partir d'une analyse minutieuse des caractéristiques matérielles de cette édition — les stéréotypes utilisées lors de son impression, les illustrations et les ornements dépareillés de l'imprimeur sur certaines pages —, ainsi que l'historique de propriété d'un exemplaire et le contexte du statut juridique de l'œuvre au Canada, cet article avance que l'édition torontoise est une preuve des stratégies adoptées par un éditeur anonyme afin d'échapper à la censure douanière. Il suggère également que ces stratégies ont influencé l'engagement des lecteur·trice·s canadien·ne·s avec *Anful Disclosures* tout en soulignant les tensions entre l'obscénité et l'anticatholicisme sous-jacentes à la réception du livre auprès de lecteur·trice·s, d'imprimeurs et de censeurs.

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### Introduction

Few Canadians know—and fewer still would celebrate—that the best-selling Canadian book of the nineteenth century was a scurrilous anti-Catholic fantasy entitled *Anful Disclosures of Maria Monk*. Its putative author, the daughter of the British barracks master at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, had appeared in New York in the autumn of 1835 claiming to have escaped from a hellish life as a nun at Montreal's Hôtel-Dieu convent. She alleged that she had experienced clerical rape and torture, and even witnessed infanticide. With the encouragement of shadowy evangelical Protestant patrons, Monk penned—or at least contributed

to—a lurid account of convent life, which first appeared under the imprint of New York booksellers and printers Timothy Andrus Howe and Joseph Bates, with backing from the much larger firm of Harper & Brothers, in January 1836. The book’s critics soon proved its allegations to be a hoax, in part because Monk’s descriptions of the Montreal convent’s interior suggested that she had never set foot inside it. However, this did nothing to quell the book’s popularity.

Monk herself did not benefit much from her notoriety; as a British subject, she did not enjoy the protection of American copyright law, and the rights to her story passed first to her unscrupulous “friends” and then quickly into the public domain. Publishers churned out edition after edition, and as many as three hundred thousand copies of *Awful Disclosures* circulated before the American Civil War, a sales figure exceeded in North America only by Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Over a century later, Protestant publishers who continued to distribute the work claimed that over ten million copies were in print. Meanwhile, the “author” herself died penniless in prison in 1849, having turned to sex work and petty theft.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk: As Exhibited in a Narrative of her Sufferings during a Residence of Five Years as a Novice, and Two Years as a Black Nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* (New York: Howe & Bates, 1836) (hereafter “Howe & Bates”); Philippe Sylvain, “Monk, Maria,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed Dec. 23, 2023, [www.biographi.ca/en/bio/monk\\_maria\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/monk_maria_7E.html); Ray Billington, “Maria Monk and her Influence,” *Catholic Historical Review* 22, no. 3 (1936): 283–296 (this remains a useful summary of the Maria Monk affair, but it is not without errors); Dennis Castillo, “The Enduring Legacy of Maria Monk,” *American Catholic Studies* 112, no. 1/4 (2001): 49–59; Cassandra L. Yacovazzi, *Escaped Nuns: True Womanhood and the Campaign Against Convents in Antebellum America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), chapter 1. For Monk’s failure to secure her copyright, see *Monk v. Harper*, 3 Edward’s Chancery Reports, 110 (1837). The registered copyright holder was one “P. Gordon,” apparently Phineas Gordon, a former Boston merchant and father of George Phineas Gordon, inventor of the Gordon job press. According to *Longworth’s New York City Directory*, the elder Gordon changed his occupation abruptly from “merchant” or “broker” to “publisher” in 1836, and correspondence concerning the use of his name for the project and the payment of royalties survive in Columbia University’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Harper & Brothers Records, Box 9, File 2. Both Billington and Yacovazzi repeat the old canard that Howe & Bates was a dummy company established by Harper & Brothers for the sole purpose of distancing the company from *Awful Disclosures*. Although the Harpers’ involvement in the affair is undisputed, and was suspected at the time, Howe & Bates were already small but established players in the New York book trade and had been printing and publishing abolitionist pamphlets, religious tracts, and translations of

*Anful Disclosures* became a favoured text among anti-Catholic nativists, but it also found an audience as pornography, with the title itself becoming synonymous with obscenity. Leopold Bloom thumbs through a copy in a grubby Dublin bookstore in James Joyce's *Ulysses*; in *The Harrovians* by Arnold Lunn, public school boys speculate that the source of an unfortunate onanist's titillation and degradation might be a forbidden book they call *The Anful Confessions of Maria the Nun*. In the back pages of London's infamous *Illustrated Police News*, sleazy pharmacies hawked Maria Monk's tale alongside "Continental chic female pictures" and "French rubber goods." As late as the 1960s and 1970s, one British publisher touted *Anful Disclosures* as "one of the most powerful accounts of depravity ever written," including it in their catalogue alongside lewd titles such as *In the Hands of the Inquisition*, *Cruel Venus*, *Black Lust*, and *The Age of Perversion*. Jenny Franchot argues that this erotic reading was evident from the book's first publication; it was "hardly intended for a genteel audience," but rather for male readers "somewhere ambiguously outside but near the sacred precinct of the home." While modern readers may struggle to find anything the least bit erotic about *Anful Disclosures*, as Karen Halttunen has observed, the infliction of pain alone was titillation enough for many early nineteenth-century readers, even without explicit sexual content. Still, the most suggestive scenes in *Anful Disclosures* pale in comparison with its anti-Catholic contemporary, *The Confessional*

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bible texts into Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) since 1834. See, for example, David M. Reese, *A brief review of the "First annual report of the American anti-slavery society, with the speeches delivered at the anniversary meeting, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1834." Addressed to the People of the United States* (New York: Howe & Bates, 1834) and *Ne ne shagohyattonni Paul ne royatadogenhti jinonkadih ne Romans kanyengehaga kaweanondahkon / The Epistle of Paul the Apostle, to the Romans, in the Mohawk Language*, trans. Kenwendeshon (Henry Aaron Hill) (New York: Young Men's Bible Society of New-York, Howe & Bates, Printers, 1835). The "dummy company" allegation appears to have originated in "An Uncivil Journal," *Catholic World* 14, no. 84 (1872–03), 726–27. For contemporary speculation about the involvement of Harper & Brothers, see "Who are the real publishers of Maria Monk! – What still harping on my daughter?" *New York Herald*, February 18, 1836. For twentieth-century circulation claims, see *Maria Monk Reveals Secrets of the Black Nunnery in Montreal. A Great Book of Facts*. (n.p., n.d. [c. 1950]) and Yacovazzi, *Escaped Nuns*, 149.

*Unmasked*, which one scholar has argued was nothing more than pornography dressed up as anti-Catholic polemic to evade obscenity laws. For its part, *Awful Disclosures* was anti-Catholic polemic clad, for some audiences, in smut—and very scantily clad at that. Its hateful intent remained plainly apparent amid any mildly titillating content.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the tension between the blatant anti-Catholicism of *Awful Disclosures* and its alleged obscenity lay at the heart of the book's reception in Canada. As the horrors that Monk related had supposedly taken place on British North American soil, Canadians took an early interest in *Awful Disclosures*, and the book circulated widely among Monk's compatriots for decades. And yet, this interest resulted in only a few Canadian printings. Of these, most surviving copies are of a cheap undated paperback edition with a title page indicating only that it was "published for the trade" in Toronto (Fig. 1). Its illustrations, cobbled together from British and American sources, reinforce not only the work's anti-Catholic message but also its appeal to a prurient interest in cruelty and pain. Based on its physical characteristics and additional contextual evidence, I argue that this mysterious edition of *Awful Disclosures* was produced in the 1930s to evade a belated Canadian government ban on the book's importation—a ban that depended on both the work's inflammatory religious content and its obscenity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: The Egoist Press, 1922), 226; Jennifer Burns Levin, "How Joyce Acquired the 'Stale Smut of Clubmen': *Photo Bits* in the Early Twentieth Century," *James Joyce Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (2009): 262–263; Arnold Lunn, *The Harrovians* (London: Methuen and Co., 1914), 149; "Books and Photos. Buy Direct and Save Money. Curios & Facetiae for Collectors," *Illustrated Police News* (London, UK), December 10, 1898; "6d. the Lot," *Illustrated Police News* (London, UK), October 1, 1910; *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (London: Canova Press, 1969); "Decisions of the Indecent Publications Tribunal," *New Zealand Gazette*, December 3, 1970, 2392; "Decision of the Indecent Publications Tribunal," *New Zealand Gazette*, May 21, 1970, 896; "Decision of the Indecent Publications Tribunal," *New Zealand Gazette*, May 27, 1971, 998; "Decision of the Indecent Publications Tribunal," *New Zealand Gazette*, October 21, 1971, 2199; Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 154; Katherine Mullin, "Unmasking *The Confessional Unmasked*: The 1868 Hicklin Test and the Toleration of Obscenity," *English Literary History* 85, no. 2 (2018): 471–499; Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 314–317.

<sup>3</sup> *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, as exhibited in a narrative of her sufferings during a residence of five years as a novice, and two years as a black nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal* (Toronto: n.p., n.d.) (hereafter "Toronto"). WorldCat lists eleven copies of the Toronto edition in

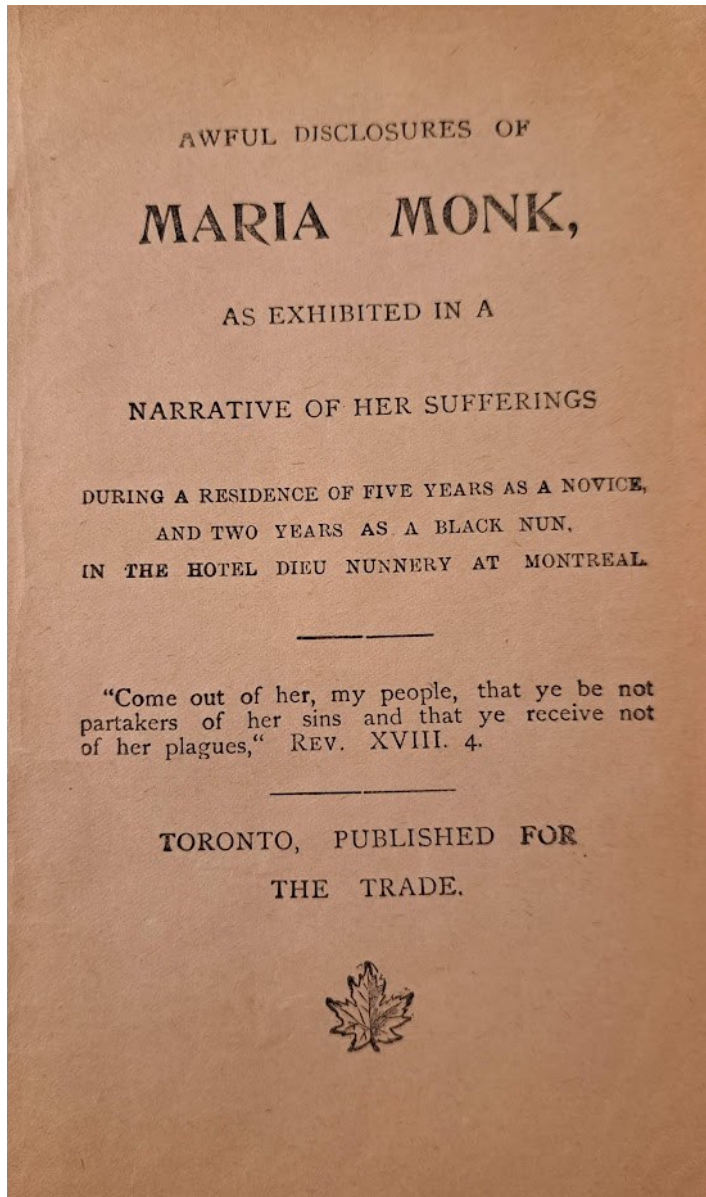


Figure 1: Title Page of the Toronto Edition

The marketing and reception of *Awful Disclosures* in Canada in the early twentieth century presents intriguing contrasts with the book's continued production and popularity in the United States and Great Britain. Although it had never been out of print, the book received a new lease on

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libraries throughout Canada and the United States. A twelfth copy was available in trade from a Brockville, Ontario, bookseller in 2023. I own a thirteenth copy and am aware of a fourteenth in another private collection; there are undoubtedly others.

life in the United States as part of a deluge of anti-Catholic print culture produced before the First World War. Both *The Menace* newspaper in Aurora, Missouri and the Milan, Illinois-based Rail Splitter Press released new editions and promoted *Awful Disclosures* in the pages of their periodicals.<sup>4</sup> However, the resurgence in American interest in the book was both explicitly anti-Catholic and a predominantly rural phenomenon. The Canadian story is an urban one, with Toronto publishers producing editions of varying originality and Montreal being a major port of entry and distribution for foreign editions. Moreover, although anti-Catholicism may have accounted for some of the demand in Canada, by the 1920s and 1930s, the Toronto publisher and Montreal distributors were marketing the book as smut. The mysterious Toronto edition lacks the marks of self-promotional propaganda that typified American editions, and “stories of the Maria Monk type” purchased at a “Yonge Street book stall” was used as a euphemism for erotica in one Toronto paper. In Montreal booksellers’ advertisements, *Awful Disclosures* appeared alongside the lewd favourites of the day—just as it did in Britain’s *Illustrated Police News*. Maria Monk’s Canadian publishers and distributors had more in common with the urban pornographers of London’s Holywell Street than they did with the small-town anti-popish propagandists of the American Midwest.<sup>5</sup> There is a symmetry between the urban context of the production and distribution of *Awful Disclosures* in Canada and the book’s content. As Rebecca Sullivan has argued, American Protestants read the first edition of *Awful Disclosures* as an urban dystopian nightmare; Montreal was “a city

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<sup>4</sup> Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 39; *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk of the Hotel Dieu Convent of Montreal: The Secrets of the Black Nunnery Revealed* (Aurora, MO: Menace Publishing Company, n.d. [c. 1910]); An advertisement for *Maria Monk, the Exposures of Old Black Nunnery* appears inside the front cover of M.H. Wilcoxon, *Abraham Lincoln’s vow Against the Catholic Church* (Milan, IL: Rail Splitter Press, 1928). There are no copies of this edition in WorldCat, but the variant title suggests that it was indeed a separate edition from the Menace Publishing issue, albeit at the same price point (fifty cents).

