

Seeing Red: Immigrant Women and Sexual Danger in Toronto's Postwar Daily Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

In Canada, post-World War Two European immigration gave rise to nativist fears that the political, cultural and social traditions of "New Canadians" - and in particular, the supposed sexual immorality of "DP" (Displaced Persons) men - threatened to undermine the Canadian way of life. This article offers a gendered examination of how these forces shaped the media coverage of the 1954 murders of two Eastern European refugee women in the city of Toronto.

RÉSUMÉ

Au Canada, l'immigration européenne après la Seconde Guerre mondiale a donné naissance aux craintes nativistes que les traditions culturelles et sociales des "nouveaux canadiens" en particulier, la soi-disant immoralité sexuelle des hommes "PD" (personnes déplacées), menaçaient de donner des coups de bêche à la façon de vivre canadienne. Cet article offre un examen sur la différence entre les sexes et comment ces forces ont influencé la façon dont les médias ont couvert les meurtres de 1954 de deux réfugiées de l'Europe de l'Est à Toronto.

In December 1955, a Hamilton, Ontario, police officer ran through D'Allairs department store shouting "Be on your guard, the slasher's in the neighbourhood." Described as a short, blonde woman "on the plumpish side," the slasher had "turned merchandising ... into a nightmare." Brandishing a razor sharp knife, she slashed coats and dresses with "pattern-like precision;" she "wiped out" the baby clothing section of G.W. Robinson Co. and "hacked up a brand new kitchen set" at the T. Eaton Co. The December 30th issue of Toronto's *Telegram* newspaper ran a brief story on the events, dubbing the illusive woman "Jill the Ripper." Accompanied by a photograph of a smiling clerk holding up evidence of "Jill's" dirty work - a torn wool coat - the short article was a satirical "gender-bender." Jill the Ripper was a foil to the real fears surrounding recent attacks by the Strangler, the nickname given to the unknown murderer of two Toronto women. Whether or not the *Telegram's* play on contemporary notions of gender was appreciated by its readers, the Jill the Ripper story demonstrates how the news media depends on precisely the kind of cultural symbols that are immediately recognizable to a mass audience. Easy myths and stereotypes are mobilized

to construct and reconstruct breaches of social order in an effort to help the community of readers to understand local, national and international events as they unfold around them. Through the organization of information, from photographs to police reports to a neighbour's impression of the victim, the news media turns disorder into order, the uncontrolled into the tamed.

This is nowhere more evident than in the coverage of acts of violence against women and children, for which Jack the Ripper - to whom Jill is an allusion - is an early example. When in the autumn of 1888 five women were found murdered and mutilated in Whitechapel, England, journalists attributed the crimes to a single man. "Jack the Ripper" so successfully captured the fears and imagination of the reading public that he has continued to serve as a stock character in the news narration of violent crimes committed against women.

In the fall of 1954, the murder of two Toronto women breathed new life into the "Ripper" trope. Both victims were strangled, both murdered near their homes, and both crimes were committed, as was the case with the original Ripper murders, in a working-class, urban neighbourhood, on the

street, and after dark. Moreover, none of the local residents reported hearing anything out of the ordinary and thus could offer no clues. Furthermore, the husband of the first victim received an anonymous letter from someone purporting to be the killer. These elements helped to solidify the image of a single crazed maniac on the loose, but other features of the victims' lives also took on enormous importance, including their status as recent refugees who lived on the outskirts of Canada's social, political and economic mainstream. Indeed, the 1954 murders of Maria Lypoweczyj and Olga Zacharko illuminate how postwar tensions around sex, gender and new immigration converged in the police investigation and media narration of these events.¹

1950s TORONTO

If marriage and the family are used as markers to define stability, the 1950s would appear to be rock solid: Canadian women were marrying younger and having more children; divorce rates dropped and remained low until the mid-1960s; and the housing industry boomed and families retreated to the suburbs (Strong-Boag). Beneath the veneer of middle class stability, however, postwar tremors reverberated across the urban landscape. Filling Toronto's downtown core was an influx of immigrants comprised largely of Jewish survivors of the Hitler and Stalin regimes, anti-communist Poles and Ukrainians, and "DPs," occupants of Europe's "displaced persons" camps. Throughout the 1950s, more than 100,000 immigrants arrived in Canada each year. Of these, over a third settled in Toronto - most of them gravitated to the west-end district that the city daily newspapers dubbed "the foreign section."