<sup>5</sup> LAC, R.B. Bennett fonds, Political Series, Section F, R11336-8-1-E, Reel M-1108, Translation of Letter from St. Jean Baptiste Society of Montreal, undated [April 13, 1931], 290921–290922; Reel M-1107, Alida R. Bélanger to E.B. Ryckman, April 9, 1931; “When Soldiers Study Art,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, December 9, 1922.



gone wrong,” a “fallen virgin-whore” crying for salvation from overbearing popery. While the Roman Catholic Church did not dominate Canadian affairs as some American observers suggested, its status in Canada and the relations between Canadian Catholics and their Protestant compatriots differed from the American circumstance. This, too, influenced the reception of *Awful Disclosures* in Canada. As Justin Nordstrom has noted, anti-Catholicism declined in the United States after 1917, owing to the enthusiastic participation of American Catholics in the war effort. In Canada, the First World War had the opposite effect, with the Conscription Crisis enflaming anti-French-Canadian sentiment—and, by extension, anti-Catholic prejudice—among some English-speaking Protestants. Ongoing disagreement over sectarian schooling also contributed to anti-Catholic animus in the 1920s—as we shall see, this sparked a renewed interest in *Awful Disclosures*, particularly in western Canada. However, when Canadian Catholics challenged publications such as *Awful Disclosures*, they found that they wielded greater influence than their equally vigilant American coreligionists, probably because Canadian leaders were concerned with maintaining a fragile sectarian political balance. Therefore, where small-town American juries were reluctant to convict anti-Catholic publishers on obscenity charges, federal authorities in Canada routinely restricted the distribution of anti-Catholic materials during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, often at the request of Catholic complainants.<sup>6</sup>

The reception of *Awful Disclosures* thus sheds new light on the history of censorship in Canada, which was never the scene of high-profile obscenity trials such as those in the United States and the United Kingdom concerning the works of James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence. Instead, Canada’s main federal censors were not judges but customs officers. Since the Canadian Confederation in 1867, the Duties of Customs Act has prohibited the importation of “books, printed paper, drawings, paintings,

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<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Sullivan, “A Wayward from the Wilderness: Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures* and the Feminization of Lower Canada in the Nineteenth Century,” *Essays on Canadian Writing* 62 (1997): 216; Yacovazzi, *Escaped Nuns*, 11; Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, chapter 5.

prints, photographs or representations of any kind of a treasonable or seditious, or of an immoral or indecent character.”<sup>7</sup> For almost a century, the Minister of National Revenue enjoyed virtually absolute power to determine which books and other publications were inadmissible, for it was only in the 1950s that it became clear that the courts could review the Minister’s decisions. Before the Second World War, the Department of National Revenue fulfilled its censorship mandate quietly, with little publicity or official documentation. Departmental practice empowered low-level customs officers to exclude printed materials at ports of entry without necessarily reporting seizures or rejected shipments to Ottawa. Only in cases of “general” importation at multiple ports did the Minister, on the advice of the departmental Examiner of Publications, issue a memorandum forbidding the importation of a particular title. Customs officers themselves seized and reported many suspect titles; concerned members of the public submitted others. While prohibited publications rarely appear in surviving seizure records, aggregate reports indicate that the volume of material examined was substantial, with officers reviewing as many as 856 titles, representing almost 130,000 copies, in 1937 alone.<sup>8</sup> In the absence of official documentation, surviving prohibited publications themselves offer evidence of the strategies publishers and distributors used to evade customs censorship. As book historian Elizabeth Haven Hawley has demonstrated, indecent books often bear physical clues about the production and distribution strategies of their publishers. In the case of the Toronto edition of *Awful Disclosures*, the

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<sup>7</sup> *Duties of Customs Act*, R.S.C. 1886 c. 32, schedule D, item 813. The Postmaster General also had the power to prohibit the delivery of obscene or immoral material through the mail. The Post Office Department appears to have exercised this authority even more discreetly than did the customs service, but the two applied similar standards and sometimes worked in concert. See *Post Office Act*, R.S.C. 1886 c. 35, s. 9(d).

<sup>8</sup> The best overview of customs censorship in Canada is Bruce B. Ryder, “Undercover Censorship: Exploring the History of the Regulation of Publications in Canada,” in *Interpreting Censorship in Canada*, eds. Klaus Peterson and Allan C. Hutchinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 131–138. Joseph Griffin, “James T. Farrell vs. The Dominion of Canada: a Case of Censorship,” *The Dalhousie Review* 68, no. 1–2 (1988): 163–83 offers a case study from an author and publisher’s perspective. For additional information on practices, see “Stemming the Tide of Obscene Publications,” *National Revenue Review* 4, no. 4 (1933): 4; “Suppressing Indecent Literature,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 30, 1938.

stereotype plates used, the illustrations selected, the curious addition of printer's ornaments, and the ownership history of one surviving copy all help to date the edition and point to otherwise undocumented relationships among Canadian, British, and American printers and publishers. Meanwhile, the evolution of customs censorship in Canada and the mobilization of Catholic civil society to demand restrictions on anti-Catholic publications provide important contextual support for the physical evidence. Although this evidence does not allow for a conclusive identification of the publisher, it does hint at the type of publisher that might have undertaken this work, and how such publishers might have operated under official and unofficial surveillance.<sup>9</sup>

### *Plates, Imposition, and Collation*

The Toronto edition of *Awful Disclosures* is by no means an example of fine printing. Its nine sextodecimo gatherings are printed on highly acidic wood-pulp paper, possibly including some straw, bound together with two staples and covered in printed blue paper wraps.<sup>10</sup> The pages themselves are printed from stereotype, or perhaps electrotype, plates; these plates were old and unevenly worn, for the heaviness and clarity of the impression vary considerably throughout the book. The text is riddled with typographical errors, idiosyncratic pagination, and inconsistencies in typeface and punctuation. In some places, full lines of text are missing. These faults are all clues to the edition's source.

Hawley has suggested that shared stereotype plates offer the “strongest proof of business networks” among publishers of indecent works.<sup>11</sup> In the

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Haven Hawley, “American Publishers of Indecent Books, 1840–1890,” PhD diss. Georgia Institute of Technology, 2005, chapters 7–8; “Mechanical Fingerprints and the Technology of Nineteenth-Century American Erotica,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (2004): 1036–1051; “Turning Ideology into Material Culture: The Technologies of Anti-Catholic Books in America, 1835–1875” (paper presentation, American Historical Association Annual Conference, Washington, DC, January 9, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> An example of an otherwise identical variant issue in brown wraps appeared in trade in spring 2020. From Here to Infinity Gallery and Bookstore, Brockville, ON, email message, June 23, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Hawley, “American Publishers of Indecent Books,” 348.

case of the Toronto edition of *Awful Disclosures*, the plates—faults and all—closely match those of another undated edition published in Great Britain. While this British edition was also anonymously “published for the trade,” the verso of the title page bears the printer’s colophon: “Made and Printed in / Great Britain by / Truslove & Bray, Ltd., / West Norwood, S.E. 27.” As newspaper and job printers in London’s southern suburbs, Truslove & Bray’s stock-in-trade included local histories, genealogies, philatelic publications, cookbooks, public library catalogues and newsletters, and annual reports for small companies and non-profit societies. While works bearing the Truslove & Bray imprint appeared as early as the 1890s, the company’s printing of *Awful Disclosures* could not have appeared before 1917, as the “S.E. 27” postal code in the colophon reflects that year’s subdivision of greater London postal districts.<sup>12</sup>

Surviving copies of the Truslove & Bray edition show certain improvements over the plates used for the Toronto edition. For example, on page 152, portions of a line missing in the Toronto edition have been reset in the Truslove & Bray edition, albeit in a different typeface. Similarly, on page 177 of the Toronto edition, a large initial “I” appears in a different typeface from the rest of the text; this has been corrected in the Truslove & Bray edition. None of the corrections extend over more than one page or otherwise alter the overall collation of the book; these were minor corrections to existing plates rather than a complete resetting and recasting. Many other errors are common to the two editions, such as the unusual inclusion of pages numbered “56a” and “57a” (Fig. 2).

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<sup>12</sup> *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, as exhibited in a narrative of her sufferings during a residence of five years as a novice, and two years as a black nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal* (London: n.p., n.d.) (hereafter “Truslove & Bray”). The Truslove & Bray colophon in some works from the mid-1920s does not include the postal code. For example, the printer’s colophon of G.W. Daniels, *Refrigeration in the Chemical Industry* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1926) reads “Made and Printed by / TRUSLOVE & BRAY, LTD., / *Printers and Bookbinders*, / WEST NORWOOD, / LONDON, ENGLAND.” However, the postal code does appear on the title page of J. Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Malton Memories and l’Anson Triumphs* (London: Truslove & Bray, 1925). This inconsistency suggests that the company’s printing of *Awful Disclosures* may date from well after 1917.

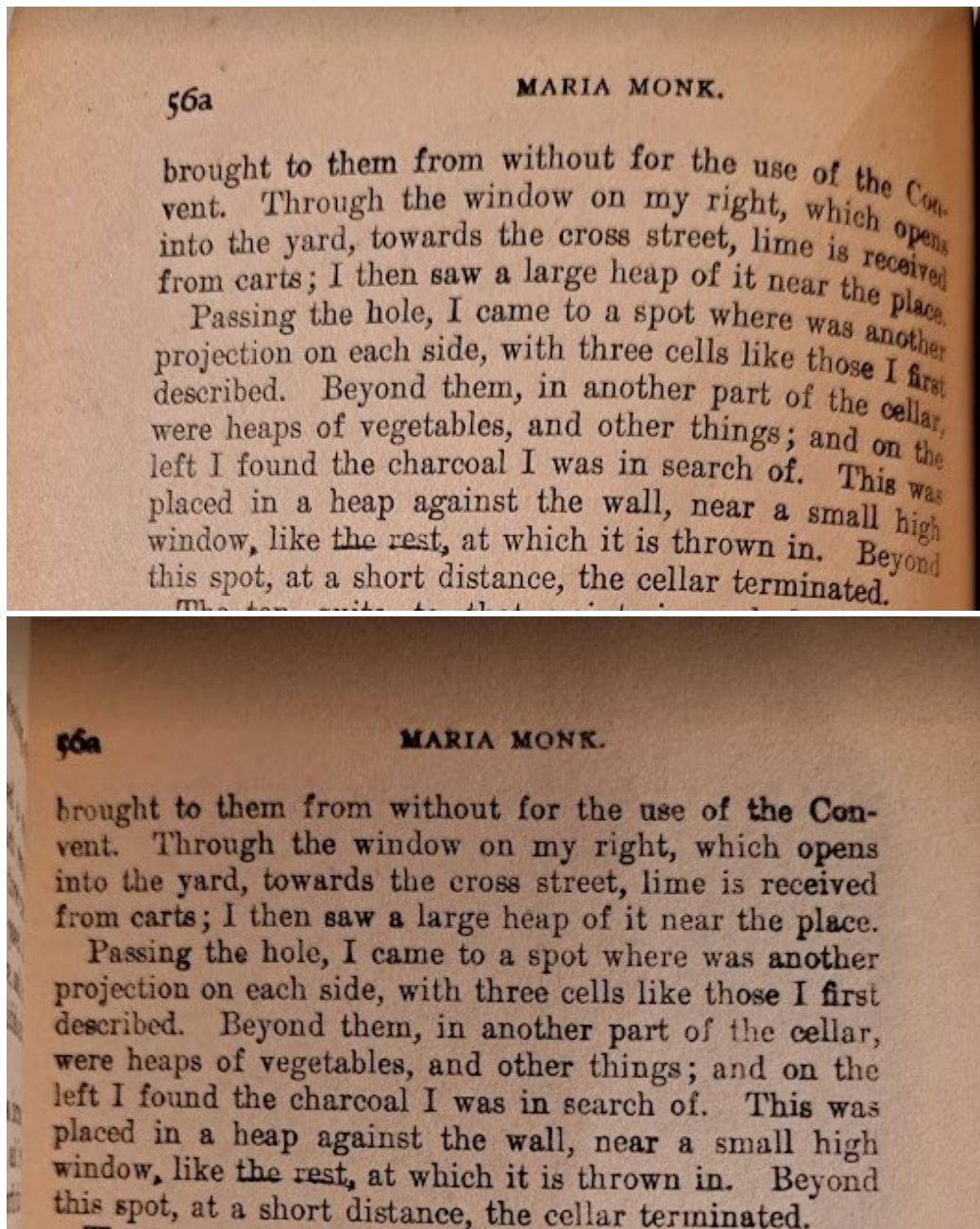


Figure 2: Page 56a from the Toronto edition (above) and the Truslove & Bray edition (below). The unusual pagination and the damage to the words "the rest" near the end of the second paragraph mark stereotype plates from a common source.

The fact that the Truslove & Bray edition exhibits several corrections might suggest that the plates originated in Toronto, but one small

correction in the Toronto edition indicates that this is not the case. In the copies of the Truslove & Bray edition I consulted, the page numbers appear in the gutters rather than the outside corners of the leaves; this is the result of insufficient attention to imposition at the printing or binding stage. The pagination is thus:

pp [vi] [7] 8-56, 56a, 57, 57a-248

In the Toronto edition, however, the number on page eight, which is the second page of the main text, has been removed, and the pagination is thus:

pp [xii] [7-8] 9-56, 56a, 57, 57a-248

The Toronto edition adds an illustration facing page eight, and the printing of page nine on the verso of this illustration corrects the anomalous page number placement of the Truslove & Bray edition. This correction left only the number on page eight out of place, and the simplest solution was to remove it, indicating that the Toronto printers worked with an existing set of plates rather than producing their own. The poor print quality of the Toronto edition suggests that these plates may have been obsolete or defective versions obtained from either Truslove & Bray themselves or their anonymous British client.

The content and structure of the two editions also reflect their British origin. The first edition of *Awful Disclosures*, published in 1836, consisted of twenty chapters; subsequent editions added various supplements, appendices, testimonials, and refutations, and this mix varies significantly from one edition to the next. The Toronto and Truslove & Bray editions feature the original twenty chapters, a selection of “Extracts from Public Journals” that appeared in the second edition, and nineteen chapters under the general heading of “Additional Information,” ending abruptly with a chapter on “Manners of the Canadian Priests.”<sup>13</sup> This arrangement appears in only one other edition released by London publisher W.

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<sup>13</sup> These nineteen chapters reproduce the first nine chapters of a “sequel” to the work, which first appeared as an appendix to *Awful Disclosures, by Maria Monk, of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Maria Monk, 1836), 257–326; the sixth chapter of part one of *Further Disclosures by Maria Monk, Concerning the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* (New York: Maria Monk, 1837), 35–41; and the first eight chapters of part two of *Further Disclosures*, 42–94.

Nicholson & Sons sometime after 1890. However, the Nicholson plates differ from the Toronto and Truslove & Bray ones; the pagination is different, and each chapter heading includes a summary of the chapter's contents. Truslove & Bray had a business relationship with Nicholson in the 1920s, having printed a household management encyclopedia under the Nicholson imprint in a hard binding very similar to the Truslove & Bray printing of *Awful Disclosures*, and with an identical printer's colophon on the reverse of the half-title. This suggests that the Truslove & Bray edition—and, by extension, the Toronto edition—might be anonymous reissues of the Nicholson edition using new, simplified plates.<sup>14</sup>

Spelling conventions also mark the Truslove & Bray and Toronto printings as part of a family of British editions. For example, the first edition of *Awful Disclosures* favoured British spellings for words such as “honour.” This might reflect Monk's rudimentary education in a Lower Canadian common school, but the preference for British usage is more likely an indication of the as-yet limited influence of Noah Webster's campaign for standard American orthography in the 1830s. Later editions diverge between American and British spellings, with Americans De Witt & Davenport (1851) and D.M. Bennett (1878) opting for “honor” and British publishers Houlston & Stoneman (1853), Nicholson (1890-1920), and the publishers of another anonymous London edition (probably after 1891) retaining “honour.” The Toronto and Truslove & Bray plates also

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<sup>14</sup> *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, as exhibited in a narrative of her sufferings during a residence of five years as a novice, and two years as a black nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal. With additional information: to which is added, The nun; or, Six months' residence in a convent / By Rebecca Theresa Reed.* (London: W. Nicholson & Sons, n.d. [c. 1890-1920]) (hereafter “Nicholson”); *Consult Me ... Entirely New Edition, Prefaced and Improved with Numerous Additions, By the Author of “Enquire Within”* (London: W. Nicholson & Sons, n.d. [c. 1922-1941]). The title page of the Nicholson edition of *Awful Disclosures* gives the publisher's address as 26 Paternoster Square. The company first occupied these premises in 1890; in 1922, they relocated to 14 Paternoster Square, and this address appears on the title page of the Truslove & Bray printing of *Consult Me*. “Trade and Literary Gossip,” *The Bookseller: A Newspaper of British and Foreign Literature*, December 13, 1890, 1372; *Post Office London Directory* (London: Kelly's Directories, 1922), 566. Two other Nicholson titles with an address at Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, which the company occupied briefly in 1920 and 1921, demonstrate this publisher's practice of updating and reusing old stereotype plates. See Nicholas Culpeper, *The British Herbal and Family Physician* (London: W. Nicholson & Sons, n.d. [c. 1920]), and *Everybody's Confectionery Book* (London: W. Nicholson & Sons, n.d. [c. 1920]).

follow this British standard. While “honour” with a “u” is now a shibboleth of Canadian English, major Canadian newspapers followed the American convention as late as the 1990s, and many in the book trade favoured “honor” as well. Therefore, plates set in Canada would probably have used “honor,” and the typesetter’s choice suggests the plates’ British origin. As we shall see, there is also circumstantial evidence that the Truslove & Bray edition preceded the Toronto one.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See page 54 of the Toronto and Truslove & Bray editions for an example of this spelling (“...not only a high honour...”). Other editions that use the British spelling include Howe & Bates, 92; *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, the Thrilling Mysteries of a Convent Revealed! And Six Months in a Convent* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, n.d.) (hereafter “Peterson-A”), 35; *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk: Illustrated with 40 Engravings: and The Startling Mysteries of a Convent Exposed!* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, n.d.) (hereafter “Peterson-B”), 54; Nicholson, 61; *The Character of a Convent: displayed in the awful disclosures of Maria Monk; being a narrative of her sufferings during a residence of five years as a novice and two years as a black nun in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal; to which is added confirmatory notes and affidavits whereby Maria Monk's Disclosures are most fully proved, and the hideous nature of the conventual system are exposed.* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1851) (hereafter “Houlston & Stoneman”), 46; *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, as exhibited in a narrative of her sufferings during a residence of five years as a novice, and two years as a black nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal. With additional information and confirmation. To which is added, The nun; or, Six months residence in a convent* (London: n.p., n.d.) (hereafter “London”), 52; *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, or, The hidden secrets of a nun's life in a convent exposed!* (Manchester: Milner and Company, n.d.) (hereafter “Milner”), 54. Editions favouring “honor” include *Awful Disclosures, By Maria Monk, of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal: Containing, Also, Many Incidents Never Before Published* (New York: De Witt & Davenport, 1855) (hereafter “De Witt & Davenport”), 59; and *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk: As Exhibited in a Narrative of Her Sufferings During Her Residence of Five Years as a Novice and Two Years as a Black Nun in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, at Montreal, Ont [sic]* (New York: D.M. Bennett: Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, 1878) (hereafter “Bennett”), 68. For Monk’s education, the affidavit of William Miller, which appears in many editions of *Awful Disclosures*, indicates that Monk had attended the government school at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, where William’s father, Adam Miller, was schoolmaster. “Abstract of Warrants,” *Journals of the House of Assembly of Lower Canada* (Quebec: King’s Printer, 1825), Appendix M, No. 16, confirms that the elder Miller held this position when Monk was of common-school age. On the fortunes of Webster’s spelling reforms, see Peter Martin, *The Dictionary Wars: The American Fight over the English Language* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019). On “honour” versus “honor” in historical Canadian usage, see Steven High, “The ‘Narcissism of Small Differences’: The Invention of Canadian English, 1951–67,” in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity and Dissent, 1945–75*, eds. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 89–110; Kevin Heffernan et al., “Preserving Canada’s ‘honour’: Ideology and diachronic change in Canadian



### *Illustrations*

The most obvious difference between the Toronto and Truslove & Bray editions is the Toronto publisher's addition of thirteen illustrations. These have no captions and come from several sources; all of the illustrations share Monk's anti-Catholic animus, but only one has any direct relationship to the book's content. This image, an engraving of nuns kissing the floor that appears both on the cover of the Toronto edition and as its frontispiece, first appeared in two combined British editions of *Awful Disclosures* and *Six Months in a Convent* by Rebecca Reed, another "escaped nun" narrative first published in 1835 and subsequently overshadowed by its near-contemporary. In both of these combined editions, the illustration serves as a frontispiece to Reed's narrative rather than Monk's. One of the two is the Nicholson edition, which follows the same chapter structure as the Truslove & Bray and Toronto editions. If W. Nicholson & Sons were the ultimate source of the Truslove & Bray and Toronto plates, they may also have been the source of this illustration. The frontispiece also appears in a second undated London omnibus Monk/Reed volume with a "Printed for the Booksellers" imprint. This edition shares two other illustrations with the Toronto printing. The first, which in the London edition bears the caption "The Torture Chamber," depicts various forms of torture inflicted in a vaulted stone room and is derived from one of a number of eighteenth-century etchings depicting the cruelties of the Spanish Inquisition.<sup>16</sup> The second depicts the infamous Eiserne Jungfrau, the "Iron Virgin of Nuremberg," a torture device that Protestant propagandists confidently attributed to Catholic inquisitors;

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spelling variants," *Written Language and Literacy* 13, no. 1 (2010): 1–23. As a crude measure of Canadian printers' and publishers' preferences, "honor" appears over 91,000 times in a full-text search of English-language publications in the *Early Canadiana Online* database, while "honour" appears only about 46,000 times ([www.canadiana.ca](http://www.canadiana.ca), accessed December 14, 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Toronto, facing 57; London, facing 96. The prototype for all of these etchings was probably Bernard Picart, *Diverses manieres [sic] dont le St. Office [sic] fait donner la question*, c. 1722, Wellcome Collection no. 43213i, accessed December 14, 2023, [wellcomecollection.org/works/t6hhs6nh](http://wellcomecollection.org/works/t6hhs6nh).

research has since exposed this claim as a nineteenth-century forgery.<sup>17</sup> This particular image of the Iron Virgin first appeared in *The City of the Seven Hills*, an anti-Catholic history in verse by H. Grattan Guinness first published in 1891. Its publication coincided with an exhibition of the Iron Virgin in London, and the image may have been taken from a photograph of that first public showing. Both Guinness' book and the anonymous London edition of *Awful Disclosures* include a second image of the Iron Virgin, opened to reveal the deadly iron spikes that supposedly impaled its victims. The Toronto edition omits this second image.<sup>18</sup>




The remaining ten illustrations in the Toronto edition depict incidents described in *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Dayes, Touching Matters of the Church* by sixteenth-century English historian John Foxe. Since its first publication in 1563, this polemical Reformation history better known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* has appeared in innumerable editions and abridgements, many of them profusely—and sensationally—illustrated. The Toronto edition illustrations come from one such abridgement, *Book of Martyrs ... Compiled from Fox's [sic] Book of Martyrs and other Authentic Sources* by American Presbyterian minister Amos Blanchard. Blanchard's *Book of Martyrs*, with a full complement of twenty-four illustrations, was first published in Cincinnati in 1831 and was reprinted numerous times throughout the 1830s and 1840s by publishers

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<sup>17</sup> Herbert Lucas, *The 'Iron Virgin' of Nuremberg, An Alleged Instrument of the Roman Inquisition* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1898); Chris Bishop, "The 'pear of anguish': Truth, torture and dark medievalism," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no. 6 (2014): 591–602.