For some native-born Canadians, the emergence of new ethnic enclaves and vibrant commercial and social spaces brought an international flavour to a largely monocultural city. One reader of the *Toronto Daily Star* praised immigrant men for keeping the custom of giving up their streetcar seats for women passengers, and hoped that they would not lose their sense of politeness by associating with Canadians (October

29, 1954). But others were not so welcoming. A significant portion of the native-born, white Canadian population feared that the large number of immigrants threatened Canada's national character and domestic security. For example, on September 13, 1954, just days before the murder of the first "Strangler" victim, a *Globe and Mail* editorial lamented that only one in four immigrants to Canada were British. The writer warned "we are steadily becoming less British, less French and hence - if our history means anything - less Canadian." Mrs. M.B. Meares agreed, informing the editor how she was alarmed to have discovered that the Polish community had its own weekly newspaper, separate choirs, orchestra, "and even sports clubs" (September 22, 1954). This, she feared, would lead to ethnic factionalism and undermine "a true national outlook."

Still others went further and characterized European immigrants as a dangerous underclass. Responding to a *Globe* report of an international immigration conference held at the Hague, Netherlands, Ottawa resident Clive Thomas argued that nations should retain the right to "preserve their ethnic composition and admit largely only those who will strengthen that composition [lest we] be swamped by hordes of illiterates and semi-illiterates from all corners of the earth" (*Globe*, September 21, 1954). Some months later, *Globe* columnist J.V. McAree printed a letter - so defamatory that it was likely rejected for the Letters page - from a nameless United Empire Loyalist who characterized New Canadians as "illiterate, diseased, and mentally unfit" criminals who were part of a special interest plot to "destroy the British Anglo-Saxon majority in Canada" (January 8, 1955). Citing recent crimes committed by European immigrants, including the murder of Olga Zacharko and Maria Lypoweczyj, McAree tightened the link between violent crime and immigration. The constant reinforcement of the myth of moral corruption among DPs was so effectively executed that, according to historian Gerald Tulchinsky, some of Canada's established Jewish communities were reluctant to sponsor or associate with the Jewish refugees for this reason (1998).

Though not all Anglo-Saxon Canadians

supported these extreme views, anti-immigration sentiments were nonetheless on the rise. In a November editorial, the *Globe* accused the newly appointed Minister of Immigration of remaining conspicuously silent on the doings of his department. "Mr. Pickersgill does not think, we are sure, that immigration is a bad thing. But he thinks a lot of other people think it is a bad thing, and he is anxious to placate them" (November 3, 1954). Despite calls for more British immigrants, even those from England complained about racial prejudice and discrimination. Citing a growing antagonism toward Englishmen, recent immigrant Martin Mulvihill complained that prospective employers suffered a sudden change of attitude once they heard a British accent. "[T]he Canadian way of life has become more manifest since the war," he argued, "resulting in a strong nationalism with its inevitable repercussions on English immigrants" (October 16, 1954). E.T. Richardson's letter followed shortly afterward, claiming that the English "are not appreciated nor particularly welcome", and he suggested that immigration officials in Britain be more honest about the limited opportunities for Brits in Canada (October 23, 1954).

Many Europeans rose to defend their communities against native Canadian ethnic and cultural chauvinism. Writing in response to the *Globe's* editorial demand for more British immigration, Henry Swierczynski insisted that it was the wrong approach, arguing that the Brits were equally guilty of forming "national clubs and clannish and prejudiced 'instincts'" (October 2, 1954). E. Janta, a British citizen married to a Pole, responded to Meares' fear of ethnic factionalism by defending the important role of the Polish press in helping immigrants ease the suffering and loneliness of being in a strange country, and claimed that rather than diminish the greatness of Canada, immigrants added to its cache of cultural achievements (September 27, 1954). Writing in response to the 1955 McAree column, lawyer Jan Aleksandrowics and Dr. Joseph Glaug published a point-by-point rebuttal in *Nasha Meta*, a Ukrainian language paper.² New Canadians did not hesitate to challenge the xenophobic claims that were openly

espoused in the news media, but it appeared to make little impact on the way events in and around their communities were reported.

If the influx of non-British immigrants were a concern for Canadians anxious about the structure of society, so too were gender relations. The end of the war was heralded as a return to normal, yet recent historical scholarship in postwar North American women's, family and gay history clearly demonstrates how war-time changes such as the demand for women's labour power in the public marketplace and the proliferation of same sex communities in both the military and civilian life threw notions of "normal" into question. Now widely understood as a period of intense instability and insecurity about sex and gender roles, postwar-era feminine and masculine ideals were reshaped according to the political and economic needs of the day, and the reestablishment of traditional family life was vigorously promoted and culturally idealized in both Canada and the US (May 1988; Adams 1997; Smith 1992).

As new immigrants arrived in Canada, it was this domestic-maternal, wage-earning-paternal model that they were most encouraged to adopt. In her study of the relationship between postwar social workers and their immigrant clients, historian Franca Iacovetta reveals that the primary goal of immigrant aid agencies was to ensure newcomers' integration into Canadian society. Key to this process was encouraging conformity to "a gendered arrangement in which husbands supported a wage-dependent wife and children, and women took on the task of running an efficient household and cultivating a moral environment for their children." Measuring up to this standard was a challenge for most new immigrants; federal immigration policies were designed with the needs of the labour market in mind, and non-British immigrants were selected according to their willingness to fill shortages in agricultural and manufacturing industries, both of which were on the low end of the wage scale. Consequently, immigrant women were instrumental in supplementing the household income. Though married women's participation in the workforce was not unusual in this period, immigrant women were

much more likely to be engaged in waged labour than were their native-born counterparts (Wright 1967). Not surprisingly, they were concentrated in the service and manufacturing industries where poor working conditions, inadequate wages and few benefits were the norm.

THE "FOREIGN DISTRICT"

The daily rhythms of 46 year-old Maria Lypoweckyj's life in Canada were much like that of most new immigrant women.³ Born in the Ukraine, she, her husband and their teenage son were all displaced by the war. Survivors of a German slave labour camp, they emigrated in 1952 and moved into a downtown Toronto house owned by Maria's uncle, a family arrangement common among immigrants forced to pool limited resources. Both Maria and husband John worked the night shift at one of Toronto's most venerable hotels, the King Edward. The couple occasionally rode the streetcar home together, but as was the case most nights, on September 27, 1954, John Lypoweckyj had to work late and Maria left for home without him. The next morning her body was found within a block of her uncle's house.

There were enough similarities surrounding the murder of Lypoweckyj and the original Whitechapel "Ripper" murders for Toronto's two main daily newspapers to draw comparisons. Lypoweckyj was attacked and murdered in a residential neighbourhood, her body discovered in the 12-inch gap between two neighbouring houses just steps from her own home. Though not sexually assaulted, Lypoweckyj was stripped of all her clothing, leading the *Telegram* and the *Star* to characterize the event as a sex crime, and the attacker as a "sex fiend." Nor was she viciously mutilated as were the Whitechapel victims, but an autopsy report noted a safety pin embedded in her chest. Lypoweckyj's purse was found in a nearby garbage can, and a shoe, hair combs and various articles of clothing illustrated the path the struggle had taken. Despite evidence of her resistance, none of the neighbours could explain how someone was murdered outside their window without creating a disturbance, yet, as with the

original Ripper murders, all insisted that they heard nothing during the night.

Speculation about the identity of the killer was drawn from the "puzzling" details uncovered in the police investigation. Described as having "hands of steel," journalists claimed that with the use of just one hand (the other held over his victim's mouth to muffle the screams), the murderer left the victim with a "completely crushed throat and [the] bones in it broken." They also claimed that the killer exercised "abnormal strength," evidenced by the location of his victim's body. According to police, the reporters explained, "It would be impossible for a man of normal strength to place the body in the alley without help (and) without dragging it." But while the police investigation began as a search for two or more assailants, the media simply dubbed the attacker "The Strangler."