<sup>18</sup> Toronto, following 131; London, following 152; H. Grattan Guinness, *The City of the Seven Hills* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1891), 111. The London edition follows the same chapter structure as Nicholson, Toronto, and Truslove & Bray but also adds confirmatory material. The final page of the edition indicates that it was printed by "John Jones, Printer, London." However, this may be a pseudonym, as no printer of this name appears in the *Post Office London Directory* for 1870, 1875, 1880, 1885, 1890, 1895, 1900, or 1905. The anonymous publisher of the London edition may have had a business relationship with W. Nicholson & Sons, as another edition under the "Printed for the Booksellers" imprint, unillustrated and shorn of all confirmatory material except "Extracts from Public Journals," bears the printer's colophon "Made and Printed in Great Britain by / Nicholson & Sons, London" on the verso of the title page. The plates and pagination of this abridgement match the first part of the Nicholson edition and may be a "missing link" between the London and Nicholson Monk/Reed omnibus editions. See *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, as exhibited in a narrative of her sufferings during a residence of five years as a novice, and two years as a black nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal* (London: n.p., n.d.).

throughout the Great Lakes region, notably by Blackstone, Ellis and Graves of Kingston, Upper Canada in 1835. It is thus the only English-language version of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* to have appeared with a Canadian imprint. In turn, the Blanchard illustrations clearly owe their inspiration to the engravings in another Foxe abridgement compiled by Connecticut Congregational minister Charles Augustus Goodrich, but they have several distinguishing characteristics. The most obvious difference is that the scenes are reflected in the Blanchard versions, but there are other alterations, such as the addition of a tree with a hanging figure to the illustration depicting the persecution of Waldensian heretics (Fig. 3). The presence of such peculiarities in the Toronto illustrations confirms that Blanchard's *Book of Martyrs* was their source.<sup>19</sup>

<p>Goodrich, <i>Book of Martyrs</i> (Hartford, CT: Philemon Canfield, 1830)</p>	<p>Blanchard, <i>Book of Martyrs</i> (Cincinnati: A.F. Robinson, 1831)</p>	<p><i>Awful Disclosures</i> (Toronto: s.i., s.d.)</p>
 <p><i>J. Martin in the Inquisition. Page 116.</i></p> <p>(p. 117)</p>	 <p><i>Michael de Molinos in the Inquisition.—Page 147.</i></p> <p>(p. 149)</p>	 <p>(p. 67)</p>

<sup>19</sup> Amos Blanchard, *Book of Martyrs ... Compiled from Fox's [sic] Book of Martyrs. and other authentic sources* (Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairbank, 1831). Later editions appeared in Cincinnati in 1834 and 1835 (A.F. Robinson); in Kingston in 1835 (Blackstone, Ellis and Graves), 1844, and 1845 (N.G. Ellis); in Buffalo, New York in 1846 (N.G. Ellis); in Cincinnati again in 1847 (N.G. Ellis); and, once again, in Buffalo in 1848 (W.W. Wade), 1850, and 1852 (James Faxon). This pattern suggests that Ellis, having partnered to publish the first Kingston edition, retained the plates and eventually relocated to Buffalo and then to Cincinnati, where the plates passed to other printers. Two Philadelphia firms, Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger (1871) and The John C. Winston Co. (c. 1900), published two additional unillustrated editions, otherwise identical in content but not credited to Blanchard. For a detailed publication history, see Heike Jablonski, *John Foxe in America: Discourses of Martyrdom in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century United States* (Paderborn, Germany: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2017), 93, Appendix 1.



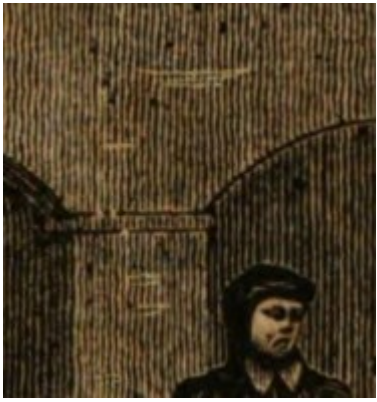
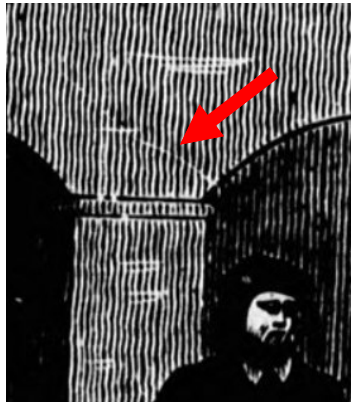

Figure 3: Comparison of Selected Illustrations

The physical characteristics of the illustrations also reveal the anonymous publishers' production practices. The page counts for each gathering, and the fact that the first illustration has a page of text printed on the verso, indicate that the illustrations were printed with the text and not tipped in. As the illustrations do not appear in the Truslove & Bray edition, their integration suggests that the text plates were not originally blocked in sextodecimo forms, but in smaller forms or even as individual pages, the latter being the most likely scenario as there is no obvious pattern to the insertion of the illustrations within the gatherings. The visible impressions on the verso of each illustrated leaf confirm that all the images were printed by a relief rather than an intaglio or lithographic process. The image of the Iron Virgin is a halftone engraving—under 20x magnification, a tell-tale geometric pattern is visible in several places, especially on the Virgin's headpiece—while the illustrations borrowed from Blanchard's *Book of Martyrs* were printed from stereotype or electrotype copies of woodblock engravings.<sup>20</sup>

The poor print quality of the Blanchard illustrations in the Toronto edition suggests that the Toronto publisher may have somehow obtained decades-old used plates. The illustration that Blanchard had captioned “Racking of Cuthbert Symson in the tower” displays a scratch or crack above the heads of the martyr's tormentors; this imperfection first appears in the 1834 Cincinnati edition and reappears in all subsequent printings of

<sup>20</sup> Joan Winearls, “Illustrations for Books and Periodicals,” in *History of the Book in Canada* vol. 1, eds. Patricia Lockhart Fleming et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 105n74.

Blanchard’s *Book of Martyrs* (Fig. 4). The Cuthbert Symson image in the Toronto edition of *Awful Disclosures* also exhibits a large black spot in an area that is blank in all editions of Blanchard’s work. This spot, as well as similar spots appearing around the edges of some of the other illustrations, are likely the protruding heads of nails used to mount the plates to blocks of wood for the purpose of locking them into the chase. Careful blockers sunk these heads using punches, so their presence on the printed pages indicates either a tradesman’s carelessness or that frequent use or poor storage conditions had caused the mounting nails to dislodge. Moreover, just as the Toronto publisher adapted the pagination of the Truslove & Bray *Awful Disclosures* plates to incorporate illustrations from another source, the publisher of a later, unillustrated edition of Blanchard’s *Book of Martyrs* modified his text plates after page 23, which had been paginated from the third (1832) edition onward, to correct for absent illustrations. Sometime between 1852 and the turn of the century, the illustration plates may have been separated from the text plates, only to resurface in the Toronto edition of *Awful Disclosures*.<sup>21</sup>

		
<p>Cincinnati 1st edition, facing p. 240</p>	<p>Cincinnati 1834 edition, p. 265</p>	<p>Kingston 1835 edition, p. 265</p>

<sup>21</sup> Fox’s [sic] *Book of Martyrs, or a History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Triumphant Deaths of the Primitive Protestant Martyrs* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., n.d. [c. 1900]), 23; compare Amos Blanchard, *Book of Martyrs* (Kingston: Blackstone, Ellis and Graves, 1835), 25. On the pagination of the early editions, see Jablonski, *John Foxe in America*, 93.





		
<p>Kingston 1844 edition, p. 265</p>	<p>Buffalo (Ellis) 1844 edition, facing p. 234</p>	<p>Buffalo (Wade) 1848 edition, p. 265</p>
		
<p><i>Awful Disclosures</i>, Toronto edition, facing p. 109</p>		

Figure 4: *A Flaw in the Plate*, “Racking of Cuthbert Symson in the tower” [detail]

In fact, the Cuthbert Symson image travelled further afield than Toronto. Although the Blanchard illustrations do not appear in any other English-language edition of *Awful Disclosures* that I have consulted, the Symson illustration does appear in a curious Ukrainian-language abridgement published in Edmonton in 1917. The translator and publisher was one Michael M. Bellegay, editor of *Kanadyjets* (“The Canadian”), a Methodist missionary monthly that never shied away from spreading salacious allegations about the indiscretions of western Canada’s Ukrainian Catholic

clergy. The first unillustrated edition of Bellegay's Maria Monk translation appeared under the *Kanadyiets* imprint in 1916. The second edition, issued under Bellegay's new *Pro'svita* ("Enlightenment") imprint, features a miscellany of anti-Catholic illustrations, including both the Cuthbert Symson picture and the torture chamber image that had first appeared in the Nicholson edition. The Symson image, which Bellegay captioned "*Mordovana nevyynnoyi z'bertvy*" ("Murder of an Innocent Victim"), displays some of the same defects as the Toronto version, including the scratch or crack in the plate above the central inquisitor's head. However, the bottom border of the plate is intact in the Edmonton printing, while it is damaged in all consulted copies of the Toronto printing; either the two editions used different copies of the plate, or the Toronto edition appeared later. The *Kanadyiets* printing office had in-house stereotyping capabilities, so it could have produced a copy of the plate from a paper flong. An imperfect stereotype plate from a damaged flong might account for the poor impression of the image in the otherwise crisply printed Bellegay translation. Although the Toronto plate is damaged, the impression is clearer, and this may be further evidence that multiple versions of the plate circulated among anti-Catholic Canadian publishers.<sup>22</sup>

The images in the Toronto edition do not "illustrate" the narrative as such, but their inclusion must serve a function. As Sarah Bull has noted in her study of medical erotica, the incorporation of illustrations from other sources changes the "reader's interaction" with an indecent work, making it more or less indecent than an unillustrated or differently illustrated edition.<sup>23</sup> Compare the use of illustrations in the Toronto edition to that in the editions from Milner and Company of Manchester and T.B. Peterson of Philadelphia, which were printed from common plates and

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<sup>22</sup> Maria Monk, *Strashni taïny monastyrskykh muriv* ("Terrible Secrets of the Monastery Walls"), trans. M.M. Bellegay (Edmonton: Pro'svita, 1917), 38; George Emery, *The Methodist Church on the Prairies, 1896–1914* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 178; "Methodists to Start Newspaper," *Edmonton Journal*, December 1, 1911; "Embryo Wallingford Got Four Years Sentence for Conspiracy to Defraud," *Edmonton Journal*, October 4, 1918; *American Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer and Sons, 1919), 1076.

<sup>23</sup> Sarah Elisabeth Bull, "Obscenity and the Publication of Sexual Science in Britain, 1810–1914," PhD diss. Simon Fraser University, 2014, 41.

circulated on both sides of the Atlantic for at least a half-century; the Milner/Peterson illustrations are generic enough to have been created for other purposes—and stylistically, they appear to have come from several different sources—but their captions link them to specific episodes in the text.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the Toronto edition’s illustrations situate the work as an anti-Catholic tract as well as a melodramatic tale of sexual depravity. With the exception of an engraving of “Instruments of Torture for Use in the Convent,” the Milner/Peterson illustrations are less sensational than the explicit depictions of cruelty in the Toronto edition, which may have appealed to a morbid and sexual curiosity.<sup>25</sup> On a practical level, Bull also notes that illustrations differentiated one edition of an indecent book from a competitor’s—an important sales gimmick, as such works rarely enjoyed copyright protection.<sup>26</sup> The copyright for *Awful Disclosures* had never been clearly established, and in any case, by the twentieth century, the book had entered the public domain due to its age. Product differentiation may have been the Toronto publisher’s main objective for legal and marketing purposes.

### *Ornaments*

While the illustrations in the Toronto edition appear in other popular anti-Catholic works published in England and North America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the printer’s ornaments at the ends of certain chapters are unique to this edition. They do not appear in the Truslove & Bray edition, even on pages that are otherwise identical to those in the Toronto edition. Moreover, they do not come from a coherent set of decorative elements; rather, they are a hodgepodge of blocks from various sources, including a rose, a stylized bird, a steam locomotive, a beaver, and, on the title page, a maple leaf (Fig. 3). One

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<sup>24</sup> Milner, 10, 12, 13, 19; Peterson B, 10, 12, 13, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Milner, 141; Peterson B, 141.

<sup>26</sup> Bull, “Obscenity,” 39. On the legal basis for denying copyright protection to obscene titles, see David Saunders, “Copyright, Obscenity and Literary History,” *English Literary History*, 57, no. 2 (1990): 431–44.



ornament, the rose, is inverted in one instance and right side up in four others, indicating that the ornaments were individual blocks added to the work during printing rather than integral elements of a variant set of stereotype plates. The printer likely had a limited assortment of ornaments from which to choose. Although all the ornaments except the locomotive appear more than once throughout the text block, only the bird ever appears more than once in a gathering, and then never more than twice. Book historian Andrew Bricker has demonstrated that specific ornaments can assist in identifying the true publishers of eighteenth-century works with false or misleading imprints.<sup>27</sup> This task is much more difficult with works printed using mass-produced type. Nevertheless, some of the ornaments in the Toronto edition of *Awful Disclosures* are unusual—perhaps even proprietary—and taken as an assemblage, they may offer clues about the publisher. Only the most generic of the ornaments—the rose—also appears in a British imprint. The other four ornaments all support the work’s Canadian origin. The model of the locomotive, a mid-nineteenth century 4-4-0 or “American” locomotive, almost certainly comes from the ornament collection of a North American print shop, as the wheels of most British steam locomotives were configured differently. In fact, this model is remarkably similar to the central device in the Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Company logo, down to the locomotive’s “COMET” nameplate, and may have been cropped from an advertising cut for this company. The three appearances of the beaver in *Awful Disclosures* seem to be a deliberate homage to Canada’s national animal. Indeed, the very same beaver cut appears in a very different context—on an early bookplate of French-Canadian politician and jurist Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine (1807-1864). Although undated, that bookplate clearly predates a better-documented LaFontaine bookplate, printed in England in 1855 and bearing the newly minted baronet’s coat of arms, which featured both a beaver and a maple leaf. The patriotic

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<sup>27</sup>Andrew Benjamin Bricker, “Who was ‘A. Moore’? The Attribution of Eighteenth-Century Publications with False and Misleading Imprints,” *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 110, no. 2 (2016): 181–214.

symbolism of LaFontaine's beaver suggests, if only by analogy, a similar intention behind its use decades later in *Awful Disclosures*.<sup>28</sup>

Curiously, the other obviously Canadian emblem—the maple leaf ornament on the title page—also appears in a French-Canadian imprint, the first (1908) edition of *Restons chez nous!* by Damase Potvin. This Clerico-nationalist novel encouraged the young men of rural Quebec to remain on their family farms rather than seek fame and fortune in Montreal or—worse—Protestant American mill towns and cities. While *Restons chez nous!* was published by J. Alfred Guay's Quebec City firm, the book was produced at Honoré Chassé's print shop, which had been operated since his death in 1903 by his widow Émilienne Larocque and their sons, Henri and Edmond Chassé. The same year that *Restons chez nous!* appeared, the Chassés also released a collection of political and patriotic speeches by such French-Canadian luminaries as Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Honoré Mercier, and Rodolphe Lemieux, and its title page displays the same maple leaf ornament. The content of these works and the involvement of the Chassé firm and family in various French-Canadian patriotic causes make it highly unlikely that they were the printers of a grubby anonymous edition of *Awful Disclosures*, but the shared maple leaf ornament reinforces the books' common Canadian origin.

Even if the ornaments do not identify a specific printer, they do point to the kind of printing firm that might have had such diverse ornaments at hand. The “Spencerian” bird ornament in *Awful Disclosures* first appeared on a page of specimen ornamental visiting cards in the 1879 edition of *Hill's Manual of Social and Business Forms*, a compendium of penmanship lessons, etiquette tips, and business form templates compiled by Chicago journalist-turned-entrepreneur Thomas Edie Hill.<sup>29</sup> Although I have not

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<sup>28</sup> Phillippe Masson Ex Libris Collection, vol. 8, no. 1171, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, McGill University Libraries; Winward Prescott, ed., *A List of Canadian Bookplates: With a Review of the History of ex Libris in the Dominion* (Boston and Toronto: Society of Bookplate Bibliophiles, 1919), 85; Archives de la Ville de Montréal, Fonds Sir Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine [sic], SHM-002, Series 1, G. Barclay to Thomas Falconer, February 20, 1855, 779A; Falconer to LaFontaine, March 2, 1855, 786.

<sup>29</sup> I am grateful to Karen Watson of *The Graphic Fairy* ([www.thegraphicsfairy.com](http://www.thegraphicsfairy.com)) for her assistance in tracking down a source for the bird ornament.





found this cut in any other Canadian imprint, other cuts from *Hill's Manual* appear in various publications from the Toronto-based J.L. Nichols & Company, including *The Business Guide; Or, Safe Methods of Business*, which went through many editions.<sup>30</sup> The 1894 edition of *The Business Guide* also includes a beaver that is similar, though not identical, to the cut in *Anful Disclosures*. J.L. Nichols & Company used this beaver ornament to signal the insertion of specifically Canadian content—rates for postal money orders—into their reprint of an American commercial manual.<sup>31</sup> J.L. Nichols & Company, later reorganized as the J.L. Nichols Company Limited, were printers, manufacturing publishers, importers, and souvenir and novelty manufacturers operating in Toronto between the 1890s and 1937, when the company voluntarily dissolved. They typically reprinted business and accounting textbooks, cookbooks and household encyclopedias, and sexual education and parenting manuals from their American parent firm and other American and British publishers. The ornaments are far from a “smoking gun” linking J.L. Nichols & Company to the Toronto edition of *Anful Disclosures*; nevertheless, they do suggest that a manufacturing publisher specializing in popular but ephemeral titles may have also anonymously produced controversial or obscene works as a discreet sideline, embellishing second-hand stereotyped pages with mismatched ornaments saved from earlier projects.<sup>32</sup>




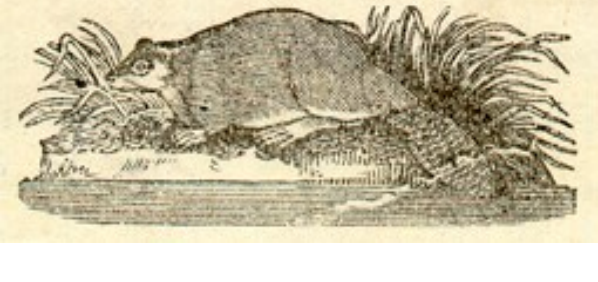
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<sup>30</sup> Chicago electrotypers A. Zeese & Company may have been the original source of these mortised cuts, and perhaps for the bird also. The company’s 1891 catalogue included similar cuts, and the penmanship community applauded the quality of its electrotyped penmanship samples. See A. Zeese & Company, *Specimens of Electrotypes* (Chicago: A. Zeese & Co., 1891), 27; “Photo-Engraving,” *Western Penman* 5, no. 8 (1888): 13. As if to further support this connection, the cover of this issue of the *Western Penman* features a flourish of a cat (presumably electrotyped by Zeese) that also appears in Nichols, *The Business Guide; Or, Safe Methods of Business*, 4th ed. (Toronto: J.L. Nichols & Co., 1894), 37.

<sup>31</sup> *The Business Guide*, 220.

<sup>32</sup> On the history and activities of the J.L. Nichols Company, see “Industrial Gossip,” *Canadian Hardware and Metal Merchant* 15, no. 3 (1903): 28; J.L. Nichols Company Limited, Printers, Manufacturing Publishers, and Importers, to A.H.L. Bell, December 1, 1920, Author’s Collection; “Salesman Wanted... [classified advertisement],” *Toronto Star*, June 28, 1927; “The J.L. Nichols Company Ltd. [legal notice],” *The Globe and Mail*, May 15, 1937.

	
<p>Toronto, p. 116 (also appears on pp. 137, 176 [inverted], 202, and 231).</p>	<p>Philip May, <i>Love: The Reward. A Novel.</i> (London: Remington &amp; Co., 1885), vol. 1, p. vi.</p>
	
<p>Toronto, p. 208 (also appears on pp. 94, 109, 129, 164, 193, 208, and 225).</p>	<p>Thomas E. Hill, <i>Hill's Manual of Social and Business Forms</i> (Chicago: Hill Standard Book Co., 1888), p. 499.</p>

	
<p>Toronto, title page.</p>	<p>Damase Potvin, <i>Restons chez nous! Roman canadien</i>, (Québec: J. Alfred Guay, H. Chassé, 1908), title page; Georges Bellerive, <i>Orateurs canadiens-français aux États-Unis: Conférences et discours</i> (Québec: H. Chassé, 1908), title page.</p>
	
<p>Toronto, p. 22 (also appears on pp. 57a, 196, and 239).</p>	<p>Bookplate of Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine, unknown printer, before 1855 (Phillippe Masson Ex Libris Collection, vol. 8, no. 1171, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, McGill University Libraries).</p>

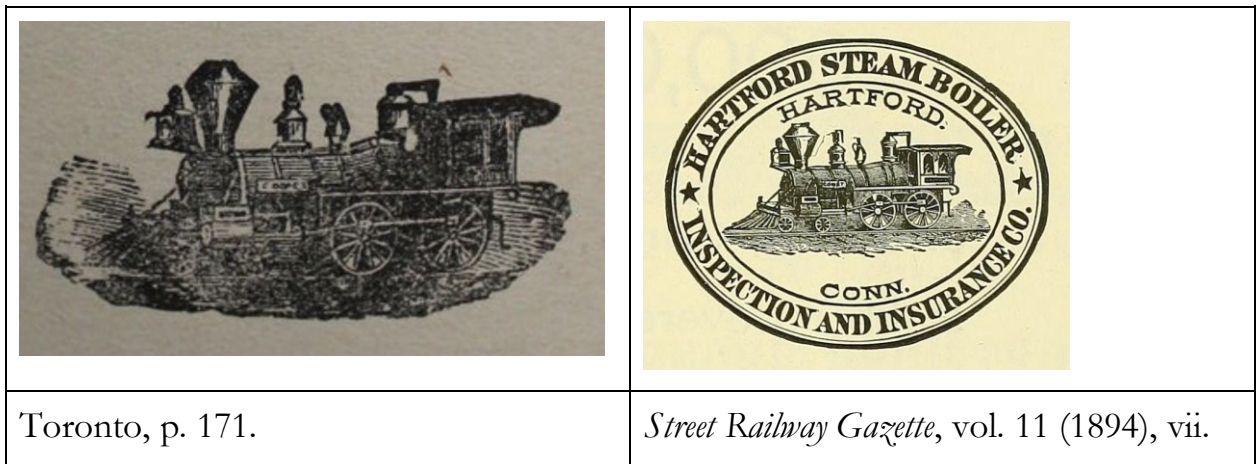


Figure 5: Printer's Ornaments in the Toronto Edition

What purpose do these ornaments serve? The only pattern to their placement is that they appear at the ends of chapters where the stereotype plate left a significant amount of blank space on the page. Except for the lone appearance of the locomotive, which a typesetter might have intended to foreshadow Monk's flight to New York in the following chapter, there is no connection between the ornaments and the book's content.<sup>33</sup> Like the illustrations, the ornaments served mainly to distinguish the Toronto edition from the otherwise very similar Truslove & Bray printing; the use of the maple leaf and the beaver also emphasizes the Toronto edition's Canadian origin. The justification for including patriotic ornaments may have been political as well as typographical, given the context of the work's publication.

#### *Dating the Toronto Edition*

The physical evidence of the stereotype plates, illustrations, and ornaments in the Toronto edition of *Awful Disclosures* points to a publication date no earlier than the 1890s and probably closer to the

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<sup>33</sup> If this use of the locomotive was indeed the printer's intention, it was anachronistic; no railway served even a portion of Monk's route in 1835 (the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad only opened in July 1836), and the text makes clear that she traveled on foot and by steamboat.

1920s. The history of the reception of *Awful Disclosures* in Canada and the ownership history of one surviving copy help to narrow this range.