In the perpetual search for more clues, the *Star* launched an investigation into Maria's personal life. John Lypoweckyj, they learned, was a member of the Ukrainian government-in-exile, the National Republicans, and out of his home office he wrote "violent anti-communist propaganda" for their magazine. The *Telegram* gave full front page coverage of the Toronto police detective's theory that Maria's murder was a reprisal for her husband's "campaign against communism." This claim was supported by testimony that Maria was often seen running the distance between the street car and her home when she returned from her night shift alone: "[E]mployees of the Brockton Hotel told detectives... [t]hey got to know Mrs. Lypoweckyj as the woman who always broke into a run after she left the street car alone... (and therefore) were of the opinion that she was a highly nervous person."

Immigrant women had reason to be nervous. Forced to take low paying jobs that demanded long hours and shift work, they regularly faced the dangers of traversing the city streets at night. Members of the organized labour movement attempted to address the problem at the 1954 Regina convention of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. Delegates of the American Federation of Labour Local 299, representing Hotel and Restaurant Employees, vigorously supported a

resolution calling for employers to pay the cost of a cab ride home for its female staff who left the workplace after 10 p.m. No doubt such a measure would have been welcome relief for Maria. According to the *Telegram*, Maria was followed, chased and assaulted on previous nights, and she had pleaded with her husband that she be allowed to find another job that did not require her to work late hours.

John Lypoweckyj insisted that his wife was never implicated in any political activities. While this may have been true, further investigation revealed that a portrait of Russian war heroine Lieutenant Lyudmila Pavlichenko hung in "a place of honour" in Maria's bedroom, indicating that she did not "fully share her husband's hate for the Reds." However, though Pavlichenko was indeed a Communist, she earned her star status for single-handedly killing 309 German soldiers during the World War Two Russian offensive against Hitler's army, making her a respected war hero even among the Allied Forces. The *Telegram* abandoned the communist reprisal theory the following day, but the plot thickened yet again when police revealed that Lypoweckyj's purse contained a snapshot of her happily posing with a German Storm Trooper. The photo was accompanied by a packet of letters confirming a love affair between the two. "Was the murderer Lypoweckyj's German lover out for revenge?" wondered the *Telegram* reporter. With virtually no clues on which to build an investigation, the political and foreign affairs of the Lypoweckyj couple were scrutinized by the police and the media, and lent an aura of mystique and intrigue to the entire story.

Ethnic and class tensions intertwined with and compounded immigrant women's troubled location on the spectrum of sexual danger. Much to the consternation of the immigrant community, everything about Lypoweckyj, including her job, neighbourhood and husband's political activities marked her as an immigrant more than it did a female. Women from Maria's neighbourhood insisted that "oldtime residents of Toronto living in the better class areas can have no idea of the terror felt by some New Canadian women whose work demands late hours and lonely walks." In a *Toronto*

Star report on the local Eastern European community's response to the tragedy, many were openly critical of the media and police handling of the case. A friend of the victim complained that Torontonians "seem to have the impression Maria was just another no-account foreigner. Even the police seem to have this idea." Others agreed, and argued that if the Toronto police "seriously believe" that Maria was the victim of a communist plot or was slaughtered by a German soldier, "then their heads are awl with foreign intrigue." Toronto's New Canadian residents attributed the murder to "a man who's known the world over - the man who walks dark streets by night and preys on solitary women."

In order to generate sympathy for the victim, Maria had to transcend the neighbourhood that marked her as "other." On day four of the media frenzy, *Star* headlines urged Torontonians to "Remember Slain Woman as Fine Warsaw Singer." Investigative reporters learned that before the war, Lypoweckyj had studied at the Warsaw Conservatory of Music, hobnobbed with the intellectual and professional elite, and "attended many of the fashionable parties in the (Polish) capital." Remembered by her friends as a vivacious young concert singer who "thrilled pre-war Warsaw with her rich soprano voice," Lypoweckyj's "real" identity, they claimed, was a successful, educated and cultured woman. For Eastern European readers, Lypoweckyj's prewar life was a bittersweet contrast to the stark and diminished existence she and many other New Canadians faced in Canada. As crime reporting, however, it was a portrait that exploited age-old perceptions of the respectable middle classes as less deserving of harm and hardship. While impossible to measure how successfully this revelation transformed negative nativist sentiments into empathetic understanding, Lypoweckyj's downfall from opera diva to salad maker could just as easily reinforce the invidious view of Displaced Persons as morally corrupt and debased.