Although *Awful Disclosures* circulated in Canada from its initial release in 1836, and Canadian journalists were among its first debunkers, it was only in the 1890s that Canadian authorities took an official interest in the book. In 1894, customs officers in Montreal intercepted a shipment destined for cantankerous local bookseller Norman Murray, a notorious purveyor of anti-Catholic and atheist publications. In 1889, he had published a parliamentary speech on the Jesuit Estates Question by the anti-Catholic Ontario populist Dalton McCarthy under his own imprint. Murray followed this up in 1892 with his own pamphlet entitled *The Holy Roman Curiosity Shop*, a satire of the cult of saintly relics that Murray dedicated facetiously to Sir John Sparrow David Thompson, Canada's soon-to-be first Roman Catholic Prime Minister. It should come as no surprise, then, that the books seized on May 3, 1894 were standard anti-Catholic works, including *Awful Disclosures*. Customs appraiser J.D.L. Ambrose deemed these to be obscene publications prohibited under the Duties of Customs Act.<sup>34</sup>

For a country already divided over Roman Catholic separate school rights, this seizure aggravated sectarian tension. In the House of Commons, the same Dalton McCarthy whose anti-Jesuit tirade Murray had published a few years earlier now demanded that the government explain the seizure. It fell to Prime Minister Thompson, a Catholic convert and one of Murray's targets, to defend the seizure. And yet, following Murray's appeal and McCarthy's challenge, Controller of Customs Nathaniel Clarke Wallace—himself the Grand Master of the Loyal Orange Association of British America—overturned his staff's decision and ordered the books returned. Catholic politicians were unimpressed. In the Senate the

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<sup>34</sup> *Awful Exposure of the Atrocious Plot Formed by Certain Individuals Against the Clergy and Nuns of Lower Canada, Through the Intervention of Maria Monk with an Authentic Narrative of Her Life, from Her Birth to the Present Moment and an Account of her Impositions, etc.* (New York: Printed for Jones & Co. of Montreal, 1836); Dalton McCarthy, *The Jesuit Question: Dalton McCarthy's great speech in the Dominion House of Commons* (Montreal: N. Murray, n.d. [c. 1889]); B.M., *The Holy Roman Curiosity Shop: A Lecture on Relics* (Montreal: Norman Murray, 1892); Canada, Senate, *Debates*, 7th Parliament, 5th Session, June 4, 1895, 201–202.

following year, Joseph-Hyacinthe Bellerose, who had recently urged Catholic cabinet ministers to resign over the Manitoba Schools Question, now demanded that Sir Mackenzie Bowell, Thompson's successor as Prime Minister and, like Wallace, a high-ranking Orangeman, explain the government's reluctance to prosecute Murray. Bowell deferred to the department, but the incident did impel the customs service to issue its first consolidated list of prohibited publications to guide field officers. For his part, the vindicated Murray went on to peddle anti-popery for decades thereafter.<sup>35</sup>

It is unknown which edition of *Anful Disclosures* Murray had imported. In 1902, he advertised two editions—a hardcover at fifty cents and a small paperback at fifteen cents. The hardbound offering promised “upwards of forty illustrations”; this was probably the Milner and Company or T.B. Peterson edition, as both publishers featured this statement on their title pages. As the shipment seized in 1894 had also included *The Fruit of the Confessional Box*, a sexually explicit exposé of confession practices published by a defrocked French-Canadian priest in Wisconsin, Murray's copies of *Anful Disclosures* probably also came from an American supplier. Notwithstanding his association with Protestant politicians such as Dalton McCarthy, Murray's anti-Catholicism was atheistic and anti-clerical rather than sectarian. Therefore, his cheap paperback edition may well have come from the presses of the American freethinker DeRobigne Mortimer Bennett, whose “revised edition” was both cheaply printed and pointedly irreligious. Most interesting for our purposes, however, is McCarthy's

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<sup>35</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 7th Parliament, 4th Session, July 18, 1894, 6306; “Norman Murray, of Montreal...,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, September 12, 1894; Canada, Senate, *Debates*, 7th Parliament, 5th Session, June 4, 1895, 201. The Postmaster General's list of prohibited American publications served as the first customs list. Subsequent revisions incorporated titles which customs itself had prohibited, as well as submissions from the Postmaster General. The department issued its last cumulative list in 1909—thereafter, the department instructed officers at ports of entry to keep all C-series memoranda, including notices of prohibited publications, in indexed scrapbooks for easy reference. See LAC, Department of National Revenue records, vol. 871, Circular 749 B, Mar 23, 1895; vol. 874, Circular 1073 B, November 15, 1899; vol. 875, Circular 1515 B, January 5, 1909; vol. 1057, Customs Circulars 1 C–49 C, 1919–1920, Circular 1 C, July 16, 1919. For Murray's continuing exploits, see Norman Murray, *The Catholic Church and the War* (Montreal: Privately printed, n.d. [c. 1916]) and Edgar Andrew Collard, “Norman Murray, Montreal's ‘Little Carlyle’,” *Montreal Gazette*, September 18, 1944.



assertion in the House of Commons that Maria Monk's book "has been published in Toronto without question." In 1899, C.W. Coates, manager of the Methodist-run Montreal Book Room, also reported having sourced the book from Toronto. Might McCarthy and Coates' testimony refer to our Toronto edition?<sup>36</sup>

Toronto publishers and booksellers distributed at least three editions of *Awful Disclosures* at the end of the nineteenth century. An anonymous 1887 Toronto reprint of the 1855 De Witt & Davenport edition is unrelated to the "published for the trade" edition. Toronto distributors William Warwick and Sons imported a "Cottage Library" edition from British publishers Milner and Company, while reprinting firm William Bryce appears to have issued *Awful Disclosures* under its own imprint. No copies of the Bryce issue survive in public repositories, but Bryce's catalogue listed the book as one title in a series of over a hundred popular works, all bearing the company's imprint and, in many cases, its copyright notice as well. Moreover, although Bryce did specialize in inexpensive paperbacks, none of the other volumes in the series were illustrated. The Bryce edition may well have been Murray's cheaper offering, but it is not the surviving Toronto edition.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Maria Monk's Awful Disclosures [advertisement]," *Richmond Hill Liberal*, September 11, 1902; Milner, t.p.; Peterson B, t.p.; Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 7th Parliament, 4th Session, July 18, 1894, 6306. Senator Bellerose's description of the second work seized clearly indicates that it was P.A. Séguin, *An eye-opener for sleepy Americans: the fruit of the confessional box* (Stevens Point, WI: Privately printed, n.d. [c. 1891]). Canada, Senate, *Debates*, 7th Parliament, 5th Session, June 4, 1895, 203. Bennett's edition first appeared in 1878 but remained in print for decades. An undated reprint under the *Truth Seeker* magazine imprint lists an address that the magazine did not occupy until 1921. The title of that printing corrects an error in the first Bennett printing that located the city of Montreal in Ontario. *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk ... in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, at Montreal, Que.* (New York: Truth Seeker Company, n.d. [c. 1921]); George Everett Hussey MacDonald, *Fifty Years of Freethought: Being the Story of the Truth Seeker, with the Natural History of its Third Editor*, vol. 2 (New York: Truth Seeker Company, 1931), 531. For Murray's equal-opportunity anti-clericalism, see Norman Murray, *Freak Reformers: Fads, Fakes, Follies and Hobby Fiends: Some Human Tragedies, Farces and Comedies* (Montreal: Privately printed, 1917 F.R.E. 128). As a mark of his secularism, Murray dated the publication of this work according to both the common and French republican calendars. For Coates' testimony, see "Found Him Guilty," *Montreal Gazette*, November 29, 1899.

<sup>37</sup> *Awful Disclosures by Maria Monk, of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal; revised, with an appendix, also a supplement giving every particular* (Toronto: n.p., 1887). A lone copy of this edition survives in the Lorne Pierce Collection at Queen's University Library, and its title and plates match one of two variants of the De Witt & Davenport edition. For evidence of the Bryce edition,

The existence of the Bryce edition and the wide circulation of the Milner and Company edition in Canada suggest that the anonymous Toronto edition of *Anful Disclosures* does not date from the 1890s.<sup>38</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, respectable Toronto publishers saw nothing disreputable in being associated with the book. It was mildly risqué, perhaps, but that did not stop, for example, one small-town Ontario newspaper from openly offering the book as a bonus for subscribers. Bryce and Warwick saw no need to hide behind a coy “published for the trade” imprint; in their catalogues, Maria Monk’s name appeared alongside Louisa May Alcott, Frances Hodgson Barnett, and H. Rider Haggard.<sup>39</sup> The mysterious Toronto edition must have appeared later, when *Anful Disclosures* was no longer worthy of polite readers’ bookshelves. In 1894, Maria Monk was only a secondary target for censors; in demanding Murray’s prosecution, Senator Bellerose’s real concern was *The Fruit of the Confessional Box*, a much more explicit book. However, after the First World War, Roman Catholic clergy and laity alike demanded that Canadian authorities ban *Anful Disclosures*. In a 1920 lecture in Montreal, American priest John Handly denounced the book’s continued distribution on both sides of the border. In 1923, Sir Bertram Windle, an anthropologist at St. Michael’s College in Toronto and recent convert to Catholicism, made a similar call during a speech before the Knights of Columbus, as did the American priest W.F. McGuinness at a Catholic Truth Society conference in Toronto the following year.<sup>40</sup>

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see “Bryce’s Home Series,” appended to H. Rider Haggard, *Allan’s Wife* (Toronto: W. Bryce, 1889), n.p. For Warwick’s distribution of the Cottage Library edition, see “The Cottage Library Catalogue and List of Milner & Co.’s Publications,” appended to Henry Kingsley, *The Hillyars and the Burtons: A Story of Two Families* (Toronto: William Warwick, 1877), 4.

<sup>38</sup> Booksellers in Halifax and Charlottetown, in addition to Warwick in Toronto and Murray in Montreal, carried the Milner edition, *Catalogue of School & Miscellaneous Books...* (Charlottetown: Bremner Brothers, 1879), 5; *Baptist Book and Tract Society’s Catalogue of Books and Periodicals* (Halifax: n.p., 1884), 25.

<sup>39</sup> “A Gift!” *The Flesherton Advance*, December 12, 1889.

<sup>40</sup> “Says Maria Monk was Cruel Hoax,” *Montreal Gazette*, March 19, 1920; “Progrès de la libre-pensée en Amérique,” *La Presse*, March 19, 1920; “Attacks on Church Should Carry Proof,” *The Globe*, October 16, 1923; “Says Catholic Press in Need of Endowment,” *Toronto Star*, September 18, 1924.

As these demands arose in central Canada, *Anful Disclosures* found a dubious new booster in Saskatchewan, where Protestants and Catholics clashed over school funding and governance. In the mid-1920s, the Ku Klux Klan, newly revived in the United States and expanding into Canada, sensed a recruitment opportunity. The “second Klan” in the United States had embraced anti-Catholicism and took a particular interest in tawdry tales of convent impropriety.<sup>41</sup> As the use of convents for public schooling was one aspect of the Saskatchewan schools controversy, the Klan’s chief representative in the province, J.J. Maloney, aggressively promoted *Anful Disclosures* and other convent exposés through lecture tours and in the pages of two periodicals, *Western Freedman* and *The Klansman*. Saskatchewan Catholics returned fire, reminding readers of major newspapers that Monk’s allegations had been thoroughly discredited. Although the Klan enjoyed some influence in Saskatchewan, and to a lesser extent in other parts of the country, its championing of *Anful Disclosures* underlined the book’s fall from respectability.<sup>42</sup>

A coordinated campaign to ban *Anful Disclosures* soon followed. In early April 1931, customs authorities received two complaints about the sale of British editions in Montreal bookshops. The first, from the Société-Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal, received a polite acknowledgement but no further action. A second complaint, however, ultimately warranted attention. It came from the Associations fédérées des anciennes élèves des couvents catholiques du Canada, a network of convent school alumnae whose members felt themselves especially impugned by the allegations in Maria Monk’s book. The president of the association, Alida Rochon Bélanger, lived but a few kilometres from Parliament Hill in the largely Francophone and Catholic Ottawa suburb of Eastview (now Vanier). Her

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<sup>41</sup> Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK’s Appeal to Protestant America, 1915–1930* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 148–155; Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright, 2017), 47.