Twenty-three days after Lypoweckyj's death "The Strangler" struck again. Like the first victim, Olga Zacharko was a New Canadian. Born in Russia, Olga met and married Ukrainian Paul Zacharko in a Displaced Persons camp near

Bremen, Germany. She was young, conventionally attractive and pregnant with her second child, all of which combined to make her appear less a victim of her ethnic and political identities and more of a victim of her sex. For some, the similarities between her murder and the murder of Lypoweckyj confirmed the existence of a "deranged killer." Desperate to find a correlation between the two victims' lives, journalists, however, could report only that both lived in houses numbered 47. What Lypoweckyj and Zacharko did share was their status as immigrant women: Olga, Paul and daughter Sophie also lived in rented rooms, and Olga had just secured low-skilled work, in this case as a cleaning woman at the University of Toronto. Neighbours also reported she was a quiet woman who kept to herself, and that neither she nor her husband was known to be affiliated with any political group.

Nevertheless, Zacharko's husband Paul was severely criticized for his failure to live up to his masculine role as protector, his marital role as companion and his familial obligation to his daughter. Paul Zacharko, reporters declared, was derelict in his duty as husband and father. The competing coverage of Toronto's two daily newspapers reveals that the husband was himself cognizant of his own moral culpability in his wife's death. On the night of October 19, 1954 Olga Zacharko and her husband left their home at 7:30 p.m., she to purchase groceries for the evening meal and he to play billiards. Paul Zacharko told a *Telegram* reporter that he would never forget his wife's last words: "Don't go, it isn't right for you to go. You're a married man with a daughter. Stay home." According to his own account, he dismissed her plea, left her at the grocery store entrance, and made his way to a billiard hall and the company of his male friends. His wife was murdered on her way back to their home on Beverly Street. Her body was found in a laneway just steps from her own front door, less than 50 yards from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Headquarters. She had not been raped, but semen was found on her clothing, thereby confirming her murder as a sex crime.⁴

By the time the *Star's* journalist arrived on

the scene, Zacharko gave a different account of Olga's last words. "Usually she reprimanded him for playing billiards," the reporter wrote, "but this time she didn't say anything about it," [Paul Zacharko] said. "In fact, she said that maybe I deserved a game since I worked so hard." The notion that fathers have a responsibility to their families is not unique to North America, but according to historian Franca Iacovetta, conformity to prevailing notions about gender and the family was a central component of social service agencies' attempts to integrate New Canadians into the social mosaic. The emergence of ethnic social clubs frequented by male patrons was seen as distinct from gender-exclusive Canadian establishments such as Toronto's elite Granite and Albany Clubs and everyday local taverns, partly because non-British ethnic organizations were regarded as inimical to the process of assimilation. Moreover, though immigrant women complained when their spouses shirked their familial responsibilities, native-born Canadians nevertheless regarded the problem of delinquent fatherhood among immigrants as evidence of their failure or, worse, refusal to abide by Canadian standards of family living. The emergence of male-dominated ethnic social clubs and commercial establishments such as the billiards hall Mr. Zacharko patronized was held up as evidence of the preservation of outdated, old world community standards which were fundamentally incompatible with the postwar Canadian ideal of marriage as an equal partnership (Golz 1993). In contrast to media representations of Maria Lypoweckyj and her murder as "ethnic" problems, those regarding Olga Zacharko's death shifted the focus from an "immigrant problem" to a "women's problem."

The media persisted in the discursive designation of the killer as The Strangler, despite the fact that, by 1954, mental health experts were convinced that the problem of sexual deviation was fairly widespread. While they hinted that the murders of Lypoweckyj and Zacharko were likely the work of a sadistic fiend, they noted the existence of a wider community of sex fiends, any one of whom could have committed the crime. Indeed, a police roundup of known sex offenders

following both murders confirmed the existence of a socio-sexual menace greater than that of a single man, and the public began to wonder just why there were so many sex offenders roaming the city streets.