<sup>42</sup> James Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 145; Jeannine Locke, “When the Ku Klux Klan Rode in Saskatchewan,” *Canadian Weekly*, June 19, 1965, 3; Frank Biene, “Maria Monk,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, February 15, 1930.

husband, Aurélien Bélanger, was a University of Ottawa professor, director of Catholic separate schools for the Ottawa Board of Education, and sometime Liberal member of the Ontario legislature, where he had been a champion of Franco-Ontarian educational rights. In 1894, Protestant politicians like McCarthy, Wallace, and Bowell held considerable influence over the fate of Maria Monk in Canada. By 1931, the tables had turned as politically well-connected Catholics challenged the book.<sup>43</sup>

Bélanger was apparently aware that the Department of National Revenue deemed leftist politics a greater threat than sexual immorality, and her initial letter sent on 9 April 1931 complained that *Anful Disclosures* was not only obscene but also seditious. By bringing Catholic clergy into disrepute, Bélanger argued, the book undermined social stability and encouraged the spread of Bolshevism. This argument, which Father John Handly had made as early as 1920, went unacknowledged, so Bélanger tried again on 26 November. This time, she received a response almost immediately; J. Sydney Roe, the department's Examiner of Publications, did not find the work sufficiently indecent to ban it. Incensed, Bélanger wrote an irate three-page letter to Roe's boss, Minister of National Revenue Edmond Baird Ryckman, citing specific passages from *Anful Disclosures* and threatening to take her association's concerns to Parliament and the press if the Minister did not act. She also sent a copy of the letter to Ryckman's superior, Prime Minister Richard Bedford Bennett, reiterating her threat to use "all legitimate means" to secure the "filthy" book's exclusion from Canada. The potential for political embarrassment clearly frightened the two Ministers, for within four days, Ryckman added Maria Monk's book to his department's list of prohibited publications. Almost a century after its publication, *Anful Disclosures* was banned in its author's home country.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> LAC, R11336-8-1-E, Reel M-1108, Translation of Letter from St. Jean Baptiste Society of Montreal, undated [April 13, 1931], 290921–290922; A.W. Merriam to Alphonse Lerocelle, April 15, 1931, 290923; Merriam to E.B. Ryckman, April 15, 1931, 290924.

<sup>44</sup> LAC, R11336-8-1-E, Reel M-1107, Alida R. Bélanger to E.B. Ryckman, April 9, 1931; Bélanger to Ryckman, November 26, 1931; J. Sydney Roe to Bélanger, December 2, 1931, 290342; Bélanger to Richard Bedford Bennett, December 27, 1931, 290337–290339; David Sim to A.W. Merriam, January 12, 1932, 290345.

This exchange demonstrated the flexibility of customs censorship in Canada. While the book was clearly not seditious, did it meet the standard for obscenity, the only other grounds for prohibition under customs legislation? Roe, a former journalist with more than a decade of experience as Examiner of Publications, did not think so, but the law gave Ryckman the final say. The threat of political repercussions aside, Ryckman's decision was consistent with an evolving definition of obscenity that encompassed what is now referred to as hate literature. There was even a precedent in a 1914 Post Office Department decision to ban *The Menace*, the Missouri-based anti-Catholic newspaper, from using the Canadian mails. In justifying that decision, Postmaster General Louis-Phillippe Pelletier had stated that the government must tolerate "abstract" discussion of religious matters, no matter how distasteful. However, *The Menace's* attacks on "the honor [*sic*] and chastity" of Catholic women and Catholic clergy went beyond doctrinal disagreement. Pelletier's successor, William Pate Mulock, applied the same test in 1941 when he banned a Toronto evangelical bookstore from distributing *House of Death and Gate of Hell*, a digest of convent narratives—including Maria Monk's—compiled by Ohio-based anti-Catholic agitator and Ku Klux Klan propagandist L.J. King. In Parliament, Mulock echoed, almost word-for-word, a 1914 departmental memorandum on the *Menace* ban. "Men, whether Protestant or Catholic, may hold their views in the extreme and give pronounced expression to them in the most extreme way, and the department does not interfere," he said, "but when personal abuse reflecting the honour [*sic*] and chastity of the women and the clergy of any denomination as a whole is indulged in ... the Post Office Department has always considered it as duty not to permit the use of the mails for such purposes."<sup>45</sup>

The Department of National Revenue was happy to follow the Post Office's lead on extreme anti-Catholic propaganda. In 1914, it had instructed its officers to help enforce the *Menace* ban, and throughout the

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<sup>45</sup> "Why 'The Menace' was Prohibited the Mails," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 4, 1914; Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 19th Parliament, 3rd Session, vol. 5, July 28, 1943, 4893. For King's Klan involvement, see Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan*, 149.

1920s, customs officials used the tariff's obscenity provisions to ban a number of American anti-Catholic publications. These included *Convent Cruelties*, an "autobiography" of self-described escaped nun Helen Jackson, and several pamphlets from the Rail Splitter Press in Illinois—though not, interestingly, that publisher's edition of *Awful Disclosures*. Like *The Confessional Unmasked* and *The Fruit of the Confessional Box* decades before, some Rail Splitter pamphlets skirted the line between theological controversy and prurient sensationalism. One such title, *Peoria by Gaslight*, alleged that unscrupulous Catholic priests ran that city's brothels, and it provided such detailed information about the locations and services of Peoria's houses of ill repute that it read like a promotional guidebook. It was easy to classify such protean anti-Catholic literature as obscenity.<sup>46</sup>

Whatever the censors' rationale, the *Awful Disclosures* ban proved uncontroversial. Major newspapers briefly noted the official memorandum and the in-house *National Revenue Review* announcement two months later, but no one publicly defended the book. Only the *Regina Leader-Post* bothered to mention that Canadians had been reading *Awful Disclosures* for almost a century. By the 1940s, even critics of customs censorship conceded that books like *Awful Disclosures* warranted exclusion, unlike the works of literary merit that customs censors sometimes deemed inadmissible. As journalist Blair Fraser lamented in *Maclean's*, "James Joyce died knowing that to Canada his masterpiece [*Ulysses*] was a bit of obscenity to be classed with "The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk." Similarly, the editors of *Quill & Quire*, in criticizing the decision to exclude American novelist James T. Farrell's *Bernard Clare* in 1946, noted that "while the majority of books banned in Canada have singularly suggestive titles, such as: ... *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* ... occasionally we come across the names of authors who already are, or whom we have every reason to expect, will be renowned in world literature." By the time of the ban, *Awful Disclosures* had lost what little respectability it had enjoyed in

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<sup>46</sup> LAC, Department of National Revenue fonds, RG 16, vol. 888, Circular 487-C, March 9, 1926; Circular 498-C, May 4, 1926; "Peoria is Pictured by Clark of Milan," *Moline Daily Dispatch*, April 27, 1903.

the 1890s. Where publisher William Bryce had included its edition in the same series as the popular fiction of the day, by the 1920s, one Montreal bookseller advertised *Awful Disclosures* alongside classic risqué titles such as *Decameron* and *Heptameron* and the scientific works of sexologists Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, which enjoyed an underground following as erotica. Such associations further reinforced an obscenity verdict.<sup>47</sup>

However, the ban applied only to foreign editions. Banning the production and sale of a book within Canada demanded more than a ministerial order; it required a successful prosecution under the obscenity provisions of the Criminal Code, and in court, unlike at a port of entry, the burden of proof was on the accuser. Indeed, in Ontario at least, crown attorneys rarely bothered to prosecute obscenity cases, and the cases that did make it to trial usually targeted distributors rather than publishers. As late as 1928, Toronto police were apparently unaware that the Criminal Code empowered them to prosecute obscene publications; instead, they pursued only those titles that federal customs censors had already banned. Publishers were well aware of the challenges facing would-be censors of Canadian publications, as the first of a long tradition of “split-run” magazines were Canadian editions of American publications excluded by customs censors. Even the publishers of *The Menace* circumvented the 1914 postal ban by printing a Canadian edition, which was cheekily printed and posted in Aurora, Ontario instead of Aurora, Missouri. Similarly to these cases, producing a Canadian edition of *Awful Disclosures* remained legal even after the 1932 customs ban.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> “Banned in Canada,” *Ottawa Citizen*, January 13, 1932; “Un livre à l’index,” *La Presse*, January 13, 1932; “Prohibited Publications,” *National Revenue Review* 5, no. 6 (1932): 5; “Books and Magazines Banned from Canada,” *Regina Leader-Post*, March 18, 1932; Blair Fraser, “Our Hush-Hush Censorship,” *Maclean’s*, December 15, 1949, 25; “Witch-Hunting,” *Quill & Quire*, July-August 1946, 43, quoted in Joseph Griffin, “James T. Farrell vs. the Dominion of Canada: a Case of Censorship,” *The Dalhousie Review* 68, no. 1–2 (1988): 169; “Books ... Dickens Bookstore, 39a McGill College Avenue,” *Montreal Gazette*, October 28, 1922. On the erotic appeal of sexological texts, see Heike Bauer, “Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* as Sexual Sourcebook for Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness*,” *Critical Survey* 15, no. 3 (2003): 23–38.

<sup>48</sup> Ryder, “Regulation of Publications in Canada,” 144–5. For examples of obscenity cases against distributors around the time of the *Awful Disclosures* ban, see “Banish the Unclean,” *Regina Leader-*

The evidence, albeit circumstantial, suggests that the anonymous publishers of the Toronto edition deliberately exploited this loophole in Canada's censorship law. The stereotype plates, which are identical to those used to produce the Truslove & Bray edition, are the first clue. Although Bélanger's first complaint also mentions an abridged version from a Manchester firm, her subsequent correspondence refers to the Truslove & Bray printing by name, and her quotations are from this edition. The notice of the ban in the *National Revenue Review* also specifies the Truslove & Bray edition, presumably because this was the edition examined by the censors. The complaint from the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste did not specify a publisher but indicated that the book was published in London; therefore, they likely also consulted the Truslove & Bray edition. If the Truslove & Bray edition was in general circulation in Canada in the 1920s, it stands to reason that this would be a model for a Canadian edition issued around the same time. Indeed, if Canadian distributors had a preexisting relationship with the British publishers, this might have facilitated the importation of the Truslove & Bray stereotype plates.<sup>49</sup>

Evading a customs ban could also account for differences between the Truslove & Bray and Toronto editions, namely the illustrations and seemingly random ornaments. Canadian distributors of British and American books often imported unbound printed sheets, adding only a

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*Post*, March 9, 1928; "Peg Dealers Charged with Selling Alleged Obscene Literature," *Calgary Herald*, February 11, 1932; "Lending Library Owner Fined \$50," *Montreal Gazette*, June 3, 1932; "Producer, Dancer and Concessionaire at Empire Charged," *The Globe and Mail*, March 23, 1934. For confusion over jurisdiction, see "Say Police Have Power to Prosecute," *Toronto Star*, September 21, 1928. For split runs of indecent magazines, see "Books and Magazines Banned from Canada," *Regina Leader-Post*, March 18, 1932; "Canada Bans Four U.S. Magazines," *Vancouver Sun*, April 18, 1933. For *The Menace*'s use of the loophole, see "Canadian Menace is Sent through the Mails," *Victoria Daily Times*, April 25, 1914.

<sup>49</sup> LAC, R11336-8-1-E, Reel M-1107, Bélanger to Bennett, December 27, 1931, 290337–290339; "Prohibited Publications," *National Revenue Review* 5, no. 6 (1932): 5. Two copies of the Truslove & Bray edition survive in Canadian libraries, at McGill and Mount Allison Universities. The abridgement mentioned in Bélanger's complaint is *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk: The History of Maria Monk* (Manchester: Daisy Bank Printing & Publishing Company, n.d. [c. 1910-1930]). This company released two abridgements, one of thirty-two pages in orange wraps and a second of sixty-three pages in a red, white, and blue cover, which it described as a "Complete Edition."



title page with the name of the Canadian “publisher.” Had customs officers or police found copies of *Anful Disclosures* matching the banned Truslove & Bray printing in a Canadian distributor’s warehouse, they might have inferred that the page blocks had been smuggled into Canada in defiance of the ban. Officials were wise to the tricks publishers and distributors might use to disguise imported indecency. The same year as the Maria Monk ban, for example, inspectors in Toronto seized a shipment of pornographic books innocently wrapped in the dust jackets of pest control manuals, and late in his career, Examiner Roe recalled several similar examples of camouflaged smut. The illustrations from British and American sources differentiated the Toronto edition of *Anful Disclosures* from its British parent more effectively than a title page or dust jacket alone, but even these could have been tipped into an imported text block. Only a close examination of the collation and printing methods demonstrates that they are, in fact, an integral part of the book as printed. The ornaments, however, appear on the same pages as the text—proving, if one took the time to compare, that the text block had not been printed by Truslove & Bray. Moreover, the maple leaf and beaver ornaments emphasized the edition’s Canadian origin.<sup>50</sup>

An intriguing ownership history is a final clue to the Canadian edition’s dating. Inscriptions in my own copy indicate that it originally belonged to a “Mrs. Annie McGuffin” of London, Ontario. Born in London in 1886, Annie May Harris married farmer Wilbert McGuffin in 1908. The couple and their two children lived in the village of Thorndale, between London and Stratford, until 1928, when Annie moved back to her home city to work as a sales clerk. She and her grown children boarded at the home of

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<sup>50</sup> “Stop New Book ‘Racket,’” *Edmonton Journal*, December 16, 1932; “‘Good Common Sense’ is Yardstick of Sydney Roe as Censor of Literature,” *Ottawa Citizen*, May 10, 1938. Although Canadian copyright law technically included a “manufacturing clause” requiring that books be printed in Canada to qualify for copyright protection, it is clear that American or British printers often supplied the sheets that their Canadian agents packaged for sale. See Eli MacLaren, *Dominion and Agency: Copyright and the Structuring of the Canadian Book Trade, 1867–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 128, 140. For an example of a Canadian issue that explicitly acknowledges its American production, see Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Toronto: Macleod & Allen, n.d. [1906]).