The Toronto Police focussed its investigation on the foreign district in hope of discovering which European country favoured strangulation as a method of killing, and whether the safety pin found in Lypoweckyj's body had any particular cultural relevance. These activities demonstrate retired Toronto police officer Jack Webster's claim that in the 1950s the police were beginning to recognize the importance of bridging the cultural gap between themselves and the city's ethnic minority groups (Webster 1994). *Star* and *Telegram* reports on the day of Zacharko's funeral state that with no new clues to aid them, the next step in the investigation was to review recent releases of male immigrants from the province's mental institutions. Shortly afterwards, the murders of Lypoweckyj and Zacharko were attributed to a man named Ivan Popp, an Eastern European and recently released psychiatric patient of the Ontario Hospital, Whitby. Once police were convinced that they had their man, Popp was committed to another psychiatric facility, the Ontario Hospital, in Penetanguishene. Because Popp was declared mentally unfit to stand trial, a public hearing never took place. The police investigation never became part of the public record, and the case was closed.

Sustained interest in the investigation, backed by \$7,000 in reward money for tips leading to an arrest of the Strangler, indicates the seriousness with which the authorities treated the "DP" murders. The events also prompted a flood of complaints by women from all over the city who had been followed or assaulted in recent weeks or months. "There is no doubt," reported the *Star*, "that there has been a miniature reign of terror across the city...Women have been pursued by men and there have been numerous acts of immorality on the street, enough to indicate that several perverts are loose." Toronto's police detectives were convinced that the murderer was an immigrant, and his target women in "the foreign district," yet a city-wide sexual panic nevertheless developed. Toronto

Police warned women not to go out at night, or to do so only with an escort. An October 26, 1954 letter to the *Toronto Star* pointed out the impracticality of such a suggestion. The murders of Lypoweckyj and Zacharko, reported Dorothy Mitchell, have "thrown a scare into the hearts of many Toronto women," many of whom could not get an escort. Some women, she added, had to work nights. "Potential killers," concluded Mitchell, "are a cowardly lot and they would make fewer attempts on women's lives if there were an organized front against them, from all citizens, male and female." Once incidences of sexual conflict were reinterpreted as pervasive rather than anomalous, and as a potential threat to Anglo-Saxon Canadian women, the Ripper trope could no longer contain the problem of sex crimes. It became increasingly difficult to typify the Strangler murders as an immigrant - and immigration - problem.

In February 1955 another Toronto murder would complete the shift from a moral panic about immigration to a moral panic about sex crimes and their commissioners, "sex deviants." Eight year old Judy Carter disappeared on her way home from school and the local media immediately reported speculation that she was kidnapped by a sex deviant. The fear that "gripped the hearts" of Toronto women the previous fall was re-ignited, except this time it was focussed on children. The *Telegram*, and to a lesser degree the *Toronto Star*, provided excessive coverage of the Carter story. They did the same with two subsequent child deaths, making the most of the fact that, as one *Toronto Star* editorial observed: "every parent trembles lest his child be the next." Though Carter's body was found six weeks after her disappearance, and the autopsy showed no signs of sexual assault, eight year old Judy continued to symbolize the threat sexual deviancy posed to the safety and security of Canadian family life.

Judy Carter's symbolic value as representative of Canadian familialism was as much a media construction as were Lypoweckyj and Zacharko's "foreignness." Carter lived with her divorced mother and step-father in a basement apartment in Cabbagetown, then one of Toronto's roughest working class neighbourhoods. At any

time, either of these details could have served as evidence that divorce and poverty breeds moral corruption and violence. However, the *Star* and *Telegram* downplayed the material conditions and familial arrangements of the Carter home, and instead crafted an idealized image of childhood innocence and, most importantly, suffering motherhood. The *Telegram's* coverage of the "Search for Judy" campaign featured front page photos not of the missing child, but of her mother. Though sexual assaults against women were far more common than those against children,⁵ the sex crime panic exploded around the latter. In so doing, it spoke to the cultural value placed on the preservation of a North American heterosexual family ideal where men are breadwinners, women are homemakers and children are innocent (Adams 1997; Gleason 1997; Golz 1993).

Spurred on by newspaper columnists and local community organizations such as women's councils, church groups and parent-teacher associations, the public directed their fear, anxiety and anger at the state. Letters and petitions demanding a response to the sex crime problem poured into the offices of Ontario provincial and federal officials. Criticism of the criminal justice system's handling of sex crimes ranged widely, from complaints about lenient sentences to protests against the use of drunkenness as a defence. However, public outrage ultimately congealed around the belief that psychiatrists could cure sex offenders of their sickness, thereby prompting many to demand more and better psychiatric treatment services for sex criminals. Indeed, Canadians from across the country revealed their faith in the "scientific methods" by which psychiatrists claimed they could achieve a greater understanding of sexual deviation. From 1954 until 1958, the Royal Commission on the Criminal Law Related to Criminal Sexual Psychopaths travelled to every capital city in the country to collect expert testimony on the problem. Though the published report indicates a concern with both the incidences of sexual assault in Canada and the application of criminal justice, the transcripts of the hearings show a preoccupation and fascination with medical testimony about deviated sexual drives. Women's

groups and the social service agencies that dealt with victims of sex crimes were swept to the periphery in favour of the modern scientific expert.⁶

The sex crime panic created an opportunity for the public to engage in an open discussion about human sexual behaviour with unprecedented candour. The public appetite for information about sexual deviation seemed insatiable. The *Toronto Star's* 1956 Massey Hall Forum on Sexual Deviancy attracted more than two thousand local residents who came to hear Canadian and American experts talk about sex. The Forum mirrored the proceedings of the Royal Commission; though the impetus behind the event was parents' desire to learn how to protect their children from being sexually molested, much of the panel's time was spent defining sexual deviancy itself, debating the decriminalization of homosexuality and discussing whether arson was a sexually motivated crime. The theme of sexual deviancy shifted the focus away from the victims of sexual danger and created an audience eager to have medical experts provide a new taxonomy of sexual practice.

Both the Strangler murders and the "sex deviant" panic that followed demonstrate the way a "true national outlook" was shaped through the manipulation and exploitation of hegemonic ideas about of race, sex, class and gender. The news media played a key role in constructing, disseminating, and reproducing certain "truths" about ethnicity, class, and sexuality by inclusion, exclusion, and in the case of McAree's article, collusion. All three daily newspapers engaged in what communications critic Yasmin Jiواني describes as an "us versus them" dialectic. Grounded in the intellectual traditions of colonialist thought, this oppositional relationship is produced by homogenizing certain groups who are then subordinated to the dominant culture by magnifying perceived differences and inflecting them with "negative connotations that imply an extreme version of some trait such as sexuality, inability to adapt, weakness, and so on" (56). The dominant culture asserts and maintains its cultural, political and economic superiority by default; never having to define itself, it produces the illusion of

self-evident qualities opposite to those ascribed to the subordinate group. As the Toronto-based cases under review suggest, post-1945 immigrants and sexual outsiders were but foils against which middle-class Canada asserted its own "national" identity.

ENDNOTES

* Thanks to Franca Iacovetta and the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments, and to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for its generous financial support.

1. This paper is part of a doctoral research project for which I have read the Toronto and national newspapers from 1948 to 1960. Here, I have drawn on articles, editorials and letters appearing in the *Toronto Star*, *Toronto Telegram* and *Globe and Mail* from September 1954 to December 1960.

2. National Archives, MG 31 D69 Volume 14, Press Clippings, 1955. My thanks to Franca Iacovetta for this reference. Further research into the ethnic presses should provide a fuller assessment of community responses to Canadian nationalism and racism in this period.

3. I gathered information about the Lypoweckyj and Zacharko murders from the *Toronto Star* and the *Telegram*.

4. I have been unable to access the records from the police investigation; my information here was obtained from an interview with Toronto Police Force archivist and retired detective Jack Webster.

5. *Report of the Royal Commission on the Criminal Sexual Psychopath*. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1961.

6. Based on my own unpublished research on the Royal Commission on the Criminal Law Relating to the Criminal Sexual Psychopath.

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