Henrietta Tait on Colborne Street before renting a house on nearby Dufferin Avenue in 1931. Wilbert moved to London in 1932 or 1933, and the couple rented an apartment at 119 King Street near Covent Garden Market. Wilbert died in 1934, but Annie remained at the King Street apartment until 1936, when she married John Littler, a locomotive engineer, and moved to his home on Salisbury Street near the Canadian Pacific Railway yards where he worked. She died in 1966.<sup>51</sup>

McGuffin's movements are relevant because she recorded each change of address in her copy of *Awful Disclosures*. On the frontispiece, she wrote "Mrs. Annie McGuffin / 383 Colborne Street / London" in ink, later adding "Please return when read" in pencil. The preceding blank leaf bears the pencil inscription "Please return / to / ~~Mrs. Annie McGuffin / Thorndale / Ont. / 383 Colborne St / London / 119 King St / London / Mrs. J. Littler / 428 Salisbury / St / London.~~" The duplication of the Colborne Street address and the double striking on the first page suggest that McGuffin acquired the book while boarding at the Tait household sometime between 1928 and 1931. The placement of the Thorndale inscription suggests that it was an afterthought, perhaps indicating that McGuffin still regarded the village as home despite her extended London sojourn or that she had returned to Thorndale for a brief stay that the directories and census did not capture.

This timeline suggests that the Toronto edition circulated slightly before the importation ban, and that the threat of censorship was the context of its publication. As we have seen, calls to prohibit the importation of *Awful Disclosures* to Canada intensified throughout the 1920s as politicians, newspapers, and civil society organizations called for stricter regulation of obscene publications. At the same time, reforms at the Department of

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<sup>51</sup> Ontario Registrar of Vital Statistics, Birth Registration of Annie May Harris, December 27, 1886, no. 020625; Marriage Registration of Wilbert McGuffin and Annie Harris, March 11, 1908, no. 013567; Marriage Registration of John Littler and Annie Mae McGuffin, November 24, 1936, no. 016786; Canada Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, Province of Ontario, District no. 102, Enumeration Sub-District no. 16, Village of Thorndale, 13; Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, Province of Ontario, District no. 127, Enumeration Sub-District no. 32, City of London, 11; *Vernon's City of London Directory* (Hamilton, ON: Henry Vernon & Son, 1929, 1932, 1934).

National Revenue led to a more consistent and efficient application of the Duties of Customs Act's censorship provisions. Although the report from the Royal Commission on Customs and Excise in 1928 did not mention prohibited publications specifically, it did recommend a new internal publication to encourage awareness and standardization of departmental practices. The resulting *National Revenue Review*, released under Examiner Roe's editorship, urged vigilance from customs officers in their duties as censors and publicized the results of censorship investigations. Although the Department never released a cumulative list of banned publications, the *Review* was not secret, and newspapers often picked up its notices of newly prohibited publications.<sup>52</sup>

The *National Revenue Review* notices and original prohibited publications memoranda track the changing focus of the customs censors. Although neither source indicates the justification for banning a particular title, the titles themselves usually allow for easy classification. After concentrating on seditious works during and immediately after the First World War, the department targeted obscenity throughout the 1920s. By the end of the decade, it had pivoted once again—in 1929, the first year in which the *National Revenue Review* included notices of censorship memoranda, the department banned six publications, all foreign-language leftist periodicals published in the United States. Although left-wing political literature remained a constant target into the 1930s, the censorship of obscene publications intensified dramatically. For example, in the *National Revenue Review*'s March 1932 announcement of eight newly prohibited

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<sup>52</sup> Canada, Royal Commission on Customs and Excise, *Final Report* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, King's Printer, 1927), 7. Representative press coverage and editorial comment on censorship includes "A New War Against Obscenity," *Toronto Star*, October 5, 1923; "Questionable Movie and Beauty Contest Scored by Women," *The Globe*, January 29, 1927; "Censorship Scheme Revealed by Recent Action," *Calgary Herald*, March 4, 1926; "Rigid Censorship Urged by IODE," *The Globe*, June 12, 1926; "Indecent Literature," *The Globe*, August 31, 1929; "Keep this Trash Out," *The Globe*, January 29, 1931; "Banning the Filth," *The Globe and Mail*, August 21, 1931; "The Corruption of Youth," *Calgary Herald*, December 26, 1931; "The War on Filth," *The Globe*, May 20, 1932; "Checking the Putrid Flood," *The Globe*, January 19, 1933. For examples of reprints from the *National Revenue Review* in newspapers large and small, see "Censorship: Books and Magazines Must Pass Tests to Enter Canada," *Windsor Star*, August 22, 1931; "Prohibited Publications," *The Wainwright Star*, July 27, 1932; "Stemming the Tide of Obscene Publications," *Stonewall Argus*, February 1, 1933.

publications, which included *Anful Disclosures*, only the Finnish-American newspaper *Pohjantähti* (“The North Star”), whose title the censors translated incorrectly as “The Red Star,” was seditious. The remaining seven titles, including *Gentlemen in Hades*, *The Hindu Art of Love*, and *Thirteen Women*, were all indecent. Just as Bélanger had quickly dropped her argument that *Anful Disclosures* amounted to Bolshevik propaganda, the censors themselves had turned their attention from the seditious to the salacious.<sup>53</sup>

Distributors of indecent publications, including the anonymous Toronto publishers of *Anful Disclosures*, could not have ignored these trends, especially as official memoranda represented only a fraction of the works intercepted and seized at ports of entry. As the *National Revenue Review* explained in 1933, the department only issued a memorandum if inspectors were likely to encounter the same publication at multiple ports of entry. Officers might seize and destroy less common publications without ever informing Ottawa; recall that Montreal customs appraiser J.D.L. Ambrosse had seized copies of *Anful Disclosures* in 1894 at his own initiative, not in response to a ministerial memorandum. Add to this the police departments that also investigated reports of imported obscenity, and it is entirely plausible that distributors of *Anful Disclosures* in Canada faced scrutiny from customs or law enforcement well before Minister Ryckman finally banned the book’s importation in 1932. Printing a Canadian edition was a simple means of evading the censors, and adding ornaments and illustrations to existing plates clearly distinguished a legal Canadian printing from a soon-to-be illegal import.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Surviving customs memoranda indicate that in 1919, the department banned some seventy-one “seditious” publications, mostly in foreign languages, and only one publication that appears to have been obscene; they also banned one atheist work. In contrast, between 1920 and 1927, departmental memoranda identified thirty-five obscene titles, four items that promoted birth control, nine seditious publications, and four atheist tracts. LAC, Department of National Revenue records, RG 16, vol. 888, Circulars [1925–1927]; vol. 1057, Circulars 1c–49c [1919–1920]; Circulars [1921–1922]; Circulars 244c–336c [1922–1923]; “Collectors have been advised...,” *National Revenue Review* 2, no. 8 (1929): 14; “Prohibited Publications,” *National Revenue Review* 2, no. 12 (1929): 13; “Stemming the Tide of Obscene Publications,” *National Revenue Review* 4, no. 4 (1933): 4; “Prohibited Publications,” *National Revenue Review* 5, no. 6 (1932): 5.

<sup>54</sup> “Stemming the Tide of Obscene Publications,” *National Revenue Review* 4, no. 4 (1933): 4.

In his 1949 article in *Maclean's*, journalist Blair Fraser drew attention to the absurdity of Canadian customs censorship. Fraser purchased seven “prohibited” publications from Toronto booksellers and noted that neither he nor the vendors had broken any law; all seven were Canadian printings of books banned only for importation. The availability of Canadian printings of indecent works likely explains the rarity of officially reported seizures of already prohibited publications (as distinct from new suspects) at ports of entry during the 1930s. While combing through the consolidated seizure books for that decade, I found only one instance of officers seizing a book already on the department’s prohibited list. In that case, officers intercepted two copies of *A Jew in Love* by Hollywood screenwriter Ben Hecht, banned nine months earlier for its foul language and unflattering depiction of Jewish characters; the books were bound for Toronto reprinters G.J. McLeod and Company, who probably planned to release a legal Canadian edition. Fraser believed that most Canadian printings of banned titles produced in large quantities by small Toronto job printers were typeset in Canada from smuggled copies, but there was a second, even easier method of evading the censors. “It’s equally simple,” wrote Fraser, “to import the plates as ‘scrap metal’ and print them here without even setting new type.”<sup>55</sup>

Fraser had hit upon the very strategy of Maria Monk’s anonymous Toronto publishers. The publishers obtained a set of stereotype plates for an edition that had already circulated in Canada. They added their own title page, as was customary in Canadian reprints of foreign works. However, they went further in making the edition their own. First, they selected thirteen illustrations, three of which had appeared in other editions of *Anful Disclosures* and ten coming from a long out-of-print abridgement of another anti-Catholic favourite, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*. They also scoured their type case for an eclectic selection of ornaments—

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<sup>55</sup> Fraser, “Our Hush-Hush Censorship,” 25; “Keeping Out Obscene Publications,” 5; LAC, Department of National Revenue records, RG 16, vol. 864, T-91: Records of Customs Seizures, 1932–1933, October 20, 1932, 52; Julien Gorbach, “Crying in the Wilderness: The Outlaw and Poet in Ben Hecht’s *Militant Zionism*,” PhD diss. University of Missouri, 2013, 164.

printers' cuts of the type that elsewhere adorned patriotic works, bookplates, obscure novels, and business and penmanship manuals—to decorate the title page and the blank spaces following certain chapters. By distinguishing their book from its British parent and emphasizing its Canadian origin, the publishers exploited a loophole in Canada's customs censorship regime.

The Toronto publishers' additions to the Truslove & Bray version of *Awful Disclosures* made it a truly new edition rather than a simple reprinting, offering Canadian readers an experience of Maria Monk's story that differed from all other editions. For some publishers, booksellers, and readers, *Awful Disclosures* was a dirty book, even though it contained little that was sexually explicit, particularly when read alongside other illicit titles that had entered the market by the interwar years. Other promoters, such as Norman Murray in Montreal and D.M. Bennett in New York, cast it as a freethinker's text—"pornography," to paraphrase Richard Hofstadter, for the impious as much as for the Puritan.<sup>56</sup> In the Toronto edition, gruesome depictions of torture and martyrdom may have pandered to a grim fascination with sadistic violence while simultaneously situating the work within a Protestant tradition.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps this positioning was a ploy to shield the publishers from the censors who, by Postmaster General Mulock's own admission, allowed greater latitude to controversial religious texts than they might have allowed baser publications. It may also have strengthened the book's appeal to multiple audiences. When Annie McGuffin, a mother of two in her late forties and a devout Methodist, purchased, read, and lent out her copy of *Awful Disclosures*, was her motivation and experience more like Leopold Bloom's, or Norman Murray's, or Dalton McCarthy's?<sup>58</sup> Perhaps it was an amalgam of these, at once prurient and puritanical. In repackaging Maria Monk for the

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<sup>56</sup> Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 21.

<sup>57</sup> On the popularity of flagellation in Victorian erotica and its association with Protestantism, see Bull, "Obscenity and the Publication of Sexual Science," chapter 6.

<sup>58</sup> For evidence of McGuffin's church involvement, see "Government will work Thorndale Gravel Pit," *London Free Press*, March 22, 1922; "Thorndale Bible Class Picnic at Springbank," *London Free Press*, June 10, 1922.

Canadian market, an anonymous Toronto printing firm not only protected itself from customs censors but also capitalized on the tension between obscenity and religious polemic that underpinned Canadians' engagement with their country's most scandalous literary export.

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